GLOBAL JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY

The central challenge for political theory today and for the foreseeable future is the problem of achieving a just global order. What must the institutions of such an order look like, and what are the normative principles that should guide them? The project will scrutinize both questions and relate them to one another, something rarely done in current academic contexts.

The project will illuminate the tensions that can arise when the concepts of "justice" and "democracy" are combined on a global scale: If global democracy is the logical consequence of a universalistic (or cosmopolitan) conception of egalitarian justice, the realisation of such a vision threatens the political infrastructure of national democracies (in both Western and Non-Western countries), potentially turning them into a "graveyard of freedom" (to use Kant's metaphor) and eventually even jeopardising world peace.

The topic will be addressed in three steps. The first probes the relationship between justice and democracy in an age of globalisation. If traditional political theory considered the national political order (characterised by rule of law, democratic self-government and institutions of distributional justice) as the single, or at least decisive context for questions of justice, globalisation forces us to ask if this can still be an adequate framework for justice. On inter-, trans-, and supranational levels we can now find shared public and private legal norms, economic interdependencies, processes of cultural exchange, and common problems ranging from environmental disasters to extreme poverty. On the one hand, these challenges already outstrip the powers of individual nation states and require participation in larger conglomerates, but on the other hand, these processes are hardly (if at all) democratically controlled. Moreover, in terms of justice, we find various relations of power and dominance (both political and economic) that overarch national contexts in an almost organic way.

To analyse this state of affairs, we must confront a range of normative, conceptual and sociological questions: What is the nature of those relationships exceeding the national framework, and do they establish a new social setting that demands a democratically organised, just new order? Or does such a new order challenge the very core of political justice, namely, national self-determination? On the other hand, arguing from a cosmopolitan outlook, should national self-determination be understood as unjust in itself, an expression of national egoism? But what should a new and global conception of the *demos* look like if it aims to be more than a mere fantasy? Could we develop a new understanding of democracy, relative to individual issues, specific areas, and criteria of affectedness?

For a deeper understanding of these questions it will be necessary to make a second, reflexive step and ask: Does the complexity and occasional confusion that characterises the debate on global justice and democracy relate to the fact that there *are* no universally valid conceptions that could serve as a basis for a comprehensive order? Pointing to historically and culturally rooted values and norms, those who

defend "particularistic" positions deny the universal character of the principles of justice and democracy, arguing that on the international level, a modus vivendi of tolerance is the most that can be achieved. Radical democratic positions in turn hold that self-determination is only possible within clearly delimited political communities, defined by the appropriate forms of communication and homogeneity. Proponents of universalism, however, point to the fact that there is at least a universal language of *in*justice, as the conception of human rights allegedly demonstrates; and the value of self-determination, too, is said to be universally acknowledged. Whether cosmopolitan consequences can be drawn from this is an open question; it may well be that democratic universalism and cosmopolitan justice do not always go hand in hand.

Finally, in a third step, the project focuses on conflicting opinions regarding the form and implementation of international institutions. What kinds of problems should just or democratic international institutions tackle, and can they build on already established structures? Issues in this section will range from the debate on UN reform over incentives and conditions for progressive democratisation in specific spheres and regions, to analysis of the *public-private partnerships* that have come to supplant universally binding agreements in many cases. How can the language of justice be mediated with the language of power when existing institutions on the supranational level allow only certain voices to be heard? What is involved in the democratic transformation of international institutions? Is there a transnational "civil society" that could stimulate such processes? And – to return to our starting-point – how can we guarantee that more democracy indeed means more justice?