

## **Global Justice**

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I would like to thank you all for the invitation to visit your great country, to come to your magnificent city, to speak to you at this important meeting. It is an honor and an extraordinary opportunity.

Permit me to begin on a personal note.

In September 1943, my father came to Italy. He was 19 years old, a soldier in the American Army. From September to November 1943, he fought with the First Engineer Special Brigade, from Salerno to Milan. After Italy he traveled to England, trained for D-Day, and landed on Utah Beach in Normandy; he fought in the Battle of the Bulge; and he ended his service in Germany.

My father returned from the war with a love of Europe, a particular love of Italy. He has always been grateful for the great kindness extended to him by so many people when he was a young soldier.

My father, who is now 81, also has always felt deep pride for his service in World War II. He helped to defeat a great evil.

But he also returned with a deep hatred for war. His view is that war is a human catastrophe, not an exciting, noble adventure. Because it is a

catastrophe, you should only fight when you must. You should only fight in a war of necessity, never in a war of choice. You fight when there is a great and imminent evil and no way of preventing it without fighting.

I share that view of war. That's why I opposed the Iraq War, as so many of you did. Yes, Saddam Hussein was a cruel dictator. Yes, he belongs in a prison, not in a palace. But the Iraq war was a war of choice, not a war of necessity. The United States was irresponsible in going into Iraq. I can report to you that there is finally a growing debate in the United States about a responsible strategy for leaving Iraq. One thing should now be clear: it is time to go.

But I was not invited to speak to you as an expert on war, or politician, or student of public policy. I was invited as a philosopher. I was not invited because my feet are firmly planted on the ground. I was invited as someone who sees the world from 30,000 meters. As a philosopher, I take my guidance from Immanuel Kant. He said that philosophy addresses three basic questions: what can we know? What should we do? And what may we hope for?

The third question, about hope, is the most important. Philosophy is not about what will be, but about what could be. Philosophy is not a science of history: it is an exploration of possibilities guided by the hope that our social and political world can be improved by our common efforts. Philosophy is guided by optimism of the heart, not optimism of the head.

So how could our world be improved by our common efforts? It is difficult to know where to begin. There is so much sorrow, so much pain, so much hatred, so much cruelty, so much terror. But when you come to Florence you are

reminded of the great human, public good that can come from our collective efforts.

We need to begin, then, by asking what the great moral problem is that we now face. Reasonable people will answer this question in different ways. I want to propose to you that the great moral problem is global injustice, and that the ideal of a more just global society should have a central place in orienting our thought and our common political efforts.

In our world, one billion people—one of every six—is destitute. Those one billion people live on less than a dollar a day. They are hungry, they have no health care, no education, no clean water; they are barely sheltered. Let's never forget: they did nothing to deserve their condition. They are not imprisoned in destitution because of their crimes: they are imprisoned in destitution despite their innocence.

Another 1.5 billion people live only slightly better: on \$1-2 a day. They are able to meet their basic needs, but they lack fundamental goods. They are poor, with minimal education, minimal health care, unsafe food and water, and their rights are always at risk. They, too, are not in poverty because of their crimes. They are in poverty despite their innocence.

That is how 40% of our world lives now.

For some of the poor and destitute, things are improving. But the extraordinary global distance between wealthy and poor is growing. The richest five percent in the world make 114 times as much as the bottom five percent; one

percent of the world's people make as much as the poorest 57 percent. So the gap grows and many are left behind. That is morally unacceptable.

The problem of global injustice is not only economic. Billions of people are deprived of basic human rights: subject to torture and imprisonment, forced into marriage, deprived of access to education, health care, and civic life. That is unacceptable.

And new forms of global governance, through organizations like the WTO, are making decisions with large consequences for human welfare. Whether their decisions are good or bad, they remain largely unaccountable to the people affected by them. That is unacceptable.

How can we live this way?

Some people say that we should not worry so much because there is no such thing as global justice. Call them the skeptics. Some of these skeptics are statisticians. They say that justice is an issue only among people who are citizens of the same state. They say that justice is an issue only when we all are subject to an authority that imposes laws on us and claims to speak in our name. The statisticians say that outside the state, there is no justice. So, they say, until there is a global state, there is no global justice.

Other skeptics are communitarians. They say that justice only makes sense in a national community, among whom people share a culture and common values. They say that justice is fidelity to the cultural values of that community. These skeptics say that global society is too diverse to be a moral community,

and does not have the common culture needed to sustain a commitment to justice.

We should reject these statist and communitarian views. They are misguided in a world of globalization. Whether we favor or oppose globalization, it is a fact. And the fact of globalization has important implications for political morality.

Economically, globalization means that the world is more integrated, with reduced communication and transportation costs, an increased flow of goods and capital across borders, and a dispersion of production. There is not a single world market. But economic integration has made the global economy a substantial presence in the economic lives of virtually everyone in the world.

Politically, there are new forms of governance that operate outside the state. These new forms of governance are especially important in the arena of economic regulation—the WTO is the most prominent. But they also have a role in areas of security, labor and product standards, environment, and human rights. The results are new forms of global politics, with important consequences for human welfare.

Moreover, these new settings of global governance are the focus of an emerging global civil society of movements and nongovernmental organizations. In areas ranging from human rights, to labor standards, to environmental protection these groups contest the activities of states and of global rule-making bodies.

So we face a new world of global economic integration, global politics, and an emerging global civil society. The history of statism and communitarianism was not always pretty. Still, the idea that there is no justice outside the state may have made sense in a world with more national economic independence, less governance beyond the state, and more self-contained national communities. But that is not our world. In our world the lives of peoples are more deeply connected, and the skeptical outlook on global justice is morally unacceptable.

In the world of globalization, what does the project of global justice mean? I can only provide a very broad sketch, aimed at general principles. There are, I believe, three large areas of global justice that we need to address.

First, we need to ensure the protection of *human rights*, and we need a generous understanding of the scope of human rights. In the United States, human rights have often been understood in a narrow and negative way, focused on protecting people from torture or arbitrary imprisonment. We have not been very good at respecting these rights recently. But the restrictive understanding is too narrow. Human rights are also about health, about education, and political participation. The point of human rights is not simply to protect against threats, but to ensure social membership, to ensure that people are not excluded from society, to ensure that they are treated as if they count for something.

Second, new global rule making bodies operating beyond the state raise questions of justice. These bodies, like the WTO, make rules with important consequences for human welfare. Global justice is about ensuring that governance by rule making bodies outside the state is accountable, that people

who are affected are represented, that rule-making is transparent. We can debate about whether the WTO is making good rules or bad rules: in fact, we ought to be having that debate. But there is a basic issue of principle here: when an organization makes policies, and the policies have large consequences for human welfare, it needs to be held accountable through a fair process. Unaccountable power is wrong.

Third, global justice is about ensuring that everyone has access to the basic goods—food, health care, education, clean water, shelter—required for a decent human life; it is also about ensuring that, when the global economy is moving forward, no one is left behind. It is shameful to have a widening global gap, when so many are poor and destitute.

These three elements of global justice—human rights, just governance, and just distribution—are distinct, and will require different policies to address them. But they all have one thing in common: they all start from the idea that each person matters, that everyone counts for something. In short, global justice is about *inclusion*: about making sure that no one is left behind. I am not making a case here for how best to advance the project of global justice: there are thousands of worthy ideas. I am urging its importance.

Some people will say that global justice is a nice idea, but that it has no real practical importance. They say that globalization puts us in an iron cage. They say that globalization leaves no room for political choices animated by an ideal of global justice, that it requires every country to follow the same path. We must reject this false assertion of necessity.

There is no single best way to respond to the common pressures and opportunities of globalization; it is not true that globalization imposes a race to the bottom in which all the more advanced economies are required to follow the neo-liberal path of deregulation, reducing social insurance, cutting public goods, and eliminating redistribution; it is not true that globalization requires all the less developed economies to follow the Washington Consensus, with its principles of stabilize, liberalize, privatize. In both richer and poorer countries, political choices are available and they matter.

Some people say that the right choice for global justice is to increase levels of direct assistance to end poverty by 2025; some people say that the right choice is to end agricultural subsidies in the rich economies; some people say that the right choice is to provide credit for poor farmers; some people say that right choice is to empower poor women through education and economic assistance; some people say that right choice is to reduce disgusting levels of overconsumption in rich countries; some people say that the right choice is to promote a richer and more vibrant civil society so that people can defend their rights and be agents in creating their history rather than victims and supplicants.

Many things are possible. Of course we do not know which are best. Lets not deny that we have choices; lets make decent choices, in light of the best evidence we have, and guided by the conviction that global justice is a fundamental imperative.

Once we accept that global justice is a fundamental imperative, once we accept that political choices are possible, then we come back to the political



tasks in our own countries. Many citizens in the advanced economies now experience globalization as a threat. Many see it as a threat to their jobs and their income; they see it as a threat to their ability to lead the kind of life that their parents led. Many citizens fear that a better life for billions who are now poor and destitute may mean a worse life for them.

People who see globalization as a great risk will demand protection from these risks. Neoliberalism is indifferent to these threats and fears. Neoliberalism celebrates the market; neoliberalism leaves people at risk. So neoliberalism threatens to provoke a nationalist backlash to the risks imposed by globalization. That backlash will mean renewed pressure for protection, renewed efforts to close borders, renewed efforts to keep resources at home.

This kind of economic nationalist backlash will be a human disaster for the poor and destitute elsewhere. And let's be clear: some of them will resist this disaster.

So global justice is not simply an abstract moral imperative. There is a deep political connection between greater justice at home and global justice. If we leave everything to the market at home, if we don't fight for social insurance, if we don't fight for education and health, if we don't fight for public services, if we don't fight for employment and income, then we can be sure of an economic nationalist resurgence with all of its terrible consequences. The first globalization ended in the blood of 1914; the second globalization will come to an equally bloody end. So the political project of global justice requires a renewed political project of a more just, egalitarian society at home.

This unity of justice—this unity of the national and the global: that is our answer to Kant’s question. That is what we may hope for. That is what we should strive to achieve.