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Review Of "Global Civics: Responsibilities And Rights In An Interdependent World" Edited By H. Altinay

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humanitarian government have emerged: “In poor countries it deals with large and often undifferentiated populations, for whom mass initiatives are set in place. In rich countries, it is faced with individuals, whose narratives it examines and whose bodies it scrutinizes” (p. 253). Within the former context, Fassin sees refugees as the emblematic category; within the latter, asylum seekers. These subjects of humanitarian government often dwell within political spaces, such as refugee camps, within which humanitarians are powerful political actors.

Fassin shows how in asserting its political autonomy, humanitarianism inevitably creates hierarchies of humanity: between the deserving and undeserving poor, between the right and wrong kinds of immigrants, between victims and perpetrators. As he puts it, “Humanitarianism, independently of the goodwill of the rescuers, constructs an unequal relationship between the one giving aid and the one being aided” (p. 193). For example, Fassin documents the ways in which medical assessments of physical scars, which are often accorded more weight than firsthand testimony of political persecution, have become key pieces of

evidence of suffering in many French asylum cases. Moreover, this is a quandary that humanitarianism cannot necessarily escape: looking for truth about suffering in its physical legacy carries the risk of depoliticizing that suffering and reducing a person to a body, while speaking out on behalf of the victim risks co-opting and distorting another’s voice.

Ultimately, neither book provides any easy answers to the dilemmas that beset humanitarianism, but they do add important nuance to the debate. The MSF volume conveys just how much of a struggle it is to identify, access, and bring even a modicum of relief to those in need; but it also reminds us of the importance of trying to do so. Fassin’s account challenges us not to pigeon-hole humanitarianism as something that only happens in faraway places, but to consider it as a powerful political vocabulary that has much broader resonance in our everyday lives.

—HENRY RADICE

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Global Civics: Responsibilities and Rights in an Interdependent World, Hakan Altinay, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2011), 145 pp., \$18.95 paper.

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Edited and written in part by Hakan Altinay, this book examines the concept

of “global civics,” which Altinay defines as “a system of conscious responsibilities

that we are ready to assume after due deliberation and corresponding rights that we are ready to claim” (p. 5). What are our ethical responsibilities toward not just our fellow citizens but also distant strangers? What kind of rules, rights, and responsibilities are necessary for fair interdependence? How can universities be utilized to engender global civics? The answers to these questions, Altinay suggests, can only be reached through global dialogue, and *Global Civics* aims to start that deliberative process.

The book’s format is unique. Part one, which constitutes the bulk of the text, introduces “global perspectives” on global civics. In addition to an introduction by Altinay, it includes ten interviews with prominent scholars and policy-makers from around the world that explore the book’s core questions. Part one also contains three individual essays. In the first essay, Nabil Fahmy, the dean of the School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the American University in Cairo, explores how the notion of security should be conceptualized for global civics. In the second piece, Trevor Manuel, a former minister of the treasury in South Africa, and Edgar Pieterse, the director of the African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town, examine the phenomenon of global solidarity. In the third essay, Tosun Terzioglu, the president of Sabanci University, and Tara Hopkins of the Civic Involvement Program at the same university analyze their experience with that program at their home institution. Building on these contributions, the second part of the book contains two essays that explore how global civics can be taught in universities, and includes an outline of readings and topics that could be featured in such a class.

The diversity of perspectives collected in *Global Civics* is the book’s greatest strength. There are contributions by senior academics from China, Egypt, India, Ireland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, and South Africa; influential policy analysts from think tanks in Bulgaria, Russia, and the United States; and policy-makers from Spain, Chile, and South Africa, all of whom have served in important international positions. *Global Civics* thus manages to avoid the Western-centered perspective that colors many collections on globalization.

The contributors examine many critical issues in relation to the book’s core questions. For instance, some highlight domestic politics as an obstacle to overcoming self-interested behavior by states in international agreements. Others point to inequality between the rich and the poor both within and across states as undermining potential global solidarity. Some argue that global economic institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund, need to be reformed to better reflect the needs of the poor.

Despite the diversity of the perspectives, the contributors agree upon a number of points. First, many converge on the notion that humanity can be united around common values, even if slowly. For instance, many point to the fact that respect for human dignity is embedded in a diversity of cultures. Second, all the contributors agree that universities are the appropriate venues for discussing global civics. Third, many suggest that, when it comes to overcoming fundamental global challenges, the current institutional arrangements fall short not just normatively but also practically. The contributors identify a number of different problems with these institutions, and emphasize the pursuit of narrowly

defined national interests as the primary obstacle to effective interstate coordination on global issues, such as climate change.

The book would have benefitted from expanding upon two key ideas. First, *Global Civics* could have elaborated upon the notion of “fairness,” which makes frequent appearances here. Altinay seems to adopt the Rawlsian notion of “justice as fairness,” and advocates for a “global veil of ignorance.” Leaving aside the question of what the “founders” behind the global veil of ignorance would decide, Altinay’s interviews focus more on whether fairness matters (an idea to which his interlocutors appear predisposed), and less on what kind of global relations would be fair. Over the course of these conversations, Altinay’s interlocutors implicitly or explicitly reveal different conceptualizations of fairness. For instance, some bring in the notion of “reciprocity” (p. 45), while others discourage against “absolute fairness” (p. 61). The challenge in engendering global civics will likely not be to get people to agree that some sort of fairness matters, but to facilitate convergence on a specific conceptualization of it.

Second, the book could have better expanded upon the question of what kind of institutional arrangements should govern an interdependent world. Altinay argues that “founders [of society] behind the global veil of ignorance are likely to keep the fundamentals the same” (p. 10). In other words, even under such a scenario, the world would still be governed by nation-states. Since many important issues remain localized in nature, Altinay explains, a world government would be considered too far removed from people’s immediate

circumstances. Altinay also suggests that participants would avoid intrusive political or institutional arrangements—for instance, those that engage in social engineering. Nevertheless, he argues that the participants in the veil of ignorance experiment would likely find greater cooperation among nation-states and less inequality across them desirable.

As I have noted, many contributors to the book find the current institutional arrangements lacking in this respect. The question remains: what kind of cooperative arrangements should govern international relations? For instance, should the membership of core economic institutions, such as the World Bank or the IMF, continue to be restricted only to states? Should states delegate more sovereignty to multilateral institutions? What other kinds of institutions are necessary to facilitate global civics? Such questions about political institutions are pertinent for understanding how rights could be provided and protected in global civics. As the European Union has shown, the definition and the provision of rights beyond borders are closely related to the nature of institutions that govern interdependence.

These shortcomings aside, *Global Civics* is a refreshing read. Its nontraditional format helps it achieve what it intends to do—ignite a dialogue about responsibilities and rights in an increasingly interdependent world. Thus, it should be of interest to anyone who finds the ethical dimension in globalization neglected.

—AYSE KAYA

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