Trade Justice, James Christensen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 200 pp., $70 cloth, $69.99 eBook.

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Despite its short length, James Christensen's *Trade Justice* probes a wide array of issues related to international trade, many of which have been overlooked by political theorists. Among these issues are the sale of hazardous waste, weapons transfers, trade in animals (and animal-impacting goods), and the labor- and culture-based grounds for restricting market liberalization, to name just a few. Breaking with the broadly moralizing tenor of recent work on the normative limitations of markets, Christensen's text is refreshingly pragmatic. It takes the world as it is and asks where justice and injustice lie in this nonideal landscape. For a work in political philosophy, it is admirably conversant with the relevant economics and social science research. Future normative inquiry into international trade would do well to begin here.

There are a few issues, however, and in this brief review I will discuss two. The first concerns the inherent compromise of nonideal theory. By assuming, as Christensen does, that a certain (perhaps significant) amount of systemic injustice is ineliminable (at least for now), one is bound to reach conclusions that will seem morally uninspired or even dismal. To his credit, Christensen acknowledges early on that some readers will find his defense of "the international arms trade, the sale of drugs for use in the administration of the death penalty . . . , and the toleration of sweatshop labor" to be "disappointingly conservative" (p. 5). Yet, he maintains that, like John Rawls did before him, the principles and policies he endorses should only be regarded as "temporary, transitional measures to be tolerated only until civilization arrives" (p. 6).

This way of framing the business of nonideal theory is worth interrogating. For one, we might ask what the imputed absence of "civilization" signifies. Likely, it is meant to indicate a lack of high per-capita incomes and correspondingly poor performance on key human-development indicators (such as infant mortality rates, life expectancy, and literacy rates); this much is implied by the language of "developed" and "developing" countries used throughout the text. While it is hardly controversial to believe that virtually every government seeks to promote the prosperity of (at least some of) its citizens, we might worry that the uncritical identification of civilization with a Western model of economic success can itself conceal injustices and neoimperial power imbalances. Furthermore, assuming that a sufficient amount of wealth will ultimately deliver poorer states from the need for nonideal compromise may cause us to discount other potentially less "productive," but also less degrading and environmentally taxing, ways of organizing economies. This may be a significant error, particularly when we consider the relationship between economic development and climate change.

But suppose, like Christensen, we employ the standard terms without worrying too much, and accept the premise that accumulating wealth is the best path to civilization, in some broadly desirable sense of the word. We might then ask: Are the principles that Christensen endorses truly transitional, in the sense of being capable of guiding transformation, or are they instead mere

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palliatives, meant only to alleviate some of the unjust sting from international trade? In other words, does Christensen's nonideal approach provide actionable guidance for how we might, over the *longue durée*, achieve full justice, or are the principles and policies he calls for just ways of rendering the status quo more tolerable? The book seems to vacillate here. In chapter 6, for instance, Christensen argues against statism in favor of a globally egalitarian distribution of the gains from trade. This seems like a concrete step in the right direction. In other places, however, his account appears more like a justification of existing (unjust) practices, with little vision for how to move forward. For example, in his discussion of sweatshop labor in chapter 5, Christensen compellingly argues that allowing sweatshops to continue for now may be the least unjust option, but readers might wonder how the global trade system could be reconfigured over time to eliminate such a regrettable necessity from the arc of economic development.

A similar dynamic arises during his discussion of animals. Christensen argues that the EU's restriction of the once-widespread trade in seal, cat, and dog products is justified on the grounds that "the costs imposed" by such restrictions on consumers are "massively outweighed by the value" such protections "afford the animals" (p. 57). Yet, while similar barbarities are daily enacted against factory-farmed animals across the world, Christensen refrains from any attempt to extend similar protections to them, conceding that "the law," along with majority public opinion, "tends to assume that the slaughter of an animal for food is a morally acceptable end" (pp. 47–8 n.14). What is needed here, and in the case above, is some notion of how we might transition from this nonideal state to a world in which such injustice is no longer tolerated.

The second issue is that Christensen tends to slip between a deontological language of rights and duties and a more consequentialist vision of what may be permitted or necessary in particular circumstances. Notably, he does caution that "[if] we were to conceive of rights as unbending rules" then their appeal "would surely vanish" (p. 111). Perhaps this is true, although his stronger claim that "no one thinks that rights are absolute" is surely wrong (p. 111): for better or worse, the tension between deontology and consequentialism remains one of the primary battlefields of contemporary ethics.

The fuzziness of Christensen's position means that he sometimes commits himself to strong claims that cannot be explained away as mere upshots of adhering to a particular ethical framework. Consider, for instance, his argument that "developed" states cannot use "the preservation of cultural distinctiveness" or "the protection of domestic labor" to justify restricting trade if doing so diminishes the "development prospects of poor countries" (pp. 83–86). Put another way, his view is that we may justifiably impose burdens on the working classes in wealthier countries (by pursuing market liberalization) if doing so is necessary to realize developmental gains for those in relatively poor countries: "Even if compensation [for displaced workers] is not forthcoming . . . , free trade must still be favored, despite the fact that it will inflict uncompensated harms on the working class." The reasoning here is that development through free trade is the lesser of two evils: "A peasant farmer's interest in subsistence is more important than the interest of an unskilled domestic worker in maintaining her current job" (p. 84).

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To my mind, this view reflects a regrettable naïveté about the plight of unemployed or precariously employed workers in many developed countries. For these people, losing a job can mean losing access to healthcare, their homes, and the basic ability to feed themselves and their families. As markets have increasingly opened up in the United States, poverty, hunger, and homelessness have grown in tandem. (The same holds true in many developing countries, such as Chile.) Of course, Christensen is clear that the wealthy *should* shoulder the burdens of market liberalization, and that their failure to do so constitutes an injustice. Yet this injustice is not, in his view, grave enough to justify restricting trade, assuming that trade is necessary to improve the situation of the globally least well off.

We might wonder, however, how much any group or individual can be expected to sacrifice for the sake of justice. Rawls, for one, believes there are strict limits to what justice can require. He captures this idea with his "strains of commitment" argument in *A Theory of Justice*, which stipulates that individuals occupying a suitably impartial perspective (the "original position") should reject any agreement or principle that they could "adhere to only with great difficulty" or that "may have consequences they cannot accept." In other words, if international free trade creates serious, uncompensated harms for some members of a given society, they could rightly reject it, regardless of whether those harms were necessary for alleviating greater harms experienced by others.

Consequentialists will surely have a response to this, and perhaps a compelling one, but my sense is that Christensen wishes to avoid embracing a paradigm that would deny a robust notion of rights. If this is correct, however, it would be helpful for him to devote more attention to the points of his argument where a strong (if not absolute) notion of rights comes into conflict with a more consequentialist ethical calculus.

The points I have raised here should not be regarded as examples of a general failure, but as exceptions to an otherwise well-argued and largely persuasive book. Christensen deserves praise for his attentiveness to often-neglected problems as well as for his generally innovative approach. (To take one example, while many scholars regard climate ethics as a purely applied domain—where externally derived ethical theories come to bear—Christensen *starts* with that literature, recruiting useful insights for analyzing trade.) His tendency to refrain from endorsing one ethical doctrine above another—in chapter 4, for instance, he considers Rawlsian, luck egalitarian, libertarian, and sufficientarian conceptions of justice—means that his book offers a valuable starting point for future work on global trade. In my view, it is this potential to start conversations among a diverse range of scholars that makes *Trade Justice* a real contribution to the field.

—Ross Mittiga

Ross Mittiga is assistant professor at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, and co-chair of the American Political Science Association's Environmental Politics and Theory Related Group.

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