

*Interactive Democracy: The Social Roots of Global Justice*. Gould, Carol C. Cambridge University Press, 2014. ISBN: 1107607418

The terms freedom, democracy, and human rights resonate significantly within contemporary international politics. They are familiar elements of international treaties and global declarations, trumpeted by political leaders and scholars alike as fundamental to peace, progress, and justice. At the same time, these concepts have seemed to many to be mutually antithetical, or at least in conflict. In her book, *Interactive Democracy: The Social Roots of Global Justice*, Carol C. Gould uses her extensive research background and distinguished theoretical work to explain how these cherished values are, in fact, compatible, and to prescribe how international politics might be reshaped to advance the project of justice. Gould, for readers unfamiliar with her work and career, is a Distinguished Professor in Philosophy and Director of the Center for Global Ethics and Politics within the Bunche Institute at CUNY. She has published extensively in moral, social, and political philosophy, and draws heavily on her previous publications in this new book. All this being the case, *Interactive Democracy* is a major entry in the growing field of global justice theory from one of that field's most prominent contributors.

*Interactive Democracy* is at once a theoretical treatise and a call to concrete action. Gould's theoretical project is to articulate her particular ideas of freedom, democracy, and human rights, and to explain how they are at once mutually compatible, mutually constitutive, and meaningfully connected to global politics and human life. Her argument, briefly, is that human beings are fundamentally entitled to their own freedom – elaborated as what she calls “equal positive freedom”. This entitlement implies a variety of culturally specified but globally recognizable human rights, many of which are included in major human rights documents like the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights. In addition, and in light of Gould's social ontology, the entitlement to freedom implies a right to a role in the democratic determination of social governance and collective practice.

Gould's more concrete project, on the other hand, focuses primarily on how global governance and transnational labor structures can be democratized through networking, specifically networking that takes advantage of the possibilities enabled by technology and the Internet. Such democratization, she argues, is of particular importance for improving the lives of women, citizens of the global south, laborers, and other peoples who have been marginalized by global politics and are frequently geographically distant from centers of political power.

The book itself is divided into three parts. Part I, "A Theoretical Framework", presents Gould's fundamental arguments for principles that she later uses to argue for concrete social changes. Essential to her argument is the idea of equal positive freedom. Gould writes,

If each person is equally an agent and if their agency requires access to conditions for it to be effective at all...then it follows from the recognition of their fundamental equality that people should have prima facie equal access to the conditions of their agency. This constitutes the principle of equal positive freedom, which serves as an egalitarian principle of justice (17).

But unlike familiar capabilities and positive rights approaches – like those associated with Sen, Nussbaum, and Hassoun – Gould's framework adopts an anti-individualistic social ontology to make her view more flexible in light of cultural diversity and further

reaching in its political implications (137). Gould argues that, rather than the atomic individuals imagined by liberal theory, agents are “individuals-in-relations” (42) who “remain capable of choosing and changing their relations...but are then formed or constituted by those relations” (43). As individuals-in-relations, the material conditions necessary for our self-transformative freedom, to which we are entitled in the form of human rights, include material goods like food, shelter, democratic management of our relations, and a meaningful role in that management. This point, that a plausible normative conceptualization of human freedom implies a human right not only to democratic government, but also to the democratization of a variety of social institutions including the work place, is both a major focal point of the rest of the book and one of its most significant contributions to contemporary political philosophy.

In Part II, “The Social Roots of Global Justice”, Gould investigates “some of the key social roots of global justice and related norms, and [considers] the social dispositions and transformations their fulfillment requires” (99). She begins from an analysis of historical ideas of solidarity which leads to her view, approximately, that solidarity is the disposition to assist and empathize with normatively acceptable projects of other persons and groups of which one is not a member (110-111). Solidarity can be a disposition of both individual persons and of groups, which suits the social ontology explicated in Part I, and so can and does exist between Facebook friends, professional organizations, and nation-states. Sometimes, she believes, our multiple solidarities overlap with one another, creating solidarity networks. These solidarity networks are essential to her overall view because, “like the related notion of care or concern, [solidarity] provides part of the motivational account that is needed for a full account of

global justice” (126). She argues that such transnational solidarity opens up new possibilities for the protection of marginalized populations and the provision of free speech and expression. While the transnational communication that enables solidarity also enables new forms of violence, she believes that the provision of the kinds of rights and protections implied by equal positive freedom, especially the right to democracy, would mitigate such violence.

Part III, “Interactive Democracy – Transnational, Regional, Global”, brings the elements established in the earlier parts together to argue and speculate about the future of democracy. Gould argues particularly that the advent of the Internet brings with it significant potential for the further democratization of existing government regimes. Specifically, she argues that aside from serving as a forum for deliberation, particularly in ways that include distantly affected agents, the Internet might also democratize policy design through crowdsourcing (238). She recognizes persistent obstacles that limit such governance methods on large scales, but is optimistic that progress could be made (223). Most important here is Gould’s insistence that trans-nationally affected parties, such as foreign nationals affected by another state’s domestic policies, are entitled to a role in the democratic determination of the policies of that government despite not being a citizen. Additionally, Gould argues that such democratization should not be limited to political governance. Instead, the human right to democracy extends to all areas of social life, specifically including the workplace, and she advocates for cooperative labor models as just alternatives to existing capitalist ones (241).

Gould’s *Interactive Democracy* makes a number of valuable contributions for advanced scholars in the field of global justice theory, and deserves their attention and

scrutiny. The two primary contributions, in this reviewer's opinion, are her work on the reconceptualization of democracy in a global and digital context and the inclusion of non-citizens in democratic decision-making. These topics deserve much more attention than they currently receive, and are a significant opportunity for new and creative scholarship in normative philosophy. Additionally, her strong commitment to equality and human rights, carefully balanced by a sort of pluralism grounded in her social ontology, is a model for how a theory can be sensitive to social diversity without accepting the problematic presuppositions of contemporary liberalism in global justice. This book expects readers to have more knowledge of political philosophy than most undergraduates will, so it is most appropriate for experts in the field and for graduate seminars on global justice or democratic theory.

Daniel Pilchman, Chapman University