

Yves Menanga Kizito

Dignity and Empowerment

Humanitarian Theory and Practice
in the Light of Cosmopolitan Justice



ACADEMIA

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Foreword

This book intends to provide philosophical foundations for one the most crucial global practice, namely humanitarian action, in view of current developments in international ethics. Indeed, in a globalized world, the suffering of many people has become more tangible and therefore also a philosophical and global political puzzle. Since the first phases of the globalization, in which the founding of the Red Cross falls, humanitarian action in form of various assistance and support services, emerged as a cross-border concern. After the Second World War, humanitarian actors have significantly expanded their activities and also increased their size. Simultaneously to the emergence of humanitarian practice, a differentiated humanitarian theory has emerged which intended to provide foundations for this commitment and determine its principles.

From a philosophical point of view, it is crucial to investigate which forms of ethical foundations and normative goals underlye this development and how, in view of various philosophical traditions, these developments are to be interpreted. This book argues that the philosophical theories of cosmopolitanism, understood as theory of global justice, provide an interpretation framework that allows to critically apprehend the normative implications of humanitarian practice and its political consequences. The work is thus not only politically, but also in the context of the current intensive debate on cosmopolitan justice highly relevant and offers an important contribution to the attempt to philosophically unveil the normative and philosophical-political implications of a central global practice.

While the current revival of cosmopolitanism, as a theory of global justice, emphasizes solely the objective aspects of cosmopolitanism, namely institutions, traditions, common political commitments and legal procedures, the subjectivity of the victims is hardly brought forward in the forefront of debates. To fill this gap is the aim of this book, which claims that condition for a fundamental humanitarian theory and practice requires that victims be treated as fully moral and political subjects, rather than passive recipients. Thus the book adopts the perspective of the victims by highlighting a twofold subjectivity of the victims, namely the moral and political subjectivity.

The moral subjectivity of the victims is articulated, using Martha Nussbaum's capability approach, which brings out the dignity of victims, while Rainer Forst's theory of justification, which sees the question of power as

Forword

the first question of justice, is used to ground the political subjectivity of the victims. Dignity and justifiability, which I propose to understand as empowerment, are therefore highlighted as inherent components of justice when it comes to articulate humanitarian practices and theories. In relation with justice, the two principles are termed *dignifying and justifying (or empowering) justice*.

The implications of both theories for a thicker humanitarian theory and practice are drawn in a dialectical movement. In the deconstructive phase, the dignifying and empowering justice allows to criticise humanitarian practices, language and power relations, which are based on the politics of pity without seeing those affected as active actors. In the constructive phase, the dignifying and empowering justice allows to extend to the traditional principles of humanitarian action the philosophically based principles of dignity and empowerment that present victims as fully moral and political subjects.

*Prof. Dr. Michael Reder
and Y. Menanga Kizito*

Acknowledgement

This book was initially a doctoral dissertation that I submitted to the Munich School of Philosophy in 2016. It was admitted and received by the Faculty of Philosophy. The dissertation and the oral examination were passed, *summa cum laude*, by the doctoral committee. The research therein is an attempt to bridge humanitarian theories and practices with philosophy and put them into dialogue, an approach which is not usual in philosophy. I decided to adopt such a bridging approach between theory and practice to utilise my own experience in the humanitarian field. After my early studies in philosophy and theology, I became involved in humanitarian work in many African countries. I then returned to university studies at the Munich School of Philosophy for a doctorate in philosophy. Due to my humanitarian work experience, I did not want to undertake a purely classical philosophical investigation, based on studying and criticising a classical philosopher. Instead, I wanted to apply philosophy, with its critical thinking skills for clarifying problems, issues and concepts, to what I had experienced in refugee camps and within humanitarian organisations. On searching for the right philosophical chair to submit my proposal, I realised that such a project would not be suitable for a standard philosophy chair. However, I was fortunate to come across the Chair of Practical Philosophy [Lehrstuhl für praktische Philosophie mit dem Schwerpunkt Völkerverständigung], chaired by professor Michael Reder, who agreed to accompany my doctoral project from its inception to its fulfilment.

Although mine, this work could not have been achieved without the collaboration and support of many great people who aided me in different ways. Without their academic, financial, moral and emotional support, this work could not have been completed. I am grateful to them all.

Professor Michael Reder deserves my deepest gratitude. It was an extremely beneficial decision to journey under the guidance of this eminent Professor throughout the entire process of the doctorate. Soon after my first contacts with his philosophical work at the Munich School of Philosophy (Hochschule für Philosophie), I was impressed by his manner of conducting philosophical investigations and applying this to current social issues of our time, thereby bridging philosophy with other disciplines of knowledge. He patiently guided me with methodological rigour and understanding. We met regularly and his pertinent questions, criticisms and suggestions helped me deepen and expand my research. Professor

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As well as these extraordinary people who accompanied me academically, I enjoyed the support of different people and organisations during the quite uncertain period of my doctoral studies. The Mission Prokur in Nuremberg granted me the basic financial support to enable the completion of my studies. I am very grateful to this organisation. Prof. Norbert Brieskorn provided me with his guidance in various issues. The sisters, Renate, Marile and Martha Schuster were very welcoming to me. They were open and friendly, making me feel at home in their homes. Ursula Ammel was also always there, helping me solve other concerns. I owe them all my deepest appreciation.

During the first two years of my studies in Munich, I stayed in St. Korbinian, where I was comfortable and at home. I was especially well looked after by the “Gospelchor” (gospel choir) members, whose director, Beate Murner, insured my full integration into the group. At that time the Sehmer family, Therese and the Norbert Sehmer, always had the door of their home open to me, and I often enjoyed their Bavarian cuisine. Ruth Söllner always had an attentive hear as well, and was always ready to help. I am also deeply grateful to Eva Lemberger for her friendship.

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During my studies in Munich, the town of Burghausen became my second home and my favourite small German town. I am grateful to Sister

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Hamburg, Germany

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