

Trading on Shifting Grounds:

Risse and Wollner's *On Trade Justice*

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Abstract: Though Mathias Risse and Gabriel Wollner's *On Trade Justice* admirably incorporates the history of European philosophy and U.S. government, their otherwise reasonable proposals rest on dubious grounds. The book derives both much of its appeal, and its primary vulnerability, from a cluster of central terms that are situated precariously at the intersection of metaphors and concepts, or what Lakoff and Johnson call "metaphorical concepts." In this article, I explore the three most important such terms, as featured in the following paraphrase of theirs: "*Trade* is an *embedded ground* of justice." For each italicized term, I conclude, Risse and Wollner vacillate between its most conceptual and metaphorical meanings, thereby attempting to (a) stretch "trade" to identify prehistoric exchange with global capitalism, so as to (b) rebrand the contextual "ground" of this universal activity as a foundation, even though (c) foundations "embedded" in other foundations simply reduce to their lowest common denominator. The latter, in this case, is global capitalism, the most immoral practices of which they are thereby pressured to defend, including temporary forms of the very exploitation that they so persuasively reconceive and otherwise condemn.

Keywords: global justice; trade; Mathias Risse; Gabriel Wollner; metaphor; Lakoff and Johnson

There is much to admire in *On Trade Justice*, including its valorization of pluralism, its situatedness in both the history of philosophy and contemporary politics, and its nuanced notion

of exploitation. Unfortunately, and in a way that recalls many great German predecessors, Risse and Wollner's philosophy rests on small cluster of terms that are situated precariously in a zone of indeterminacy between metaphors and concepts. Or, in the terms of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's classic study, *On Metaphor*, they are "metaphorical concepts."ⁱ Before turning directly to *On Trade Justice*, I will briefly summarize Lakoff and Johnson's view.

To clarify their theory, it is helpful to contrast it with the standard view of metaphor, which they call the "objectivist" account. According to objectivism, metaphors unfold as follows: two things share objective similarities, which inspire a creative metaphorical identification, which identification eventually becomes so common that people do not recognize the metaphor, resulting in the word having two meanings (the original literal meaning and the new metaphorical meaning) (211). For example, (a) both life and journeys have beginnings, endings, and (often) surprising twists in the middle; (b) someone recognizes this and writes that "life is a journey"; and now (c) the word "journey" has both a literal meaning (geographical relocation) and a metaphorical one (lifespan development). This standard, objectivist account, according to Lakoff and Johnson, is "based on erroneous assumptions," namely that the two things linked by metaphor have (a) "preexisting similarities" which are (b) "based on inherent properties" (213).

In Lakoff and Johnson's competing view, our "ordinary conceptual system" is "fundamentally metaphoric in nature" (3). They abbreviate this idea with the abovementioned phrase, "metaphorical concept," their first example of which is "ARGUMENT IS WAR" (20). That is, to engage in philosophical argument is (in most cases, one hopes) not to physically battle for geographical territory or monetary wealth. Yet there are structural parallels, such as the fact that some do engage in argument for the "thrill of victory," and can earn reputations (or, rarely,

wealth) for repeatedly defeating their opponents. Finally, ARGUMENT IS WAR is what Lakoff and Johnson call a “structural metaphor,” which structures one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain. Relating this back to Risse and Wollner, their cluster of metaphorical concepts (including “stepping stones,” “prices worth paying,” and “fragmented agency”), can be further specified as structural metaphors.

For reasons of space, I focus here on solely the three most important such structural metaphors in *On Trade Justice*, namely “trade,” “ground,” and “embedded,” directly interconnected in the following paraphrase of Risse and Wollner’s view, “Trade-As-One-Ground”: “trade is an embedded ground of justice.”ⁱⁱ For each of these three terms, I first explain how it possesses a range of meanings that could be graphed on a spectrum, from a maximally-metaphorical extreme to a maximally-conceptual (or minimally-metaphorical) extreme. Second, I explore how Risse and Wollner fully exploit this range of meanings, vacillating between these two extremes in such a way that gives the misleading appearance that today’s global economy constitutes a solid foundation of justice. One unfortunate result of this exploitation (of meanings) is a rebranding of late capitalist commonsense, and a qualified defense of capitalism’s worst offenses, including temporary exploitative wages and doing business with authoritarian regimes.

To summarize their view and my evaluation thereof, Risse and Wollner present themselves as a reasonable middle ground between the right-leaning view that (capitalist) trade is *amoral*, and the leftist view that (capitalist) trade is *immoral*. Whereas I share Aristotle’s view that certain virtues, specifically what he calls the “intellectual” ones, are not golden means halfway between vicious extremes. Thus, there is no such thing as too much wisdom or justice. Is a wise person truly halfway between a fool and a genius or sage? Applied to *On Trade Justice*, Risse and Wollner’s preference for what they call “procedural” justice undermines the

intellectual efforts of their colleagues who defend leftist views that the authors term “structural equity” (54, 52). In short, I would argue that capitalism is no timeless ground; the only ground is the earth. And while every community shares goods and services among its members and between other communities, some such practices, like First Nations’ potlach ceremonies (wherein one individual might distribute most or all their resources to the community in one feast) are not aptly categorized as “trade.” In fact, such practices were so threatening to their capitalist trade practices that they were subject to centuries of settler colonial government oppression.ⁱⁱⁱ I return to this example briefly below.

I. Trade: “PREHISTORIC EXCHANGE IS GLOBAL CAPITALISM”

“Trade,” according to the first sentence of *On Trade Justice*, “covers everything from primordial exchanges across village lines and one-time interactions among strangers to modern highly structured exchanges governed by domestic and international law, from personal exchanges to supply chains sustained by fleets of container ships” (1). That Risse and Wollner do not intend this to be a definition of “trade” is confirmed later. In Chapter 3, they explain that they intentionally “do not abstractly look at how to conceptualize trade,” and instead “follow Rawls’ strategy” in “developing our view by way of competing images” (45).

This overt reliance on “images” (which they prefer to abstract conceptualization), provides one clue that “trade” functions in *On Trade Justice* less like a “pure” concept, and more like a metaphor. In fact, in my interpretation of the book, “trade” is its most important metaphorical concept. That it has this structure is only difficult to realize because of what the objectivists call a “dead metaphor.” To get clearer on trade as a metaphorical concept, and in a

way that follows Risse and Wollner's admirable commitment to historically informed analysis, I will now briefly explore the etymology of "trade."

The word "trade" first appeared in English in the 1300s (introduced by the Hanseatic League, a confederation of merchant guilds), and it originally had the meaning of "path, track, course of action." It was borrowed from two other Germanic languages (Middle Dutch and Low German), where it probably referred to the path in the water made by a nautical vessel. Later, in the 1540s, "trade" came to mean "way, course, or manner of life," and then one decade later, "buying and selling, exchange of commodities." But it was not until the 1800s that it took on the present-day meaning, along with phrases including "trade-name," "trade-route," "trade-war" and "trade-union." Finally, "trade" was also "originally cognate" with the Old English *tredan*, meaning "to tread, step on, trample; traverse, pass over," which suggests the kind of violence and exploitation that is central to Risse and Wollner's conception of trade injustice.

Telescoping this etymological analysis, the word "trade" first suggests moving through the water, then a professional way of life, then economic exchange, and finally, trade as regime. Rendered into an image, it suggests a wandering craftsman, like a medieval blacksmith (especially the second, "journeyman" phase of the medieval apprenticeship model). Like *poiesis* in Greek, which Plato claims originally meant "making" in general, and eventually narrowed to the archetypal Greek making, namely that of the poet—so "trade" in English originally meant the wandering of a dedicated professional, before eventually narrowing to the archetypal English professional wandering, that of the merchant.

This is important for *On Trade Justice* because present-day usage of the word "trade" has rotated these meanings almost 180 degrees, insofar as anyone on earth with internet access and a bank account can now engage in global trade, and without ever either leaving their homes or

receiving professional training. Thus, when Risse and Wollner praise trade as creating the world—which is crucial to their argument that trade deserves to be considered as constituting its own distinct ground of justice—what they are talking about is an historical phenomenon that diverges widely from the activities they seek to regulate today. In other words, the claim that “trade is a ground of justice because it helped create the world” becomes less and less plausible as one moves from prehistory to today.

Put in Lakoff and Johnson’s terms, one could interpret *On Trade Justice* as operating with a structural metaphor along the following lines: “TRADE IS GLOBAL CAPITALISM.” Here, “TRADE” refers to the older meanings of the word (“paths and professions,” for short), and “GLOBAL CAPITALISM” refers to the contemporary system that Risse and Wollner are trying to reform. Below is a suggested partial mapping of the first conceptual domain onto the other.

<u>TRADE</u>	<u>GLOBAL CAPITALISM</u>
-merchants	-states, corporations
-professionals	-investment advisors
-seafaring	-flows of capital
-physical currency	-digital records

The point of this visualization is that Risse and Wollner, to whatever degree they are successful in making the case that trade is a separate ground of justice (on a par with Risse’s four other such grounds), this relies on a dubious recharacterization of global capitalism (a very recent historical

phenomenon) as fundamentally coextensive with the central activity of prehistoric merchants. Put more simply, *On Trade Justice* gives the misleading impression that global capitalism is a timeless ground of human flourishing by metaphorically blending it with trade.

II. Ground: “FOUNDATION” vs “BACKGROUND”

This second metaphorical concept seems more obviously and vividly metaphorical than “trade,” perhaps in part because “ground” is viscerally, corporeally connected to the earth. This connectedness, moreover, ties “ground” in *On Trade Justice* to the broader, more all-encompassing metaphorical concepts that Lakoff and Johnson term “orientational metaphors” (14). Such metaphors, they explain, (a) organize “a whole system of concepts with respect to one another,” (b) “give a concept a spatial orientation,” and (c) “arise from the fact that we have bodies of the sort we have and that function as they do in our physical environment” (14). For example, they claim that the orientational metaphor “HAPPY IS UP; SAD IS DOWN” comes from the fact that drooping “posture typically goes along with sadness and depression, erect posture with a positive emotional state” (15).

The problem with the analogous case of “ground” in Risse and Wollner, however, is that they seem to use two different orientation metaphors without acknowledging it. In the first, which might be termed “GROUND IS FOUNDATION,” there is a three-dimensional, embodied, vertical orientation (as with standing), a sense of gravity, and a resulting feeling of security. Whereas in the second, “GROUND IS BACKGROUND,” there is a two-dimensional, detached, horizontal orientation (as with viewing a screen), a sense of abstraction, and a resulting feeling of contemplation. In brief, *On Trade Justice* uses the connotation of the literal ground to suggest that trade is a solid foundation for justice, but then retreats to the denotation of a figurative

ground to specify that trade is technically merely a background against which justice appears and can be applied. I will now consider this presentation in detail.

In Section 1.3, in the sentence that introduces their technical usage of “ground,” Risse and Wollner deploy a subtle but impactful substitution. “We develop the idea that trade—specifically, subjection to the global trade regime—is one of several *grounds of justice*” (4, emphasis original).^{iv} As the authors make clear throughout *On Trade Justice* (albeit through context rather than explicit articulation), they view trade today (if not also historically) as fundamentally structured by this global trade regime. Thus, one can fairly interpret the first dash in the preceding quote as equivalent to an “equals” sign. (Put formally, “trade = subjection to the global trade regime”). This identification seems problematic, however, because it is not value neutral.

To wit, while trade as such, or trade across time and space (including in the “primordial villages” of *On Trade Justice*’s first sentence), could be interpreted as fundamental and morally neutral, the term “subjection” is quite loaded axiologically, insofar as it implies the surrender of power. And the same applies, perhaps even more strongly, to the final word “regime.” Regarding the latter, Risse and Wollner later quote Stephen Krasner’s claim that a regime “consists of sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which expectations converge in a given area of international relations.”^v Thus, as with Risse and Wollner’s use of “ground,” so also their use of “regime” (as in “trade regime”) is not the substantial, material entity that it might initially seem. Instead, their “regime” is an array of abstract objects and conceptual relations. In sum, zooming back out to “trade = subjection to the global regime,” one could easily interpret it as a terminological manifestation of the “GLOBAL CAPITALISM IS TRADE” structural metaphor I identified in my previous section.

Having thus introduced this “ground,” Risse and Wollner proceed to define it. “Roughly, a ground of justice is a context where particular principles of distributive justice apply...,” they write, “...and do so because individuals in their scope have certain properties or stand in particular relations to each other” (4-5). Where one might have expected the ground to be a solid thing, it is instead defined as a context, which seems to imply that the ground is not something we stand on—even though later in the same sentence the metaphor “stand” is deployed, and one can only stand on a thing, not on a context. On the one hand, then, the ground is formally something closer to the (back)ground against which a figure emerges in the famous optical illusions of Gestalt psychology (such as Wittgenstein’s favored example, the rabbit-duck illusion). On the other hand, the ground is implicitly something more like a foundation, on which individuals can stand in positions relative to each other.

To get clearer on this tension, between this denotation and this connotation of “ground,” I again follow Risse and Wollner in turning to history. As with “trade,” the origins of “ground” are similarly fertile. It derives from “Old English *grund* ‘bottom; foundation; surface of the earth,’ also ‘abyss, Hell,’ and ‘bottom of the sea,’” which derives, in turn, from “German *Grund* ‘ground, soil, bottom’.” Not until 1200 does it take on the sense of “reason, motive,” and only in the 1400s does it become “source, origin, cause,” followed in the 1610s by “place where one takes position,” in 1890 by the sense of “ground rule,” and finally, as recently as 1953, by a “basic rule.” Note, in this etymology, the recurrence of this same tension, between “ground” as depth/foundation and “ground” as surface/background.

One might attempt to reconcile this tension using a dialectic method, favored by so many great thinkers in the history of philosophy, and deployed by Risse and Wollner themselves in *On Trade Justice* in relation to ground (specifically, for “adjudicating” conflicting principled

demands from their five grounds of justice) (135). In the present case (of second-order “ground”), one might understand it as the visible surface of a deep foundation, as illustrated by the example of the sea. That is, the sea is made entirely of water and, given its translucence, its deeper foundations can be seen along with and through its surface. This sea-connection, moreover, ties “ground” back to the original (“paths and professions”) meaning of “trade” as the profession that makes its path through the waters.

Thinking together “trade” and “ground” in these senses, the merchants’ path (through the sea) becomes its own kind of ground (the surface of the sea), albeit one with the constant danger of pulling the vessel to its fatal depths (or even to the depths of hell). And this is cumulatively analogous to global capitalism, a web of pathways that constitutes a kind of ground for itself, albeit with the constant danger of sinking to the fatal depths of economic depression, or even to the end of capitalism per se. In this light, Risse and Wollner’s claim that “trade is one ground of justice” seems much more vulnerable, since that ground appears as a mere flurry of activity which, should it fragment by ceasing, could imperil global justice today.

III. Embeddedness: Political Deference vs Capitalist Assimilation

Perhaps in part because of this implicit peril, Risse and Wollner attempt to reinforce trade as a ground of justice with the four other such grounds that Risse proposes in his earlier work, *On Global Justice*.^{vi} More precisely, Risse and Wollner describe “subjection to the global trade regime” as “embedded” in the other four grounds (namely, “common humanity,” “membership in states,” “membership in the world society,” and “humanity’s collective ownership of the earth”) (5). Before exploring this in detail, I will first survey the other uses of “embed” in the book.

On the first page of the Preface, in the first of a total of eighteen instances of the word “embed,” Risse and Wollner characterize *On Trade Justice* as “a work of political philosophy that is historically and politically embedded” (v). Here, by “embedded,” the authors seem to mean taking history and politics seriously enough to not only situate their philosophy therein, but also to allow that philosophy to be inflected thereby. For example, the historical-political event of the New Deal contributes both the book’s subtitle (*A Philosophical Plea for a New Global Deal*) and its central practical proposal (namely that “The WTO must be reformed to assume the obligations of a trade organization with global ambitions”) (5).

This subtitle and proposal may therefore constitute a deliberate performance of the Preface’s historical-political embedding. Additionally, this performance may also constitute an intertextual allusion to such historical-political embedding, since the New Deal was itself an attempt to embed the U.S. economy in a history of economic and political disasters (especially the Great Depression and WWI). More precisely, the second instance of the word “embed” in *On Trade Justice* involves U.S. political scientist John Ruggie’s concept of “embedded liberal compromise,” which refers to the global political economy that resulted from the New Deal (39n8). That is, *On Trade Justice* is embedded in and named after an event in political history, “embedded liberalism,” in which the philosophy of free markets was embedded in an historical politics of the welfare state.

The next two instances of “embed” involve Trade-As-One-Ground being “embedded” into a global theory of justice. And finally, the next instance of “embed” concerns a “system of states” “embedded into a world society” (64). It is clear from this partial survey that “embedding” for Risse and Wollner is an important phenomenon which takes place at multiple levels. But in each case, I discern a unifying sense: a philosophical entity defers to a later and

politically loftier entity. More specifically, (1) Rawlsian philosophical concepts defer to a global political economy, (2) pre-WWI free market political philosophy (pace J. S. Mill) defers to post-WWI welfare states, (3) Risse and Wollner's theory of trade justice defers to a future WTO reformed to prioritize justice, and (4) and the historical theory of the sovereignty of nation-states defers to the twenty-first century world society.

This sense (of philosophy deferring to politics) stands in contrast to the remaining twelve instances of "embedding" in *On Trade Justice*, which concern a ground of justice being "embedded into other grounds" (126). In Chapter 7, Risse and Wollner clarify this ground-embedded-in-grounds relationship with a formal definition of "embeddedness," preceded by the introduction of a few additional technical terms involved therein. "An actor or institution," they stipulate, "may be 'linked' to a ground in direct or indirect ways," namely (a) "direct," "if the institution is constitutive of the ground and establishes a justice relationship among those in the scope associated with that ground," and (b) "indirect," "if the operations of the institution are primarily directed at, or most directly affect, people in the scope associated with that ground" (125, 126). For example, a political state "is constitutive of a ground" to which it is therefore directly linked, and that state is also indirectly linked to "trade as a ground," because the state's operations are "primarily directed at, or most directly affect, people in the scope of that ground" (namely, that of the trade regime) (126).

Note that the above passage (on direct and indirect linkages) introduces a significant change in Risse and Wollner's use of the term "scope," and in a way that creates tension with the term's meaning in their earlier definition of "ground." In the latter definition, namely "a context where particular principles of distributive justice apply, and do so because individuals in their scope have certain properties or stand in particular relations to each other," it is the principles

that possess a given scope (as is clear from “their scope,” which as a plural must belong to the plural noun “principles,” rather than the singular noun “ground”). But in the “linking” definition, it is the scope (not the “ground” definition’s principles) that is directly “associated with the ground.”

Does this imply that a ground is nothing other than its principles? That is, since scope belongs to ground in the earlier quote, and scope belongs to principles in the later quote, by logical substitution the ground would be identical to its principles. But if so, how can a ground be both its principles (as here) and also (as in the “ground” definition) “a context where principles apply”? This implies, *per impossibile*, that principles are their own site of application. That is, if principle = ground, and ground = principles’ application site, then principle = principles’ application site. Clearly, it is circular to say that principles are where they are applied. One way to resolve these difficulties is to return to the GROUND IS FOUNDATION and GROUND IS BACKGROUND orientational metaphors, between which *On Trade Justice* vacillates. To wit, in the “ground” definition, ground is being thought metaphorically as a foundation (i.e., ground as principles’ place), while in the “linking” definition, ground is being thought metaphorically as a background (i.e., a ground made of principles, like a painter’s canvas is made of fabric).

It is on this shaky ground that Risse and Wollner then construct their formal definition of “embeddedness,” as follows: “Let us say ground G is embedded into H if agents in the scope of G are also in the scope of H” (128). They then elaborate.

A principle is “associated” with a ground if it either arises from the ground as sketched (e.g., as the Rawlsian principles arise from state membership) or from another ground into which the first is

“embedded.” Then we apply this rule: an institution has duties corresponding to all principles associated with the grounds linked to the institution (128).

With this new information, the overall picture is even murkier, in two ways.

First, the principles are now “associated” with a ground, whereas previously it was the principles’ scope that was “associated” with a ground. This would seem to imply, again *per impossibile*, that principles are their own scope (just as, before, it was implied that they were their own site of application). Second, a ground is now described as something that can be “sketched,” which fits the GROUND IS BACKGROUND metaphor, but not the GROUND IS FOUNDATION metaphor. Perhaps this is because only as a background can a ground be embedded in other grounds (like a figure drawn against the background of a house, against the background of an island). By contrast, a foundation stacked on other foundations is merely assimilated into the original foundation (like a foundation of cement poured on a foundation of bricks, laid on a foundation of stone, placed on a foundation of rocky soil).

To relate this back to Risse and Wollner’s use of “embed” for grounds of justice, if a ground is a site where principles apply (and can therefore be adjudicated, weighed, balanced, etc.), then embedding is coherent, but if the ground is merely an array of principles, then “embedding” becomes incoherent. For example, thinking first with the GROUND IS BACKGROUND metaphor, it would make sense for a manager to have a corporate duty to “respect coworkers,” which might appear more or less binding in the context of a state duty to “report suspicious behavior to the police,” which in turn might appear more or less binding in the context of a global justice mandate to “resist one’s national regime when it is engaged in human rights abuses.” If, however, one modifies this example using the GROUND IS FOUNDATION metaphor, a corporate principle of “do not exploit coworkers” cannot be embedded on the

foundation of a state principle “do not exploit fellow citizens,” itself embedded on a foundation of a global principle of “do not exploit any humans,” without the former two principles being reductively assimilated into the latter principle. And the global principle, given the difficulty of enforcing violations within the trade regime, is constantly violated, thus effectively permitting widespread immorality, which is then defended on pragmatic grounds.

Finally regarding “embed,” as with “trade” and “ground,” this ambivalence is also reflected in the word’s history. To begin, the verb “embed” is much younger than “trade” and “ground,” originating in 1778, when it meant “to lay in a bed (of surrounding matter).” Having thus begun as a “geological term, in reference to fossils in rock,” by 1835 it had achieved its “figurative sense.” The noun root of this verb, however, is much older. “Bed” derives from “Old English *bedd* ‘bed, couch, resting place; garden plot,’ from Proto-Germanic **badja-* ‘sleeping place dug in the ground’.” In sum, for most of its history, “to embed” has meant to carve a place into the existing ground, creating a new space for something sleeping, dormant or dead.

In a very recent twist, however, the Iraq War in 2003 provided a new meaning, “to place (a journalist) within a military unit at war.” This was supposed to allow journalists to report the truth up close while maintaining their journalistic integrity, but the net result was a tendency toward propaganda for the U.S. and its military.^{vii} Similarly, Risse and Wollner’s attempts to embed grounds of justice is intended to facilitate a dialectical give-and-take among principles and obligations arising from various contexts, but there is a danger that all other contexts will be assimilated to one, namely the global trade regime of late capitalism.

III. Conclusion: Dwindling Dimensions of Justice

Perhaps some readers will object that I have taken the terms “trade,” “ground,” and “embedded” too literally (or, for other readers, too metaphorically). But I am not trying to force any specific interpretation on them. Indeed, I am happy to grant any, so long as they are used consistently. So, for example, if we take these terms in their most literal, everyday sense (i.e., on the maximally conceptual end of a metaphorical/conceptual spectrum), the sentence connecting them might read something like this: “The global capitalist system is a context, within other such contexts, where principles of distributive justice apply.” But this is not a new or debatable claim, at least for those for whom principles of distributive justice are meaningful. In fact, it is more like a pure description, with no normative force, and so things can go on immorally.

Alternatively, if we take these terms in their maximally metaphorical sense (on the opposite end of the metaphorical/conceptual spectrum), then the sentence might instead read like this: “Economic exchange is a foundation, layered on other such foundations, of justice.” Like the literal version, this metaphorical one is also not new, though it is debatable. For one thing, many leftists argue that true justice requires the end of the economy altogether (which would mean that economic exchange does not constitute any layer of the system’s foundation). Whereas many rightists argue that true justice would involve only the economy without state interference (leaving a single-layered economic foundation). Additionally, many theorists would argue that economic exchange in general, especially at the micro-level and for prehistoric societies, is not powerful or pervasive enough to constitute a separate foundation for justice. Recall the above example of the First Nations’ potlatch ceremony. Rather, other would-be foundations of justice, including Risse and Wollner’s “common humanity” and “membership in the world society,” would be in danger of being assimilated into the sole ground of the global trade regime, thus

pressuring everyone to moral compromises such as temporary exploitation and working with authoritative regimes. Perhaps for this reason, *On Trade Justice* provides qualified defenses for both, euphemizing them with the metaphors of “*stepping stones towards*,” and “*prices worth paying for*,” imagined eventual justice (14).^{viii}

In any event, Risse and Wollner do not argue for any of these conclusions, as suggested by my hypothetical, maximally-metaphorical interpretation of “trade as embedded ground.” Instead, they attempt to split the difference within each of these three metaphorical concepts. First, they treat “trade” sometimes more literally as exchange (when they want to emphasize its being timelessly foundational for justice), and sometimes more figuratively as global capitalism (when they want to emphasize its contemporary capacity for regulation). Second, they formally define “ground” in a more figurative way (connoting Gestalt psychology’s figure/ground dichotomy), but only after spending half the book applying it in a more literal way (connoting the everyday sense of a solid foundation). And finally, they promote a more figurative “embedding” (as of states in a global trading regime regulated by the WTO) that is nevertheless based on the kind of abstract entities (such as principles) that can only be embedded more literally (with the danger of localized but enforceable principles being assimilated to imperializing and unenforceable ones).

Put more schematically and comprehensively, and by way of conclusion, *On Trade Justice* vacillates between what one might call 4D trade and 3D trade (historic exchange vs contemporary global capitalism), between 3D grounds and 2D grounds (foundational depth vs figured background), and between 2D embedding and 1D embedding (philosophy deferring to politics vs localized practices being assimilated to global capitalist principles). Thus, by *On*

Trade Justice' end, its aspiring pluralist internationalism threatens to keep us all chained to the same old bottom line.

Notes

ⁱ See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

ⁱⁱ Though Risse and Wollner do not give any explanation or reasons for this hyphenating and capitalization, it recalls Martin Heidegger's similar stylizations (for example, "being-in-the-world" [*In-der-Welt-sein*]), which were intended in part to undermine the Cartesian dichotomy between subjects and objects. Risse and Wollner have a similar intention, which would align with their consistent emphasis on contextual embeddedness.

ⁱⁱⁱ For more, see for example Jaqueline Shea Murphy, *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing: Native American Modern Dance Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 31.

^{iv} Risse and Wollner frequently italicize such terms, especially the metaphorical concepts that I am considering here (which is part of what drew my attention to them as a cluster of non-mere concepts in the first place), so the reader should assume hereafter that italicized words quoted from *On Trade Justice* are original.

^v See Stephen D. Krasner, "Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables," in *International Regimes*, ed. Stephen D. Krasner (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 2, quoted in Risse and Wollner 66.

^{vi} See Mathias Risse, *On Global Justice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

^{vii} See, for example,

https://www.salon.com/2015/05/23/perilously_close_to_propaganda_how_fox_news_shilled_for_iraq_war_and_jon_stewart_returned_sanity/.

^{viii} For Arendt's warnings about the dangers of "stepping stones" in global politics, see Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Mariner, 1973), xviii.