

Preface

THIS BOOK IS ABOUT HUMAN BEINGS and their just coexistence in a global society—and it is about corporations. We cannot discuss global justice without taking these powerful institutions into account. The practical realization of global justice will be virtually impossible without paying adequate attention to the role of large corporations. Thus the perspective on multinational corporations in this book is derived from the primary emphasis on global justice. The connection also holds the other way around; if we are to truly understand the role and responsibility of multinational corporations in the global political economy, we cannot discuss them without paying adequate attention to the concept of global justice. Corporations are built by and for human beings, and they have been built with a purpose—a public purpose. It is important to remind ourselves of this purpose behind economic ideas today. More than ever, during the last three decades we have disconnected the concept of the corporation from its humanistic foundations and studied it in a social vacuum. We tend to discuss the theories of modern corporations and the conclusions we draw from them without ever taking a closer look at the normative assumptions on which they inevitably are built.

Any book about corporations is at the same time a book about human beings and society; however, we have come to forget that the corporation is designed to serve the people, rather than the other way around. This in itself speaks volumes about how we see and interpret the world today. There are no books that do not contain and promote specific worldviews. We cannot escape the normativity of our own being and writing, no matter how hard we try. We can either state those worldviews explicitly and make them the subject of the book itself, or we can try to obscure them behind the veil of theory and

sell them as quasi-objective truths. The former is the more honest approach; the latter, however, is the more common one.

Developing a picture of the corporation that is not disconnected from but is based on and embedded in a holistic conception of just human coexistence takes time. It takes time not only for the writer but also for the reader to work through the moral and political-philosophical foundations on which a normative account of corporate responsibility can and must be built. The structure of this book is a reflection of these insights. Rather than forcing the perspective on the corporation onto a conception of global justice, I will let it emerge from and through it. The result will be a better and more integrated understanding of the corporation's role and place within society—an understanding of the corporation as an instrument for human beings rather than as an end in itself. The place of the corporation in society conditions the place of the corporation in the structure of this book; it does not come first but derives naturally from the vision of justice in 21st-century global society.

An analysis located at the intersection of economy, society, and politics is naturally multiperspectival. If it also has an explicitly normative focus, it is likely to be controversial. Thus not everyone will agree with the suggestions and conclusions put forth in this work. However, initial disagreement sparks debate and discussion and therefore builds the breeding ground for inclusive and holistic solutions to complex problems. I hope that the readers of this book will be as diverse and different in their perspectives and opinions as society can be. Its interdisciplinary approach should provide entry points for various fields to take part in the discussion. However, for truly fruitful solutions to emerge, I hope that any disagreement sparked by the theses put forth in this book is motivated by one shared goal, the sincere practical concern for achieving justice and humanity in the global era.

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