

AMARTYA SEN'S *THE IDEA OF JUSTICE*/ "AMARTYA SEN ET *THE IDEA OF JUSTICE*

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Titles of papers

David Crocker, "Sen Ideas of Justice and Democracy"
Jay Drydyk, "Acting Justly"
Pablo Gilabert, "Comparative Justice Assessments"
Dominique Leydet, "Délibération et participation"

Outline of the topic of the symposium and of each participant's contribution

Amartya Sen is one of the most influential contemporary political philosophers. In his last book, *The Idea of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), Sen presents for the first time a comprehensive articulation of his thought about several issues. These include, for example, (a) his account of "capabilities" as the appropriate metric of distributive justice, both regarding equality and absolute poverty reduction; (b) his construal of the role of "democratic participation" and "public reasoning" as crucial features of a just society; and (c) his proposal for a "comparative" rather than a "transcendental" approach to the design of conceptions of justice. Sen's earlier presentation of his views regarding these three points constituted decisive contributions that decisively altered the shape of central debates in political philosophy. In his new book, Sen introduces a further development of each of these (and other) aspects of his thought, and attempts to show how they interact in an overall account of justice. This bilingual symposium proposes a detailed assessment of this major book.

"Amartya Sen est l'un des philosophes politiques les plus importants du monde actuel. Dans son dernier livre, *The Idea of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), Sen présente pour la première fois un exposé complet de sa pensée sur plusieurs questions, notamment : a) sa conception des "capabilités" comme métrique appropriée pour la justice distributive, tant en ce qui concerne l'égalité que la réduction de la pauvreté absolue; b) sa conception du rôle de la "participation démocratique" et du "raisonnement public" comme caractéristiques essentielles d'une société juste; enfin c) sa proposition d'une approche "comparative" plutôt que "transcendante" de la conception des théories de la justice. Les contributions précédentes de Sen sur ces trois questions ont été décisives et ont eu un impact significatif sur les principaux débats en philosophie politique. Dans ce dernier ouvrage, Sen nous livre de nouveaux développements sur chacun de ces trois aspects de sa pensée, et tente de montrer comment ceux-ci forment ensemble une conception générale de la justice. Le symposium propose une évaluation détaillée de ce livre important."

David Crocker and Dominique Leydet focus on Sen's discussion on democracy and public reasoning. David Crocker probes the extent to which Sen's account of democracy and public reasoning succeeds at helping us to frame a robust comparative assessment of the justice of social arrangements in the face of deep cultural diversity, and argues that to do this, we need a further development of the idea of agency and its role in political processes. Dominique Leydet s'intéresse à la tension souvent présente dans le débat contemporain entre les implications d'une participation démocratique accrue et l'exigence délibérative et discute de la façon dont ces deux exigences sont pensées et articulées dans la pensée de Sen.

Jay Drydyk and Pablo Gilabert focus on the relation between ideal and nonideal theory, and on the extent to which Sen's approach to justice helps to articulate the duties of individuals and groups in nonideal contexts. Jay Drydyk argues that Sen's position in *The Idea of Justice* deviates considerably from the expectation that a theory of justice should lay down necessary and sufficient conditions for judging that a society (real or ideal) is just, and that as a result his position is more plausibly seen as an account of acting justly --i.e., as construing justice primarily as a virtue of collective or individual agents. Pablo

Gilbert challenges Sen's claim that we should substitute comparative assessment of currently feasible social schemes or paths of social action for the development of a more ideal (Sen calls it "transcendental") theory of justice ranging over larger sets of imaginable social institutions and forms of social action, and argues that we cannot do the former sufficiently well without engaging in the latter.

Information about participants

David A. Crocker is a senior research scholar at the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy and the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland. He directs the School's International Development Specialization and an undergraduate living-learning program called Public Leadership. His most recent book is *Ethics of Global Development: Agency, Capability, and Deliberative Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Jay Drydyk is Professor and Chair of the Philosophy Department at Carleton University, where he is also Acting Director of the Centre on Values and Ethics. Since 2004 he has written on implications of the capability approach for democracy, justice, agency, empowerment, and human rights. In view of this work he was appointed in 2006 as a Fellow of the Human Development and Capability Association.

Pablo Gilbert is an Associate Professor of Philosophy at Concordia University. His current research focuses on human rights and global justice. His research has been supported by grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Fonds Québécois de la Recherche sur la Société et la Culture. He has been an HLA Hart Visiting Fellow at the University of Oxford, a DAAD Fellow at the University of Frankfurt, and a Visiting Fellow at the Australian National University. His papers appeared in journals such as *The Philosophical Quarterly*, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *Philosophical Studies*, *Kant-Studien*, *Social Theory and Practice*, and *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, among others.

Dominique Leydet est professeure et directrice du département de philosophie de l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Ses travaux portent principalement sur la théorie de la démocratie. Elle a publié des articles dans les revues *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, *Archives de philosophie du droit*, *Négociations*, *Social Science Information* ainsi que dans la *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Elle prépare actuellement une monographie (avec Hervé Pourtois) sur la démocratie délibérative.