

**Review of Olúfẹ́mi O Táíwò's *Reconsidering Reparations*.
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The arc of the moral universe bends towards justice, but there are certain situations where it seems more urgent to bend it. One of them is when someone has been wronged and a reparation is needed. Another one is when a disaster occurs. In *Reconsidering Reparations* (2022), Olufẹ́mi O. Táíwò tries to establish the moral link between the past wrongs of colonialism and the already present disasters of climate change.

The main thesis of the book suggests that reparations for colonialism must be able to assure everybody's capabilities to have relationships of equality with others. Táíwò names this project the 'constructivist' view of reparations. Since climate change is distributing advantages or disadvantages in an unfair way, the constructivist project requires that climate justice be successful. The book has 6 chapters. Chapter 1 is an introduction. Chapter 2 explains how the current world system is a direct consequence of colonialism. Chapter 3 presents Táíwò's constructivist view, and Chapter 4 confronts it with two alternative reparations approaches. Chapter 5 shows the connection between reparations and climate justice. Finally, in Chapter 6, there is a reflection on the responsibility of inter-generational justice.

The book is divided into two parts upon which this review will briefly comment: reparations for colonialism and climate justice. The first part begins with the exposition of the historical situation in Chapter 2: the current distribution of advantages and disadvantages within the present-day global economic and political framework (the Global Racial Empire). This can be directly traced back to the historical injustices stemming from the Atlantic colonialism that emerged following 1492 (24). The differences between countries' advantages and disadvantages have this historical origin, but continue to determine them because advantages are cumulative (25).

The existence of historical injustice seems to imply that this wrongdoing needs to be corrected by the wrongdoer; that is, corrective justice is required. Previous reparations accounts such as the "harm approach"

(124) or the “relationship repair view” (133) assume this perspective. However, Táíwò argues that these backward-looking accounts suffer from different versions of the non-identity problem (127): the people that caused the injustice are dead and no living people can be held accountable for those acts. Furthermore, corrective justice can be applied and still leave an unfair distribution of advantages.

The problems of corrective justice allow Táíwò to present his ‘constructivist view’ of reparations as a distributive justice approach. According to this account, what is unjust is the unfair distribution of advantages and disadvantages that started with colonialism and continues in present structures (75). Therefore, what needs to be done is to modify these structures by “remaking the world” (72). This view is defined by forward-looking targets (it resembles Young 2006). It does not seek to punish wrongdoers but intends to correct the unequal distribution. However, it is historically informed when assigning the costs of this project (73).

More specifically, the *distribuenda* of this approach are the capabilities needed to function as an equal and free individual (inspired by Nussbaum 2011). Táíwò considers advantages or disadvantages as the elements that expand or shrink someone’s capabilities (88). This not only includes material resources, but also social norms such as racism.

This historical fact has a crucial importance for the debates about the limitations of Global Justice. The first refers to the duties of distributive justice the citizens of one state have to their fellow citizens, and the question about whether they are different to the ones they have towards non-members. Some argue that when two countries have different wealth levels, if the richest state has no interaction with or responsibility for the other state’s situation, the duties of justice to members or non-members of their state are not the same (see Miller 1995). The second debate includes the problem of brute-option luck (Dworkin 2002). If two states begin with the same amount of money but one gets rich by investing it in technology and the other poor because it wastes it, does the rich country have duties of distributive justice towards the poor one?

By situating his reparations approach in this historical context Táíwò avoids both limitations to his project of Global Justice. The constructivist view must be Global because the whole world is shaped by the reality of colonialism. Nonetheless, he only focusses on Atlantic history (84) and leaves open the issue about the geographical limitations of this approach. Also, the cumulative aspect of advantages makes especially poor states not responsible for their situations (86).

Let us comment on the second aspect. Táíwò argues that the relation between colonialism and climate change is “contingent” (158). The explanation of this idea is useful to understand the role climate justice has in the constructivist view. It is true that the countries that will suffer the greater effects of climate change tend to be the ones that were colonized. This is, in part, an unfortunate coincidence due to natural processes. However, the impact caused by climate change also depends on the level of adaptation, which is higher when there are material and intellectual resources to prepare for natural disasters (as seen in the example of Hurricane Katrina’s effects in New Orleans (153)). Once we understand that reparations must deal with the distribution of advantages and disadvantages, it is easy to comprehend that climate change adds new advantages and disadvantages (“environmental risks and vulnerability” (167)) that were not foreseen during the history of colonialism. Therefore, since the inherited structures of colonialism are the ones that distribute the levels of prevention throughout the world, it is necessary to include climate justice in the constructivist view.

This book tackled two main difficult tasks. The first one was to define a project of reparations for colonialism that was sound and philosophically coherent. This is well accomplished because it embraces a forward-looking rather than a corrective approach. However, there are two issues that have not been addressed in the book that would clarify the author’s position. The first one is the importance of colonialism for the justification of a distributive justice project that wants to distribute capabilities equally. Is there a duty of justice to do that even if inequality was not caused by colonialism? Second, when Táíwò says that the constructivist view can be compatible with other corrective justice approaches (124), he does not explain in which ways. This absence makes it difficult to understand the real connection between Táíwò’s account and the correction of the wrongdoings of colonialism. Can corrective and distributive accounts of reparations really be compatible (see Blomfield 2021)? Should the advocates of reparations embrace both accounts if they are compatible? Would this increase the specific demands when both kinds of justice apply?

The second task was to convincingly link the reparations for colonialism to the climate justice project. This is the most original part since nobody had argued for this connection. However, the book does not fully capture the relationship between climate change and colonialism. One of the main omissions is the explanation of the economic processes required

to increase capital accumulation and the environmental damage they cause. Pollution is not merely a side effect of colonialism, but a necessary element to maintain the inherited structures of advantages and disadvantages, as Malm (2016) shows.

In conclusion, *Reconsidering Reparations* introduces new intuitions to the usually philosophically stagnant debates of reparations and climate justice. This book will be of interest to scholars and general readers interested in the philosophical justification of progressive politics. Specifically, it can be of great help for those who know that we need to consider the injustices of the past to build a just and livable future.

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