Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft
German Research Foundation

Leibniz Lecture

Rainer Forst    Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize 2012

“Two Pictures of Justice”

Thursday, October 17, 2013, 6:00 p.m.
Munk School of Global Affairs
Campbell Conference Facility
Trinity College Site: 1 Devonshire Place
Toronto, Ontario

Opening remarks:
Walter Stechel, Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany to Canada
Robert C. Austin, CERES, Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto
Eva-Maria Streier, Director, New York Office, German Research Foundation (DFG)

The German Research Foundation (DFG) is proud to present the first Leibniz Lecture in Toronto. Professor Rainer Forst, Leibniz Prize winner of 2012, will be addressing the subject of “Two Pictures of Justice”. The event takes place in cooperation with the University of Toronto.

A brief abstract of the lecture:

“There are two ways to think about justice: One focuses on goods to be distributed to persons based on the situation these recipients are in, the other focuses on past and present relations between persons and possible structures of domination. Both try to overcome the arbitrariness that may inhere in political and social life, but they have very different interpretations of it. The lecture argues for a relational view of justice as based on a principle of the proper justification of social norms – in short, for a discourse theory of justice.”

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Nationally and internationally, Rainer Forst is considered the most important German political philosopher of his generation. As the Frankfurt-based scholar continues the German — and especially Frankfurtian — political philosophy of Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth, and engages it critically with American representatives like John Rawls, he shapes his very own philosophy. It revolves mainly around the basic concepts of justice, tolerance and justification. In a highly original fashion, Forst has contemplated and formulated the insight that humans have always been embedded in various “practices of justification.” These require that ultimately all actions must be legitimized according to particular logics of morality, law and other discourses. Our practical reasoning is the ability to recognize and accept these logics — such is Forst’s far-reaching conclusion as a political philosopher.

A strong international orientation, with a particular interest in the United States, was seen early on in Rainer Forst. After studying in Frankfurt, New York/Binghamton, and Harvard, he was a lecturer and visiting professor in Berlin, Frankfurt and New York. Following stints in Frankfurt and Gießen, he became a professor at the University of Frankfurt in 2004. He is director of the Cluster of Excellence on “The Formation of Normative Orders” at Goethe-University. Rainer Forst has accepted the Senior Emile Noël Fellowship and is spending the fall 2013 semester at New York University.

His most recent publications are:
“Toleration in Conflict. Past and Present” (2013)
“Justification and Critique” (2013).

The Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize is the highest honor awarded in German research. Established in 1985, the prize provides an unparalleled degree of freedom to outstanding scientists and academics to pursue their research interests. Up to ten prizes are awarded annually with a maximum of €2.5 million per award. Prize recipients are awarded the prize solely on the basis of the scientific quality of their work. The Leibniz Prize honors the well-known scientist and humanist Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), who was a leading figure in the fields of philosophy, mathematics, physics and theology.

The German Research Foundation (DFG) is the central, self-governing organization funding science and basic research in Germany. Serving all branches of science and the humanities, its members comprise German research universities, non-university research institutions, scientific associations and the Academies of Science and the Humanities.

The chief task of the DFG is to fund the best research projects by scientists and academics at universities and research institutions, which are selected on the basis of a multi-layered peer review process. The DFG is a cornerstone of Germany’s strength as a research nation and it plays a key role in structuring academic research in Europe.

The DFG organizes Leibniz Lectures in different regions across the world in order to promote the prize, the research conducted by the prize holders, and the high quality of German science in general.