

Symposium on Thomas Christiano's Views on the Legitimacy of the International Order

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Thomas Christiano, one of the more prominent democratic theorists today (Christiano 1996, 2007), is developing some of the most refined and influential normative views on the legitimacy of global institutions and international law (Christiano 2006, 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2013), with contributions to more specific issues like immigration (Christiano 2008b, 2017) and climate change (Christiano 2015), among others.

Christiano defends a model of fair democratic association of states. While it is true that his is mainly a statist view, it is a very qualified one: he holds that the autonomy of democratic states should be preserved and should remain the basis of, and be the main legitimate actor in, an international multilateral system, with state sovereignty conditional to the fulfillment of certain global, morally mandatory aims. Christiano rejects the more demanding ideal of global democracy. But he does advocate a distinctive, and attractive, ideal of international democracy that presupposes the existence of a cosmopolitan political community and seeks to conciliate and preserve the value of national self-determination and self-government with an egalitarian, institutional framework that promotes peace, human rights, and basic justice worldwide. Christiano's cosmopolitanism is initially modest and limited, but he characterizes it as progressive, that is, its aims and requirements are meant to become more and more demanding as the cosmopolitan community develops.

This symposium has brought together three significant scholars, who, from three different perspectives, discuss Christiano's views on the international order and immigration.

The first commenter is David Álvarez, professor of philosophy at the Universities of Minho (Portugal) and Vigo (Spain). He has written extensively, mostly in Spanish, on global justice, global health, and the global order (for English publications see Álvarez 2012a, 2012b). In his contribution to this symposium, "Democratic Legitimacy, International Institutions, and Cosmopolitan Disaggregation", Álvarez pushes Christiano towards a more radical cosmopolitanism. He argues that

Christiano's idea of global morally mandatory aims imposes stronger objective restrictions on what actions democratic states may carry out internationally, and what they may say in domestic democratic deliberation, and that individual citizens are legitimated to address disaggregated, direct claims to global institutions when their states fail to meet such obligations.

The second commenter is David Lefkowitz, professor of philosophy, politics, economics, and law at the University of Richmond. He has made very significant contributions to several issues regarding authority and the duty to obey the law, criminal law theory, the *ius in bellum*, and others. He has recently written about several areas related to international law and the international system (Lefkowitz 2010, 2011, forthcoming). In his piece in this symposium, "Democracy, Legitimacy, and Governance", Lefkowitz argues that interdependence among citizens of different states is not great enough to generate a claim to legitimate common legal order. Because of this argument, he sides with Christiano in his skepticism of global democracy, but extends this rejection to Christiano's own model of fair democratic association. Lefkowitz concedes that the international system may have some instrumental value, sufficient to grant some degree of legitimacy, but holds that it is disconnected from its democratic or associative character.

The third commenter, Michael Blake, is professor of philosophy, public policy, and governance at the University of Washington and a prominent philosopher of international issues. Blake has significantly contributed to the debate on global justice, defending an institutionalist view that rejects the existence of transnational justice obligations based on the lack of a coercive international institutional system (Blake 2001, 2011, 2013a). He has also contributed significantly to debates on immigration and the brain drain (Blake 2013b, Blake and Brock 2015; see also the symposium on Blake and Brock's book in this volume), the former being the focus of his contribution to this symposium, "Migration, Legitimacy, and International Society". Blake expresses skepticism on two fronts. One target is Christiano's general view that international bodies may have legitimate authority. The other is Christiano's more specific claim, made in one of his more recent works (Christiano 2017), that a multilateralist order like the one he advocates may end up adopting justifiable common principles to govern migration.

Thomas Christiano responds to these three critics in a piece that serves to clarify and illuminate different aspects of his own theory. These concluding pages may be seen as a very useful introduction to his views on the international order.

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