



KATHOLIEKE  
UNIVERSITEIT  
LEUVEN

### **Laudatio for Professor John Braithwaite**

Delivered in Leuven on 4 February 2008 by Professor Stephan Parmentier, promotor

Your Eminence,  
Rector,  
Your Excellencies,  
Dear Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

What do restorative justice, financial regulation and peacebuilding in post-conflict societies have in common? Most observers will be puzzled by this quiz-like question and will resort to sophisticated search engines on the World Wide Web to find an answer. For all us today, however, the answer is a very simple one, for the three topics mentioned have all been studied *in extenso* and with immense depth and great skill by our *doctor honoris causa-to-be*, Professor John Braithwaite.

“The most cited author” in international criminological journals during the 1990s, “one of the most influential criminologists of our time”, and “the new Durkheim”, are merely some of the many epithets with which John Braithwaite has been heralded in the social sciences. He can, without further ado, be regarded as an intellectual giant who belongs to the absolute world top, and continues to shape this very world top from day to day.

His career spans more than thirty years that can roughly be subdivided into three main periods. Starting his scientific writings at the age of 24 years, the young Braithwaite is immediately drawn to study all aspects of crime and ethically inspired responses to them. His early publications back in the 1970s on corporate crime and corruption gradually lead him to focus on the overarching problem of how to regulate individual corporations and the world of business at large.

The major breakthrough comes in 1989 with the book *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*, which introduces the concept of ‘re-integrative shaming’. This implies that persons having committed a criminal offence – whether petty or serious – can be ‘shamed’ for their absence of conformity with the existing rules, but should always be given the possibility to ‘reintegrate’ themselves into ordinary life of mainstream society. Braithwaite shows how ‘re-integrative shaming’ is an inclusive approach to deal with crime, as well as a very powerful



mechanism to respect the dignity of all human beings – offenders and victims alike – and to prevent crime in the long run. ‘Disintegrative shaming’ as an exclusive approach, on the other hand, in his view mostly leads to stigmatisation, feelings of anger and revenge, and further deviance. These ideas are developed further in *Not Just Deserts. A Republican Theory of Criminal Justice* (with Pettit, Clarendon Press, 1990). Both authors make a strong plea for criminal law and criminal justice systems that are more participative for all parties involved, and focus on the preservation of ‘dominion’, a unique combination of rights and freedoms of modern society as well as the certainty that these will be upheld.

The powerful theoretical vision underlying both works has profoundly influenced and renewed the discipline of criminology over the past 20 years. This took place in particular in relationship to the theory and practice of restorative justice in which offenders and victims, and other parties in a conflict, are brought together to deal with the aftermath of a criminal act and to work together towards repairing the harm inflicted. Many of these ideas have been picked up and further developed by academic and criminal justice institutions all over all globe, and particularly in Belgium that has established itself as a forerunner in this field over the past decade. Brief reference can be made here to the pioneering work of Leuven based academic networks such as the *International Network for Research on Restorative Justice for Juveniles* and the *European Forum for Restorative Justice*, as well as the Leuven *Public Prosecutor’s Service* that first allowed victim-offender mediation for more serious crimes and the Ministry of Justice that introduced restorative justice in all Belgian prisons. Years later, at the turn of the millennium, also international institutions as the European Union and the United Nations have discovered the powerful message of restorative justice and have embraced its potential.

As a truly innovative thinker, however, John Braithwaite cannot be caged in one box and is always challenging new fields for his concepts and theories to be applied. At the turn of the century another milestone publication, *Restorative Justice and Responsive Regulation* (Oxford University Press, 2002), allows him to view restorative justice as a multiple and multi-layered concept that ranges from the micro level of individual encounters up to the macro level of states and further. Hence the challenge to investigate the possibilities and limits of restorative justice and responsive regulation in fields far beyond traditional crime and criminology, reaching deep into the areas of political science, sociology and economics. His books *Global Business Regulation* (with P. Drahos, Cambridge University Press, 2000) and *Markets in Vice, Markets in Virtue* (Oxford University Press, 2005) tackle very sensitive topics, such as the extreme hardship inflicted by ruthless capitalism in many parts of the world, and do explore new avenues for peaceful, just and inclusive development. The same holds true with his worldwide and ambitious project on *Peace-building and Responsive Governance* since 2006 that studies the dynamics of peace-building after violent conflicts through 48 case-studies over a twenty-year period.



Besides being a builder of bridges between various disciplines, and between theoretical and empirical approaches, professor Braithwaite is also a builder of networks. Back in 2001 he set up the *Regulatory Institutions Network (Regnet)* at the Research School of Social Sciences in Canberra. In its short life time, this truly global network of institutions, practitioners and academics has gained worldwide recognition for its high-quality research on regulation issues in fields as diverse as peace building, social justice, human rights and sustainable development. Braithwaite is also lauded for his leadership to commit the social sciences to an ethical approach towards issues of social justice, participative democracy, human rights and world peace.

Given these extensive qualifications, it is both amazing and laudable that John Braithwaite has managed to remain a very warm and charming person, open to all and everyone without distinction, gifted with a very down-under Australian sense of wit and humour, and above all, with a 'non-ego' difficult to match in our current competitive world.

Over the past decade, John Braithwaite has closely worked together with several members of the almost 80-years old Leuven Institute of Criminology, and notably with emeritus professor Lode Walgrave, and he and his colleagues have paid several pleasant visits to our university. Because of his impressive career, his paramount scientific contribution to the social sciences and his powerful ethical vision, the whole team of our Criminology Institute and the Faculty of Law have enthusiastically supported the candidacy of Braithwaite, also in view of further strengthening the mutual cooperation between Leuven and Canberra. The honorary university degree for John Braithwaite is particularly well taken in the context of this year's central theme of 'Sustainable Development', since this encompasses more than clean water and clean air, and it entails more than the survival of endangered species and cultural practices. Sustainable development also deeply refers to relationships in the social world that deal with peace, social justice and inclusive citizenship, relationships that need to be restored or to be built up from scratch, relationships between individual people as well as at the collective level of groups, nations and the international community at large. Sustainable development is indeed a multi-dimensional reality as much as a concept, and poses enormous challenges for all regions of today's global village, including our own multicultural society.

**For all these reasons, I ask you, honoured Rector, on the recommendation of the Academic Council, to grant the honorary doctorate of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven to Professor John Braithwaite.**