

Towards Social Justice and Global Citizenship as an Intellectual Approach and Global Aspiration for Humanity (in a Strife-ridden World)

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In today's world, we encounter a great number of exacerbating conflicts and crises that may even lead to annihilation of human life on this planet, if they are allowed to persist. Into whatever direction we turn, we witness raging fateful North/South and East/West struggles. However, nothing would enable us to overcome such ongoing political conflicts, economic crises, environmental catastrophes, or social afflictions other than using a great panacea and supreme instrument of this equation – that is, to put the necessary human principles in place. Whosoever believes in the oneness of humanity – irrespective of the multiplicity and diversity of its parties, regions, and warring factions – finds nothing at the core, save that essentially indivisible human spirit, notwithstanding the diversity of ethnicity, creeds, denominations, ideologies, and interests.

Back in the day, the Chinese philosopher Confucius called for the principle of inner peace, and he was followed down through the ages by other expositions, from leaders of thought, of the beneficial effects of establishing peace in solving countless human problems and disputes. In this hypothesis, I will attempt to add to the foundation that those prior advocates of peace had laid down, by establishing that principle of the consciousness of global citizenship is a modern-day panacea for current and future crises and conflicts. This principle is manifested in the consciousness of humanity's love for one

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another and of the world as one homeland for every person, from a global perspective.²

Hence, we come to the indissoluble relationship that binds peace to development, in the global term of “humanity”. This, in turn, invites us to lend our attention to sustainable development, and the need to create a new developmental strategy on the global level, based on prosperity rather than amassing of wealth. For incessant accumulation of wealth brings about the depletion of unreplenishable natural resources of the planet – a situation that can require reliance on renewable energy and further efforts to create a better future that is, in this case, the future of the world and its citizens. Here, we are all fully aware that the antithesis and nemesis of development is *war*.³

That said, our primary concern remains that of laying the foundation of education for a global citizenship that is humane in nature. Personally, I consider that this branch of education should be made part and parcel of political education taught in every country, should their respective political leaders’ wish to reach the shore of safety, as well as to rescue their countrymen and fellow human beings. In so doing, the leaders would make choices and political and economic decisions designed to consolidate peace, thus becoming an extension of international human thought and world education. Under today’s daunting problems, overshadowed with conflicts that revolve around political aims and that compete for natural resources, and confronted by contemporary human challenges, the leaders of thought would be left only with one strategic choice: pursuing the analytical approach to world education, since education for global citizenship should be the aim and ultimate goal. A question remains here for the educators to answer: if we wish to advance our world towards peaceful coexistence, then how can we plan in order to enable our educational systems to cultivate world-citizenship within programs of international education?⁴

Here we may ask ourselves: “What are those concepts that, perforce, underlie world peace and prosperity and world education, notably global citizenship?” Such a question is needed to restructure citizenship itself, to determine which approaches should be followed in order to foster education for citizenship in general terms, and to understand the importance of positive change – all with the aim of promoting global citizenship. A researcher of basic

² Jiabao, 2004.

³ Paupp, 2014.

⁴ Dower and Williams, 2002.

pedagogic goals in any country has the obligation to search for a close relationship that links civic education with global education, and hence their indissoluble link to world peace. Consequently, it is incumbent upon every morally conscientious politician to create an environment for social interaction in order to form a dialectic bridge between the stakeholders of education at all levels on one hand, and the leaders of thought who value the importance of laying the foundation of global citizenship.⁵

More than any time before, we might be in dire need to answer a number of questions and speculations around a major philosophic question, “Are you a world citizen?” If the answer is in the affirmative, then the follow-up question would be: “How would you like to live – peacefully, or in a state of endless bloody conflicts?”

Peace, as opposed to war, remains the most daunting of current-day global priorities and challenges that has taken a controversial place in contemporary international field of thought, notably under current global and environmental changes that we experience today, including the specter of the coronavirus pandemic with its impact on the notion of citizenship, both in theory and practice. Here we cannot ignore the paramount role of the state and its educational institutions in aligning pedagogy to the principles of global citizenship, and in creating an atmosphere of freedom and rights that are consonant with global citizenship and its exigencies. The same is true of role of those political democratic beliefs espoused by politicians in establishing global citizenship, as well as lending a hand to combating terrorism, peace-building and peace-making for a brighter future and a human world order that embraces all humanity.⁶

Today we live the age of globalization and what comes beyond and facing the problems of modernity and post-modernity as well. Both globalization and modernity are also inseparable from the challenges of globalization that the world witnesses today. These challenges highlight the paramount role of the desired democratic state, both in our Arab world and throughout the Middle East, in shaping cultural identity of citizens in every country such that the consciousness of world-citizenship may emerge. In this connection, we cannot also forget the impact of a liberal democratic model on desired political and intellectual reforms. Such a model is capable of enabling countrymen to seamlessly perform their role as world citizens, notably when confronted with

⁵ Andreotti, 2010.

⁶ Baylis, Wirtz and Gray, 2018.

clashes of civilizations and narrow national interests. Our aim in this process is to create an environment for dialogue and harmony among civilizations. In our Arab world, we are also in dire need of building a pedagogic model for liberal education and inculcation of global citizenship. Here we might benefit the trail-blazing that took place in the West and benefit, time and again, from the progressive thoughts of culturally advanced countries in terms of their achievements. At this point, I recall the importance of the suggestion to adopt a charter for humanity as direct demonstration of the world-embracing role of international institutions in this connection. There is a moral responsibility that rests now on the shoulders of all of us as individuals, institutions, and states.⁷

Here I might refer to some ideologies, in terms of their general influence on education, such as pragmatism, existentialism and their contribution to cultivating the consciousness of global citizenship, where human needs do arise for reciprocal support by every human to his fellow human for the common good. What is meant here is the welfare of man who has been created to live and enjoy the world's natural riches in a conflict-free environment, that is a state of convergence, collaboration, and cooperation that paves the way to a better world.

Here we should remember the need to investigate the types of relationships that bind moral frameworks to pedagogic approaches, where moral standards do play an important role in shaping the pillars of education in a manner that would consolidate human security, and build the future world order, and foster global citizenship based on this indispensable prerequisite. Here lies the importance and potential of education and of formulating plans for cultivating a sense of world-citizenship within the framework of international pedagogic standards. Our approach would be that of relying on principles of strategic dialogue, moral education, and political education with the aim of establishing a culture of world-citizenship that places the identity of world citizen in high regard – an identity that rests squarely on the values of peace within an interconnected framework of human pedagogic concepts based on a “green” revolution and on a true visualization of humanity's future. What is at the stake here is future of world-citizenship itself.⁸

In order to refocus on our local order of things and problems, we need to identify our immediate priorities and understand perspectives and aspirations of the Arab world's younger generations. These are generations of the future.

⁷ Torres, 2017.

⁸ Cabrera, 2010.

Here, moral values that shape world-citizenship must be in the forefront of our concerns and priorities.

Here, a question of paramount importance poses itself among the foremost among pedagogic and political issues that influence today's Middle East situations – issues that revolve around real human causes that must be discerned and reexamined. These are pedagogic concepts that must be taken into consideration by our educational and intellectual institutions. The same is true of moral education initiatives, and our future role in the transformation needed to achieve desired goals. Hence comes the need to consider effecting a fundamental change in current mindsets of the Arab mind, and to give due importance to structural and functional changes, in an effort to redefine our concepts of the principles of justice, equality, peace, and security, as well as responsible citizenship. Our aim here shall be that of formulating plans for world-citizenship education and developing a futuristic vision of peace.

The onus of promoting international human concepts rests on the shoulder of every human being – concepts that aspire to establish a consciousness of world-citizenship that forges humanity into a single, global crucible on the basis of world-embracing intellectual and political foundations that are essentially humanistic and educative. Here, and more than any time before, we stand in great need to forge a bond between global citizenship and the desired virtue of justice. For the prevalence of justice in all human affairs is an exigency. It is inconceivable that any member of society can enjoy the benefits and bounties of civilization in the absence of justice as a guarantor of human welfare and well-being. However, justice cannot exist in the absence of equality of rights, fairness of dealings, and unbiased government. Justice, above all, is one of the four cardinal virtues that were upheld by ancient philosophers, i.e. prudence, temperance, courage, and justice.⁹

As a virtue, justice can be exercised from a personal viewpoint – in the sense that it motivates spontaneous fair deeds on the part of the individual. The essence of justice in this case is moderation and observance of duties and obligations. The other perspective of exercising justice is from the social point of view. When exercised on in societal terms, justice manifests itself in a mutual respect of individual rights and prerogatives. We should also keep in mind another concept of societal justice: “Human beings should be treated as an end in themselves and not as a means to something else”.

⁹ Wolterstorff, 2010.

The legal perspective of justice, however, is that a “just rule” or “just action” is what presupposes “fairness” and “indiscrimination” when dealing with individuals. In this same legal context, justice assumes several other concepts, the foremost of which is that justice denotes equality. But “equality” in moral terms denotes the ideal principle that considers man as equal to his fellow man in terms of rights and dignity. Such equality assumes two forms under this moral perspective: “civil equality” and “political equality”.

Speaking of “civil equality”, it is the principle that necessitates treating of all individuals equally when they are summoned to perform their duties, and also when they enjoy the rights that are accorded to them by the law. “Political equality”, on the other hand, it is that principle that grants all individuals the right to participate in government, and the right to be appointed to public positions in compliance with the terms specified by the law and without any discrimination. Political equality may be also defined by the principle of nondiscrimination in such considerations as gender, race, class, language, religion, or social origin.

Another category of equality is “human equality”, which is guided by a number of principles, in a sense that every individual enjoys the same right as any other individual for basic freedoms, equal work opportunity, and political participation. Additionally, income and wealth, under the principle of human equality, are shared such that, on the part of any individual, an entitlement commensurate to his/her efforts shall not be opposed to granting other individuals their minimum requirement for a decent living. This latter concept is an entry point to the concept of distributive justice.

The world is governed by two important realities: on one hand, the earth’s resources tapped for our living are limited. On the other hand, demand for these resources is limitless. Consequently, “equity” must regulate the volume of such demand. The term “distributive justice” denotes the role of the state in allotting rights and assigning duties to its individual citizens in a manner commensurate with their respective capacities, and within the sphere of the common good. Under such an allotment system, the “entitlement” accorded to an individual of a given rank should be identical to that of any other person who occupies the same rank. In this sense, it is obvious that “social equity” is synonymous with “legal equity”, since the former regulates relationships of citizens with their state and is concerned with the equitable distribution of commonwealth in society. As such, distributive justice regulates the interrelationship of the “whole” to the “individuals who constitute this whole”. It is an undisputed reality here that “the equitable distribution of

resources” is in itself the core of the problem, since every community consists of a peculiar, layered structure. Another dimension of this problem is the fact that members of any organized political institution do not assume the same rank or level since such ranks and levels are usually assigned in accordance with the prevailing political system. Under democracy, for instance, freedoms accorded to various individuals are such that every citizen of the state receives a portion of benefits that is commensurate with his/her needs and capacities.¹⁰

On the other hand, “distributive justice” is understood to be concerned with four forms or categories of good: economic good (or benefits); equal opportunities for development and growth; political good (such as citizenship); and human dignity. From this perspective, the concept of “distributive justice” should not necessarily refer only to equality in distribution. In the course of analyzing the concept of “distributive justice”, Robert Nozick sees it necessary that no one should regard any individual as a means for others to achieve their goals. This can be achieved through avoiding what may be described as the institution of slavery. Thus Nozick wanted to find legitimate and moral ways to justify the right of ownership and consequently define a clear concept of distributive justice. To achieve this goal, he proposed the “acquisition concept” that explains the way through which an individual may obtain the moral right to acquire a given asset, through mixing his labor with the asset. In his *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, John Locke reaches a similar conclusion when he spoke of the natural state and equality of distributing natural resources.

As to “compensatory justice”, it means the compensating an individual for something, i.e. granting a benefit in lieu of another. The basis of compensation here is equilibrium or egalitarianism. This requires either deducting from the surplus portion or adding to an inadequate portion, in order to achieve the desired equilibrium between the two portions. Compensatory justice is concerned with exchanging of benefits between individuals on the basis of equality, as is the case with all equitable dealings. As such, it regulates interrelationships of individuals as an ideal model of fair play. Thus, compensatory justice regulates processes of exchange such that no one would be disadvantaged by another in the course of any given transaction, and everyone would, instead, receive a return that is commensurate with what he or she rendered to another.

Undoubtedly, the worst form of interpreting or applying compensatory justice is that which allows us to take from someone what would deprive

¹⁰ Hayek, 2012.

him/her of everything, such as life itself. Such a form of justice is referred normally to the civil judicial system that assumes the duty of compensating the wronged one at the expense of the tortfeasor, whether in the case of voluntary dealings of the will and accord of the two parties (such as selling, buying, and borrowing), or, in a criminal context, such as robbery and assault. The concept of compensatory justice includes respect of others and their rights, fulfillment of promises and pledges, and contractual compliance. That is the society that bears the responsibility of compensating individuals for afflictions that they may involuntarily suffer, such as natural disasters.

This juncture takes us to the concept of “social justice”. Social and political developments of modern times, especially those of post-WWII, gave rise to the concept of social justice in an effort to mitigate the impact of crises that resulted from applying principles of absolute economic freedom. The underlying basis of the social justice concept is the promotion and observance of common social welfare. Under this concept, cases of injustice are redressed by taking into consideration the common social good that may result from a given remedial action. Social justice is thus the right to equal opportunity, banning exploitation, compensating commensurate with individual labor, satisfying personal natural and social needs in an equitable manner without prejudice to the rights of others, or of a community’s interests, or of shared values. It is then respect and observance of societal rights and of the public interest or, in other words, respect of socially recognized natural and man-made rights, such as labor statutes, and fair compensation of laborers, provision of services, and social security to which individuals are entitled – all with purpose of safeguarding their rights and interests and achieving their prosperity.¹¹

We might say that the concept of “social justice” performs the role of monitoring both law and individual behavior. Consequently it constitutes a yardstick by which to evaluate the justice of the laws that are currently in force, so that we may retain from them what is socially just. In essence, social justice represents a social sentiment and is the expression of a social contract that embodies a sense of common benefits and public interest, taking into consideration that a relationship may not necessarily exist between the concept of “social justice” and that of “man-made law”.

In order to achieve social balancing and stability, applying the concept of “social justice” requires its exigencies to be met through widening the scope of

¹¹ Brown, 2004.

social security, enacting of labor laws, and reducing the gap that results from granting varying degrees of benefits and freedoms to individuals. It is our view here that the achievement of “social justice” relies, to a great extent, on the mechanisms and potentialities of man-made laws, and on ensuring that social justice is also the corresponding yardstick of equality that has been observed upon enacting such laws. It is for such considerations that the challenge of the relationship of such laws to justice stands out in full force – a matter that merits a detailed discussion as elaborated herein.

In order to understand legal justice, we need first to understand the notion of “justice,” in the legal context, as being the right of individuals to identify and understand the laws and statutes that regulate personal and societal relationships, and to become aware of the fact that all individuals enjoy an equal status vis-à-vis such laws and statutes.

The absence or misalignment of what some ethical philosophers describe as “conscience”, or the tendency to violate ethical rules, is the motive animating the law’s approach to achievement of justice. Yet, and however adept we may be at legislation and however equitably we apply the law, there can be no alternative to each individual’s “conscience” or self-policing and spontaneous adherence to laws. While assuming that law is meticulous in respect of being in harmony with moral duties, we may, however, discover that some legal judgments, if not many, may not necessarily be consonant with the dictates of conscience. The reason here is that the “judge”, or the “law” itself, may not be aware of all the circumstantial evidence that relates to a sentence that has been passed. Even so, neither the judge nor the law can claim the ability to delve into the real intentions or motives that gave rise to the action being considered. The legislative concept of justice depends on how we view the law, from the perspective of its being a system into which all forms of freedoms merge and represents a serious attempt “to implement the concept of justice in a given social milieu”.¹²

Since the prime duty of the state is to protect the basic rights of its citizens through provision of legal justice, it goes without saying that punishment is a tangible tool for achieving such (penal) justice, which takes the shape of redistribution of things – as it is the case with distributive justice. The law can be constantly corrected (i.e. amended) so that it aligns more properly with principles of human justice, albeit within the spheres of our social or moral mindset. Here, and in conjunction with law, human justice assumes the role of

¹² Luhmann and Kastner, 2004.

a concrete conscience or sublime ideal that we permanently endeavor to emulate and adopt as our guiding beacon – yet without being able to be in full conformity thereto, or in perfect grasp thereof.

It might be worthwhile at this point to take into account how man-made law views justice, since the existence of both “justice” and “injustice” depends on the law itself upon the light of such view. In the absence of law, there would be neither justice nor its opposite – i.e. the “injustice” that goes against the law. The upholders of such opinions see law as being independent from justice, and even as its creator. Our notion that a law might be just or unjust does not make sense to them. The proponents of this theory, such as Hobbes, Hegel, Spinoza, and Ayer, went even to the extent of stating that the law is preexistent to justice, both in reality and theory. Therefore it would be meaningless to judge law from perspective of justice since law provides the yardstick by which justice (and injustice) may be measured. If we, figuratively speaking, eliminate all laws, then neither justice nor injustice would assume any presence or meaning.

Nevertheless, a real distinguishing feature between “law” and “justice” remains. Law is basically impartial and dependent on power of enforcement, and, without law, justice would not be achieved. In the absence of penalties, we cannot force people to do what is just. Indeed, without penalties, they cannot be protected from injustices. In contrast, justice is a self-contained virtue – in a sense that it is a value on its own, irrespective of the power and influence that it might be able to exert on individuals.¹³

It becomes evident from the foregoing argument that, in the absence of a detailed critical philosophical analysis, no distinction can be made between the various meanings of justice due to their close interrelationships. When applied within a given community, distributive justice runs into the channel of social justice. Justice might be indeed, in certain cases, commensurate with compensative or remedial justice. Additionally, the judicial definition of justice is sometimes synonymous with one of the concepts of justice, i.e. equality before the law. While we can relate some of the meanings of “justice” to each other, in a manner that a certain meaning may comprise the other, yet there remain certain interpretations of justice that are independent from another without any possibility of interrelationship. When we interpret “justice” as the absolute equality among individuals, for example, this may be a simultaneous inference from the faculty of reason that all human beings enjoy. In such a case, and if we desire to achieve true equality, such a faculty must be availed to every

¹³ Jasso, 1978.

individual. Yet, and in the course of this availing process, it is inevitable for untold differences and inequalities to arise – due to varying personal traits, social opportunities, talents of creativity, innovation and excellence, as well as various degrees of inherent capacities. As an outcome of such differences, other variations come to light with respect to social capacities, and the individual right to distributive justice. While such differences are functional rather than existential, yet they distort our understanding of justice as synonymous to equality. Consequently, such understanding does not admit of any inference thereto.

Therefore, it might be said that there are three principles that guide our concept of justice. These are: mathematical equality, eligibility, and necessity. The first principle is represented by the rule of “one vote for every individual”, using mathematical equality since “one” is matched by “one”. The second principle, eligibility, manifests itself in the case of graduated taxation, where individual financial capacity comes into play, taking into consideration individual financial eligibility and worth. With such varied treatment, differences in financial capacity are taken into consideration when ascertaining individual eligibility. A typical example here is that of remuneration in accordance with prevalent skills and abilities. The third principle, i.e. necessity, which focuses on distributive justice, dictates that allotments must be commensurate to individual needs, rather than being a compensation for accomplished work. It is thus evident that the logical postulates that support the principles of justice are: (1) “Commonwealth”, which adopts the principle of benefit to achieve the highest possible degree of happiness; (2) “Eligibility”, which treats “every individual according to his/her worth, or natural capacity”, in a sense that “everyone shall be dealt with according to his/her ability”; and lastly (3) “Necessity”, which is distribution using the rule that “everyone is treated according to his/her needs” .

It should be noted here that egalitarian principles govern the concept of justice to a great extent. This is quite evident from two perspectives: first, from the perspective that every individual should have a share that is equal to that of any other in respect of basic freedoms, equal employment opportunities, and political participation, in a manner that preserves moral consistency and accords equal self-esteem to the “I” and “s/he”. The second viewpoint is that distribution of both income and wealth should grant every individual a share that is equal to what others enjoy. Thus the difference between “equality” and “justice” is that equality aims at future safeguarding of the fortunes of every individual in a proper equitable manner, while justice looks in the opposite

direction, as it is concerned with elimination of unjust or inequitable situations among individuals.

Eventually, and in a world rife with violent struggles the like of what we are experiencing today in countries of the Arab world and Third World, we reach a conclusion that the panacea of our difficult social and human problems is that of treading the paths of social justice and world-citizenship as intellectual approaches and global human aspirations, under the shadow of which we hope to live together in perfect peace and security.

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