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**Justice, Governance, Cosmopolitanism,
and the Politics of Difference.
Reconfigurations in a Transnational World**
Introduction

To the memory of Iris Marion Young

In the 1980s, political theory in the West was characterized by a paradigm change from *redistribution*, a politics of structural difference, to *recognition*, a politics of cultural difference that focused on multiculturalist and feminist claims and notions of cultural group identities. Since the 1990s, political philosophers have more radically confronted the repercussions of a multi-centered, globalizing world increasingly beyond the nation-state system that challenged the parameters of democratic theory. They have criticized reductionist and essentialist notions of culture(s) and identities, analyzed the potential and the limits of “civil society,” acknowledged the radical hybridity, polyvocality, and “transculturality” of all cultures and societies, and pursued new directions in democratic theory, visions of “deliberative” or “communicative” models of democracy. They have explored the transformations of the meanings and roles of “flexible,” “non-territorial,” and “world” *citizenship*, versions of a “rooted,” “partial,” or “federalist” *cosmopolitanism*, the complex and contested new dimensions and practices of *governance* and *sovereignty*, and cogently addressed the crucial question of global *justice*, of structural injustice and the forms of a politics of difference, of the three dimensions of “abnormal justice” in today’s world.

During the last two decades, American political philosophers have powerfully analyzed the contours, the dynamic, and the objectives of these fundamental issues of a new democratic theory. To this exploratory and contentious public debate, Kwame Anthony

Appiah, Seyla Benhabib, Nancy Fraser, and Iris Marion Young have made particularly challenging and suggestive contributions. They have not only engaged in a continuous open dialogue with each other's work, but they have also committed themselves to a *transatlantic* philosophical debate with Critical Theory (esp. Jürgen Habermas, Axel Honneth) and French poststructuralist philosophy (esp. Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva). All of them have been part of the ongoing project of feminist critique and gender discourse. Their philosophical work confronts, deconstructs, and transfigures fundamental Western philosophical and disciplinary distinctions and oppositions, such as universalist norms and the politics of difference, *negotiating* their *tensions* and *interdependencies* without discarding one side or pressing for a “new” “synthesis.” Their contributions to this volume, revised versions of their Distinguished W.E.B. Du Bois Lectures at Humboldt-Universität, 2004–2005, testify to their ongoing dialogical philosophical commitment to a theory of democracy in a “globalized world of uncertainty, hybridity, fluidity, and contestation” (Seyla Benhabib).

In his essay, “Ethics in a World of Strangers: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Spirit of Cosmopolitanism,” Kwame Anthony Appiah argues in favor of what he calls a “rooted” or “partial cosmopolitanism.” Taking W.E.B. Du Bois as a, or indeed as *the* example in case, Appiah shows that cosmopolitanism cannot only *not* be divorced from a rootedness in a specific, also *national* culture but rather is dependent on concrete cultural affiliations. Appiah shows that in his thinking, Du Bois was deeply influenced by his time as a doctoral student at Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, now Humboldt-Universität. At the heart of his writings lies a thorough understanding of German philosophers of *Sturm and Drang*, and particularly of Herder. Taking up Herder's notion of *Volksggeist*, Du Bois advocated a progressive “nationalism” as it developed in the specific philosophical and political climate of 18th and 19th century splintered Germany, a nationalism which can in fact be described as cosmopolitan. Du Bois's cosmopolitanism thus unites two, sometimes considered to be contradictory strands: “one is the general moral idea that we have obligations

to others, obligations that stretch beyond those with whom we are related by the ties of kith and kind, or even the more formal ties of a shared citizenship. The other is that we take seriously not just the value of human life but of particular human lives.” With Appiah, and Appiah’s reading of Du Bois, therefore, a “citizen of the world” should neither “abjure all local allegiances and partialities in the name of a vast abstraction, humanity” nor should s/he take the nationalist position of rejecting all foreigners. In effect, Appiah concludes, “[t]he position worth defending might be called (in both senses) a partial cosmopolitanism.”

It is this revisionary notion of a “*partial* cosmopolitanism – in both senses” or a “*rooted* cosmopolitanism” in a postcolonialist world, of the “ideal of contamination,” hybridity, and intermingling of cultures, of “relations between strangers,” of a contentious, crosscultural “dialogue” and a “negotiation between disparate tasks” of a “cosmopolitan patriotism” of difference within societies and across nations that Appiah explores more systematically in his books *The Ethics of Identity* (2005) and *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2006).

In her book, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (2002), Seyla Benhabib analyzes the dimensions and repercussions of a “deliberative model of democracy” and addresses the “demands for the recognition of identities based on gender, race, language, ethnic background, and sexual orientation have posed to the legitimacy of established constitutional democracies,” opting for a “dialogic and narrative model of identity constitution.” Her next book, *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens* (2004), examines, in a comparative perspective, the boundaries of political communities, the “principles and practices for incorporating aliens and strangers, immigrants and newcomers, refugees and asylum seekers in existing polities” and proposes a vision of global justice that pleads for “moral universalism and a cosmopolitan federalism” and a concept of flexible, cosmopolitan citizenship.

In her lecture, “Crises of the Republic: Transformations of State Sovereignty and the Prospects of Democratic Citizenship,” Seyla Benhabib explores how globalization and its multi-faceted political and social consequences have led not only to the eventual demise of the principle of the Westphalian nation state, but consequently also to a transfiguration of citizenship and sovereignty. It is the aim of Benhabib’s essay to discuss possibilities of a refiguration of democratic institutions and civil participation in a thus changed global space. For the demise of the nation state in the wake of globalization does not, of course, lead automatically to a general implementation of cosmopolitan and humanitarian norms of justice but rather, as a consequence of global capitalism, undermines popular sovereignty as it brings with it the “deterioration of the capacity of states to protect and provide for their citizens.” Benhabib perceives two parallel tendencies as part of a general disaggregation of sovereignty. On the one hand, a “vertical uncoupling,” constituted by world-wide migratory movements on an unprecedented scale, leads to a new uncoupling of territoriality and jurisdiction as present-day migrants are able to and effectively do hold close ties to their country of origin and thereby enforce forms of overlapping jurisdiction. Consequently, an ideal of popular sovereignty which presupposes singular allegiances to just one country and with it democratic rule in general may become problematic as “a state-centered model of sovereignty is itself becoming dysfunctional.” On the other hand, what Benhabib calls the “horizontal uncoupling” as triggered by the transnational movement of capital and commodities reduces the state’s power of legislation while giving rise to legal practices of deep impact which are not, however, legitimized through democratic processes.

In this context of deep-going change, a reconfiguration of sovereignty will not be acted out, as Benhabib argues, neither by an emerging “multitude” (Hardt and Negri) nor simply on a local level (Slaughter). Benhabib rather perceives as necessary an accompanying reconstitution of citizenship “which shows that political agency is possible beyond the member/non-member divide” and through multiple “democratic iterations,” namely “complex

processes of public argument, deliberation, and exchange through which universalist rights claims and principles are contested and contextualized.” Benhabib concludes in pointing out that “popular sovereignty cannot be regained today by returning to the era of the ‘black box’ of state sovereignty: the formal equality of sovereign states must mean the universalization of human rights across state boundaries, respect for the rule of law and democratic forms of government.” A vision of an “emergent global civil society, in which new needs are articulated for a world public, new forms of knowledge are communicated to a world public opinion and new forms of solidarity across borders are crafted,” she elaborates more fully in her Tanner Lectures, *Another Cosmopolitanism: Hospitality, Sovereignty, and Democratic Iteration* (2006).

In her book, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990), Iris Marion Young develops a conception of justice critically indebted to the more recent work of the Frankfurt School and French poststructuralist philosophy, and feminist theory, a reflective discourse about justice historically and socially contextualized and responding to the claims about social domination and oppression that permeated the new left social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. She rejects fundamental presuppositions of contemporary political philosophy and argues for a politics that “recognizes rather than represses differences,” a vision of a “heterogeneous public that acknowledges and affirms group differences,” a vision she finds expressed in the ideal of city life (as against the celebration of a homogeneous “community”) as the “openness to unasimilated otherness.” Her next book, *Inclusion and Democracy* (2000), “explores additional and deeper conditions of political inclusion and exclusion, such as those involving modes of communication, attending to social difference, representation, civic organizing, and the borders of political jurisdiction.” It addresses the “norms and conditions of inclusive democratic communication under circumstances of structural and cultural difference” in “societies with millions of people.” She discusses the dimensions and the limits of civil society and proposes a model of “differentiated solidarity” that she also extends to a global level, the worldwide “interaction and interdependence among people.”

Iris Marion Young describes her philosophical writings as contributions to a “set of overlapping conversations with people of diverse interests and backgrounds whose writing has stimulated me to think or with whom I have spoken over time.” In this dialogic mode, her essay, “Structural Injustice and the Politics of Difference,” elaborates a complex understanding of politics of difference which takes into consideration the highly relevant, albeit often disregarded distinction between positional and cultural difference while arguing for a reconsideration within public and academic discourses of the former. The discussion of positional difference as cause of structural inequality and injustice was central to feminist, anti-racist, and gay liberation activists of the 1980s who argued for equality and inclusion, while a version of a (multiculturalist) politics of difference “gained currency in the 1990s, which focused on differences of nationality, ethnicity and religion,” emphasizing “the cultural distinctness of individuals.” While both the discourses of positional and of cultural difference are legitimate and important, Young points out a number of critical limits to the politics of cultural difference. First, it “obscures racism as a specific form of structural injustice,” second, it lays too much emphasis on the role of the state towards individuals while underestimating “civil society either as enacting injustice or as a source of remedy,” and third, it too easily reinforces positions of (seeming) normalcy which were “exposed and criticized by a politics of positional difference.” Young therefore proposes “to re-focus [academic and popular] attention to group differences generated from structural power, the division of labor, and constructions of the normal and the deviant, as they continue also to reflect on conflicts over national, ethnic, or religious difference.” This vision of a “global democratic discussion and regulation,” Young pursues in her more recent work on “global democracy,” “global governance,” a “global public sphere,” and “global justice” in a critical re-assessment of economic globalization, current national and international conflicts, and transnational social (“grassroots”) movements (see *Global Challenges: War, Self-Determination and Responsibility for Justice* (2006)).

Since her book *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (1989), Nancy Fraser has worked on a theory of a communicative democracy with a heterogeneous, dispersed network of many publics and of postnational democratic justice, critically drawing on European and American feminist theory, critical social theory, poststructuralism, and pragmatism. In her book, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Philosophical Exchange* (with Axel Honneth) (2002, 1998), based on her Tanner Lectures of 1996, she offers a dual perspective approach to a theory of justice that addresses the complex and conflictual interrelations of maldistribution and misrecognition, a “bifocal” approach that is particularly energized by her reflective engagement with the conception of gender. Near the end of her Tanner Lecture, “Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition and Participation,” she asks the question if a theory of justice today requires a *third* dimension, in addition to redistribution and recognition, and she suggests “the political,” i.e. political marginalization and exclusion, as the most likely candidate. In her more recent work, Fraser further develops these questions of “participation” and “democratization” in proposing a *politics of representation* in which the framing of questions of justice becomes a matter of *democratic deliberation*. “The theory of social justice must become a theory of *democratic justice*,” which has to be explored in moral philosophy, social theory, political theory, and practical politics in their *different* forms. Fraser does not look for a single, “synthetic” theory, but offers a complex dialogical model that can accommodate “differentiation, divergence, and interaction at every level,” recognizing that “questions of distribution and recognition are today inextricably imbricated with questions of representation.”

In her essay, “Abnormal Justice,” Nancy Fraser discusses the changes necessary within meta-disputes over justice in a globalizing, post-national world. By using the term “abnormal justice,” she denotes the unstable character of central parameters and dimensions of justice-discourses in the present world. Although premises and scopes of justice-discourses in general are often taken for granted, they do not constitute ontological truths but rather refer to

historically evolved presuppositions, are “[c]onstituted through a set of organizing principles, and manifest[...] a discernible grammar.” Presently, the nation-state as norm and context of justice-discourses dissolves, leaving behind a yet unfilled and contested continuum of discourses which Fraser terms “abnormal” on the grounds of their yet unshaped or undetermined character. Fraser thus “suggest[s] a way of approaching questions of (in)justice in abnormal times,” registering three rival claims for justice – socio-economic redistribution, cultural or legal/status recognition, and political representation. She identifies “three nodes of abnormality in contemporary disputes about justice” and formulates “three corresponding conceptual strategies for clarifying these abnormalities.” For justice under conditions of abnormal discourse, “taken-for-granted assumptions about the ‘what,’ the ‘who,’ and the ‘how’ [of justice] no longer go without saying.” Fraser consequently argues that a meta-theory of abnormal justice should respond to and combine both its positive and its negative side and “encompass an account of the ‘what’ of justice [the overarching principle of ‘parity of participation’] that is multidimensional in social ontology and normatively monist.” It should also encompass a view of the “who” of justice [“*who* is entitled to participate on a par *with whom* in *which* social interactions?”], guided by what she calls “the *all-subjected principle*,” that is “simultaneously reflexive and substantive,” and a view of the “how” that “combines dialogical and institutional features,” “submitting meta-claims for the reframing of justice to a process of two-way communication between civil society and new global representative institutions.”

The repercussions of world-wide migrations in a postcolonial, post-fordist world, of cross-cultural tensions and negotiations, of new concepts of citizenship, of diasporic and hybrid multicultural identities and communities, of the new media of communication, or of the transnational quality of cultural production and consumption ask us to reconceive our notions of the public sphere, of governance, of the social and political role of culture(s), of cultural difference in terms of ethnicity, race, gender, and class, and of the dialectics of intercultural relations. The *Distinguished W.E.B. Du*

Bois Lectures address these questions and visions of a new theory of democracy in a *transatlantic perspective*, taking the international debates about the dimensions and objectives of public culture(s) and the translation of culture(s) as guiding reference-points. The Lectures are named to honor William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1886–1963) as one of the most important and influential intellectuals, scholars, public figures, and writers of the 20th century, whose multi-faceted international public life and work incorporated what the Lectures set out to achieve. He was closely connected to Humboldt-Universität, a Ph.D. student at Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität from 1892 to 1894 and recipient of an honorary doctoral degree from Humboldt-Universität in 1958.

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This volume is dedicated to the memory of Iris Marion Young who passed away in August, 2006.