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ABSTRACT

This symposium introduction summarizes the main arguments in Catherine Lu's book, *Justice and Reconciliation in World Politics*.

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Nearly half a century after the United Nations General Assembly declared 'the continuation of colonialism in all its forms and manifestations a crime' (United Nations General Assembly 1970), popular debate persists about the rights and wrongs of colonial rule and its legacies in contemporary politics. Among those who view colonialism as a wrong or set of wrongs, committed by mostly European powers against mainly non-European peoples, many think that colonialism as an injustice effectively ended when colonized peoples gained political independence through recognition of their sovereign statehood in international law and society in the mid-twentieth century. From this perspective, contemporary calls for justice and reconciliation regarding the wrongs and harms of colonialism are primarily about settling outstanding accounts for, or coping with the legacies of, an unjust past. And yet, for some, colonialism is not yet over.

Justice and Reconciliation in World Politics aims to show how different ways of describing, explaining, and evaluating the injustices of colonialism yield different ways of thinking about the responsibilities of contemporary agents – individual, corporate, and collective – to redress or address colonial injustice. Accounting for these responsibilities raises critical but also perplexing questions about justice and reconciliation as moral and political endeavours in world politics. Whose responsibility is it to redress colonial injustices, given the historic legality of colonialism in modern international order? How do contemporary agents incur any responsibility to redress injustices of the distant past? How is redress for colonial injustice related to contemporary global justice? Under what conditions might agents be reconciled to the institutions that enabled or produced colonial injustices, and which still may constitute so many of the options and limits of their lives? What

implications does redressing colonial injustice have for the transformation of world order (Lu 2017, 8)?

Burgeoning literatures in political philosophy on global justice, as well as the interdisciplinary field of transitional justice, have begun to explore how contemporary demands for redress of colonial injustice fit into or challenge existing theoretical frameworks. This book seeks to reorient these and other literatures so that they can better make sense of the normative purposes and goals of such social and political efforts. The book's objective is to improve normative descriptions and diagnoses of colonial injustices, with a view towards devising more normatively plausible and constructive accounts of contemporary responsibilities (8). To achieve this aim, political theorists ought to base normative theories of responsibility for redressing colonialism on empirically accurate or plausible, and not oversimplified or distorted, accounts of colonialism or colonial injustice.

The book engages with a variety of cases from modern international relations to make five interventions in contemporary debates in political theory and international relations about problems of justice and reconciliation in world politics. The first intervention of the book is to clarify what calls for justice and reconciliation are demanding in response to major political and social injustices. Some scholars view justice and reconciliation as conflictual or mutually exclusive moral strivings, while others regard them as complementary or even as indistinguishable goals. There has been little consensus on whether both justice and reconciliation are necessary, how they may be analytically distinct, or how they are related to each other. Instead of privileging or subsuming one or the other concept, the book distinguishes between justice and reconciliation in the following way: whereas justice refers to tasks related to remedying various kinds of injustices, reconciliation responds to various forms of alienation implicated in or produced by injustice or unjust contexts.

The book further distinguishes between interactional and structural accounts of both justice and reconciliation. Interactional justice refers to the settling of accounts between perpetrators and victims of wrongful conduct or unjust interactions (33–4). Individuals may be implicated in interactional wrongs as agents who commit wrongdoing themselves, as members of organized groups or corporate agents, or of joint purposive groups, that commit wrongs. Theoretical and practical treatments of responsibility for redressing major political injustice have conventionally focused on interactional models of individual, corporate, or joint liability for wrongdoing or wrongful interactions. Where there are still individual survivors of colonial wrongdoing, reparation in the forms of official acknowledgement, apology, and financial compensation to individual victims is one important component of interactional justice and reconciliation. The book reveals, however, the limits of conventional interactional frameworks, arguing that the moral legitimacy and sustainability of institutions that aim to deliver the accountability of agents in interactional terms, such as the International Criminal Court, depend on making progress towards redressing structural injustice in world politics (113). Furthermore, in most cases of major political and social injustice, proper redress of victims' injuries and losses must entail going beyond the interactional duty of perpetrators to provide reparations to their victims.

How can such an extension of redress responsibilities beyond direct (individual, joint, or corporate) perpetrators of wrongdoing be justified? The second intervention of

the book is to focus on the concept of structural injustice. Structural injustices shape in morally objectionable ways the social positions, identities, agency, roles, aspirations, and potential and actual achievements of persons and groups. Structural injustices can inform laws, norms, and discourse; shape the design and purposes of institutions and social practices; and produce material effects. They enable, legitimize, normalize, and entrench conditions under which structural and interactional injustice may persist on a regular and predictable basis (35). Structural injustices may produce ‘unintended, generalized, or impersonal harms or wrongs that result from social structural processes in which many may participate’ (118).

Building on the work of the late American political philosopher, Iris Marion Young, the book argues that structural injustices have been a constitutive component in the production of intentional and flagrant colonial and settler colonial injustices. For example, it would be difficult to account for widespread colonial practices of usurping indigenous governance, upsetting economic livelihoods, and destroying cultural and religious orders on the African continent, or the policies of cultural genocide and forcible incorporation of indigenous peoples in North America, without some reference to ‘scientific racism’ and the ideologies of civilization and progress that posited a fundamental incompatibility between indigeneity and modernity. Structural injustices consisting of racialized ideologies of civilization and modernity may motivate or generate intentional interactional and structural wrongs, such as the imposition of colonial rule and the perpetuation of a racially stratified international order, as well as entrench unintentional harms, such as the devaluation and marginalization of indigenous systems of knowledge (100). Thus, as Young noted (2011, 73), most cases of social and political injustice should be analysed at both interactional and structural levels.

By highlighting the importance of structural injustices in enabling interactional forms of injustice, the book highlights a different dimension of agent responsibility, not for interactional wrongdoing, but for contributing to the production or reproduction of structural injustice and alienation. Acknowledging the role of structural injustices identifies other contributory agents in the production of many interactional wrongs and raises the question of the responsibility of those other contributory agents. Taking structural injustices seriously also leads to an acknowledgement that colonialism as a wrong affected larger category of persons than those who could claim to be individual victims of egregious human rights violations. Indeed, seeing colonialism as structural injustice illuminates objectionable social structures – often based on race, class, and gender categories that transcend nationalist and statist divides – that exposed large categories of persons or peoples to social positions of inferiority or structural indignity that heightened their vulnerability to various forms of victimization (Lu 2017, 257).

The third intervention of the book is to address the common tendency to view colonialism as a historic injustice between nations. The book shows how a structural approach helps to make sense of the claim that colonialism is not over for all. The interactional approach tends to depict colonialism in a historic injustice framework, but then needs some way to connect past agents with present agents and to connect past wrongs with present wrongs (147). Instead of viewing colonial injustices as historical episodes or events or acts that contemporary agents inherit responsibilities for redressing, through notions of accumulated moral debt, the book develops an account of the continuity of unjust social structures that may have been introduced or entrenched in the colonial past, but which are being reproduced in modified

forms of contemporary structural injustices. Contemporary agents are not responsible for the wrongdoing of past agents, but they are responsible for reproducing structural injustices of the social and political orders that mediate their identities, agency, social positions, conditions, and outcomes of interaction. The book's focus on the structural continuities between contexts of colonial injustice and contemporary social structures at domestic, international, and transnational levels reveals that debates about justice and reconciliation in response to colonial injustice need to move beyond a historic injustice framework. Redressing contemporary structural injustice is not less morally demanding than a theory of redress for historic injustice, but a structural approach provides a more empirically and normatively plausible account of the moral significance of historic injustice on contemporary agents and structures (178). In addition, understanding colonialism as structural injustice generates a contemporary moral and political responsibility to transform persistent structural injustices of international and transnational order.

The fourth intervention of the book is to criticize contemporary practices of reconciliation that focus on depoliticized forms of individual healing, rely on a conflict-denying ideal of social unity, or forestall continued struggle for progressive social and political change (188). The book reconstructs the concept of reconciliation as a response to alienation in interactional, structural, and existential forms. Reconciliation is defined not only by the moral quality of agents' interactional relations but also by agents' mutual affirmation of the social/political structures at domestic and international levels that organize and mediate their activities and relations. Such a political ideal involves resolving problems of existential alienation produced by colonial injustices that disrupted agents' moral and subjective freedom. Focusing on indigenous peoples in settler colonial contexts such as Canada, the book reconstructs reconciliation as a regulative ideal that aims not only to reconcile parties in relational terms, but more fundamentally to create a mutually affirmable and affirmed social/political order that can support the flourishing of non-alienated agents. The criteria of structural dignity and non-alienated flourishing challenge many postcolonial and settler colonial states' policies of assimilation, integration, state- and nation-building, as well as the constitutional architecture of the contemporary sovereign states system (184).

The fifth intervention of the book is to correct statist biases in various literatures in international relations, political theory, and transitional justice. In particular, in normative political theory and the global justice literature, those working on justice beyond borders have tended to take the modern state and states system as givens in the international context when developing their theories. The statist interactional framework common in international political and legal efforts to redress colonialism, however, distorts the historical record of how colonialism as an international practice was produced and how it operated, as well as the differential patterns of victimization that it generated (130). A statist bias obscures, for example, the colonial nature of the decolonization process of the mid-twentieth century, especially as it entrenched the inferior status of indigenous peoples vis-à-vis the settler colonial states into which they were forcibly incorporated (158). In developing an account of colonialism as structural injustice, the book highlights the centrality of indigenous struggles for justice and reconciliation to understanding the depth of structural injustice represented by our contemporary statist international order.

A normative focus on the social stratifications of contemporary international order that reproduce structural injustice generates new ways to think about and engage in transformative politics of redress (253). The book argues that redressing colonial structural injustices that

have persisted, even in different policies or practices, requires developing strategies of decolonization, decentring, and disalienation. The purpose of decolonizing our images of ourselves, others, and the world is to help develop a clearer view of contemporary political realities, not only informed by historic injustice, but also infused by unsurpassed contemporary structural injustices. In conjunction with this diagnostic task, decentring can be understood as the intellectual and political movement of reorienting historical, social, and political narratives of human agency and responsibility away from dominant frames to make visible, intelligible, and consequent the contributions of marginalized and oppressed perspectives. Disalienation is a political strategy for the oppressed and marginalized to build up capacities of non-alienated agency, a necessary condition for their participation in genuine communications about reconciliation with the terms of international and transnational order. The overall aim of all these strategies is to change the orientations of variously situated agents in contexts of structural injustice and to motivate the transformation of political conditions in ways that support constructive, collective political efforts to create mutually affirmable and affirmed social/political orders for the flourishing of non-alienated agents (281).

Justice and Reconciliation in World Politics is a book that focuses attention on the complexity of normative, political, and institutional challenges raised by contemporary structural injustice and alienation in world politics. Scholars and all those engaged in moral/political projects of justice and reconciliation need to think beyond practices of accountability and reparations, beyond frameworks of history and healing for individual victims, and beyond statist domestic and international orders, when clarifying, formulating, and assessing contemporary agents' struggles to redress and address colonial injustice in world politics.

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