



Knight, C. (2012) In defence of global egalitarianism. *Journal of Global Ethics*, 8(1), pp. 107-116.

Copyright © 2012 Taylor and Francis

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

Content must not be changed in any way or reproduced in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holder(s)

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details must be given

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/69988>

Deposited on: 08 June 2015

Enlighten – Research publications by members of the University of Glasgow_
<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk>

In Defence of Global Egalitarianism*

Carl Knight, University of Glasgow and University of Johannesburg

I. Introduction

According to David Miller, ‘weak cosmopolitanism’ requires that equal concern is shown for all persons in the world. ‘Strong cosmopolitanism’ accepts this requirement but, crucially, adds another: that all persons must be subjected to equal treatment (in some strong sense).¹ This position is most strongly associated with the many writers who endorse one or another form of ‘global egalitarianism’, which requires that all individuals are rendered materially equal in one regard or another, regardless of the country to which they belong.

Miller accepts weak cosmopolitanism, but denies that there is injustice in there being inequality between nations or between citizens in different nations, provided national self-determination and individual basic needs are both satisfied globally. Chapter 3 of Miller’s recent book *National Responsibility and Global Justice* is concerned with rejecting global egalitarianism. This article responds to the two arguments that Miller presents against global egalitarianism.

The two arguments are presented against global equality of opportunity, which is, roughly, a worldwide application of Rawls’ suggestion that ‘there should be roughly

* This article was published in the *Journal of Global Ethics*, 8, 1 (2012). The published version is available at <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17449626.2011.635678>

¹ Miller 2007, 43-4.

equal prospects of culture and achievement for everyone similarly motivated and endowed'.² My counterarguments will appeal to a different kind of global equality of opportunity, 'global equality of opportunity for advantage', which is a form of luck egalitarianism.³ Equality of opportunity for advantage states that levels of advantage⁴ must reflect exercises of responsibility.⁵ Where different individuals exercise their responsibility equivalently, and where different individuals do not exercise their responsibility, equality of advantage is justified. Where different individuals exercise their responsibility non-equivalently inequality of advantage is justified. Global equality of opportunity for advantage is simply an application of equality of opportunity for advantage to every individual on the planet, with no morally fundamental weight being given to national borders. As luck egalitarian positions such as equality of opportunity for advantage are usually treated as being by default global, 'asocial' views, with some

² Rawls 1972, 73. Miller also advances the same two general arguments against global equality of natural resources which, being further removed from luck egalitarianism, I do not consider.

³ The position differs from Arneson's (1989) 'equality of opportunity for welfare' in not being committed to welfare as its conception of advantage (Arneson (1999) now endorses a somewhat different 'responsibility-catering prioritarian' position). There are two differences between equality of opportunity for advantage and Cohen's (1989) 'equal access to advantage': a purely terminological difference between 'access' and '**opportunity**', and a substantive difference due to Cohen's commitment to advantage being a combination of welfare and resources.

⁴ I understand advantage as a placeholder for whatever it is that egalitarian justice is concerned with distributing. Similarly, Miller refers to advantage as a neutral egalitarian currency; see Miller 2007, 68.

⁵ Arneson 1989; Cohen 1989; [Author's Publication A]. Dworkin 2000, ch. 2 is the main inspiration for luck egalitarians, though Dworkin (2003) refuses the label.

special justification needed for restricting their scope,⁶ I will not hereafter distinguish between global and non-global forms of the view.

The article is arranged as follows. Section II addresses global equality of opportunity's (alleged) inability to specify a metric of justice which is broad enough to exclude spurious claims for redistribution, but precise enough to appropriately value different kinds of advantage. Section III considers the claim that global egalitarianism demands either too little redistribution, leaving the unborn and dissenters burdened with their societies' imprudent choices, or too much redistribution, creating perverse incentives by punishing prudent decisions. Section IV concludes.

II. The Metric Problem

Any proponent of equality of opportunity will have to decide how fine-grained or broad-grained their metric of equality is in order to say what equal opportunities consist in. This gives rise to what Miller calls 'the metric problem'. Neither a very fine-grained, nor a very broad-grained metric is appealing on his view:

If we make it too fine-grained, then we will get lots of meaningless results ... - equalities and inequalities that just do not matter because they are too specific to engage our ethical attention. But if we try to make it as broad-grained as possible, then we run into controversy about how, if at all, different components of our metric should be evaluated relative to one another.⁷

⁶ See Arneson 2011, 42-50.

⁷ Miller 2007, 64.

The demonstration of the problems of extreme fine-grainedness is convincing. Darrel Moellendorf has suggested that, ‘if equality of opportunity were realized, a child growing up in rural Mozambique would be statistically as likely as the child of a senior executive at a Swiss bank to reach the position of the latter’s parent’.⁸ But as Miller notes, this is far too strong. It would require that there were no limits on migration or citizenship and, most tellingly I believe, require that there was no difference in the relevant (German, French, or Italian) language skills of the Swiss child and the Mozambiquean child. It is indeed ‘more plausible to interpret the principle as requiring equivalent opportunity sets’.⁹ Miller suggests that it would be enough for the Mozambiquean child to have as good a chance of getting an executive post with a bank in Mozambique as the Swiss child has of becoming an executive with a Swiss bank, provided the benefits (including salary) of the two posts were equivalent. The idea of Swiss bank executives and Mozambiquean bank executives receiving equivalent remuneration may seem too far-fetched for us to test our intuitions. But we need only consider whether we think it a case of inequality of opportunity for a French child to have the same chances of getting an executive post with a French bank as a German child has of becoming an executive with a German bank, where the benefits of the two posts are equivalent, but both children have only a negligible chance of getting an executive post in the neighbouring country. It seems to me that there is equality of opportunity in such a case, but if there is not, then equality of opportunity is not something we should care about.

⁸ Moellendorf 2002, 49.

⁹ Miller 2007, 63.

So much for fine-grainedness. What, then, is the problem with using a very broad-grained metric? Miller asks us to imagine that there are two broadly similar villages, one of which has a football pitch, the other of which has a tennis court. This, he suggests, can be seen as compatible with equality of opportunity as both villages have equal access to the category of ‘sporting facilities’. But what if one village possessed a school but no church, and the other a church but no school? Here equality of opportunity is upset, because there is no tenable category of ‘access to enlightenment’ within which we could say that both villages were equally endowed, on account of the school in one village and the church in the other.¹⁰ Miller’s explanation for why it is that there is a significant inequality in this case, though there is not one in the sporting facilities case, is that

we have cultural understandings that tell us that football pitches and tennis courts are naturally substitutable as falling under the general rubric of sporting facilities, whereas schools and churches are just different sorts of things, such that you cannot compensate people for not having access to one by giving them access to the other.¹¹

¹⁰ Miller refers to ‘access to enlightenment’ as a metric, and later suggests that equality of opportunity might be assessed using several metrics (2007: 66). But as he is here concerned with the question of how fine-grained the equality of opportunity *metric* should be – whether it should compare many categories, like chance-to-be-a-Swiss-banker (more fine-grained), or fewer, like chance-to-be-a-banker (less fine-grained) – it is confusing to also refer to these categories as each being a ‘metric’. So I will refer to (possible) sub-metrics, such as ‘access to enlightenment’, as categories, as Miller sometimes does.

¹¹ Miller 2007, 65.

These ‘cultural understandings’ are key to the next part of Miller’s objection. He says that ‘within nation-states’ cultural understandings are sufficiently common that we can identify categories of opportunities and goods, such as education and health care, as being important enough to be non-substitutable, so that sub-equal healthcare can not be compensated for by a surplus of education. But at the global level there are no such shared understandings, which leads to two difficulties. First, we have no guidance when it comes to interpreting whether equality has been achieved within the categories. For instance, education takes different forms in different countries, and it may be impossible to say whether equality has been achieved in this category. Second, the lack of common culture means we can not make general judgments about equality of opportunity as we have no means of merging categories. For instance, even if we could agree that Iceland had better educational opportunities than Portugal, and that Portugal had better leisure opportunities than Iceland, we would have no means of saying which country, if either, was ‘better off (in a global sense)’.¹² In the final essay of Miller’s book *Citizenship and National Identity* this same argument is directed at equality of opportunity for advantage, the position I have defended. The position ‘is not sustainable, because of the radical heterogeneity of the things that together might constitute “advantage” from the perspective of global justice’.¹³ Intelligible trade-offs between these things can only be made ‘within communities with sufficient cultural cohesion that their members can come to a broad agreement’.¹⁴

¹² Miller 2007, 66.

¹³ Miller 2000, 172.

¹⁴ Miller 2000, 173.

The key move here is Miller's assumption that 'cultural understandings' are the only legitimate source for metrics of equality. Without that assumption there is no need for us to 'run into controversy about how, if at all, different components of our metric should be evaluated relative to one another'. Furthermore, that assumption runs contrary to every form of strong cosmopolitanism or global egalitarianism that I am aware of. I think even Miller takes the global egalitarian's understanding of substantively equal treatment to include only metrics which apply globally. Certainly, all well-known statements of the strong cosmopolitan positions that he mentions – aside from global equality of opportunity he mentions global equality of resources and 'the doctrine of human rights'¹⁵ – deny that cultural understandings wear the trousers, as it were. Proponents of each of these positions define their metrics independently of the beliefs and customs that particular societies happen to have.

Miller's claim that global equality of opportunity is 'unsustainable' seems to rely on the thought that the 'radical heterogeneity' of the vectors of advantage could only be resolved by an actual agreement. But every major thinker in mainstream contemporary political philosophy – liberal egalitarians such as Rawls and Dworkin, luck egalitarians such as Arneson and Cohen, capabilities theorists such as Sen and Nussbaum, and utilitarians such as Hare and Singer – denies this.¹⁶ There is no shortage of ways of defining advantage without surrendering to local opinion.

¹⁵ Miller 2007, 30.

¹⁶ Rawls 1972; Dworkin 2000; Arneson 1989; Cohen 1989; Sen 1999; Nussbaum 2000; Hare 1981; Singer 1993. The first of these may seem controversial, given that Rawls later (1993; 1999) refuses to see his principles of justice as international in scope. But as Samuel Freeman notes, '[t]his standard for domestic

The global luck egalitarianism I have defended above has this feature of independence from local opinion, and for that reason neither of Miller's problems arise under it. Whatever education systems are in place, the relevant question is how far it equalizes opportunities for advantage between individuals worldwide. Similarly, if individuals face differences in their educational and leisure opportunities, the relevant question is how far these differences offset one another, and hence how far overall equality of opportunity for advantage is achieved. So to address Miller's example, we need only to know how far Iceland's people are benefitted (high educational opportunities being a notable influence), and how far Portugal's people are benefitted (good leisure opportunities being a notable influence). This will depend on the conception of advantage that we adopt, but any of the main candidates (welfare, resources, capabilities, and so on) will do the job. To give just two examples, Arneson's equality of opportunity for welfare would ask us to compare Icelandic and Portuguese opportunities for welfare, transferring resources until the welfare opportunities are equalized, while Dworkinian equality of opportunity for resources would apply the 'envy test', and transfer resources until there is no Icelandic preference for the Portuguese bundle of resources, and no Portuguese preference for the Icelandic bundle of resources, that can not be traced to differential exercises of responsibility.¹⁷ To be sure, it would be

distributive justice is to apply worldwide, to determine just distributions in every society in the world. ... Neither *Political Liberalism* nor *The Law of Peoples* retracts or alters this position' (Freeman 2006, 243).

¹⁷ Arneson 1989; Dworkin 2000, ch. 2. The 'can not be traced to differential exercises of responsibility' clause is what makes the latter view an opportunity view. Dworkin's own 'equality of resources' is not explicitly formulated as an equality of opportunity view, so it does not include a clause of this kind. He

hard or impossible to directly apply these precise measures of advantage in practice, but proxies for metrics of this sort can be drawn from the kinds of economic, educational attainment, and life expectancy data already collected for UN Human Development Reports. In general, where people are richer, more educated, longer-lived, and happier, they are more advantaged. Furthermore, the Prime Ministers of both France and the UK have recently expressed interest in directly measuring well-being, and official statisticians have been tracking it for some time in Canada, so government statistics may, together with academic social scientific research on happiness,¹⁸ increasingly allow more direct measurement of advantage. In any event, Miller explicitly says that his objection is not an empirical one,¹⁹ so even if it was hard to make international comparisons of opportunity for welfare or resources he would not be justified in saying that global equality of opportunity was ‘unsustainable’.²⁰

As there are alternatives to using cultural understandings as the basis of our metric, you would be forgiven for thinking that Miller would need an argument for his cultural understandings assumption. Curiously, his critique of global equality of opportunity in *National Responsibility and Global Justice* does not seem to recognize this. In the relevant chapter there is no argument for the assumption, nor even a reference to where one might find such an argument. This makes me wonder if Miller believes that many global egalitarians actually are committed to grounding their metrics in cultural

does, however, make less formal suggestions along these lines (for instance, the suggestion that distributions should be choice sensitive and chance insensitive).

¹⁸ See Layard 2005.

¹⁹ Miller 2007, 67-8.

²⁰ See Barry and Gilibert 2008, 1038.

understandings. If that was the case – if, for instance, global equality of opportunity was often based on the idea that there were shared global understandings of which opportunities mattered, and why – then Miller might not need to defend his assumption. But if there ever has been a defence of global equality of opportunity in those terms it is of only marginal interest.²¹ The standard position does not privilege cultural understandings, so if Miller wants to challenge global equality of opportunity he must explain why his assumption is better than the global egalitarian alternative.

In fairness, it should be noted that in the Introduction of the book Miller gestures towards some ‘contextualist’ arguments that might support his thesis, and he has written on the subject elsewhere in too much detail for me to enter into here.²² But as these arguments have not been applied to the task of resisting global equality of opportunity we are left with the finding that Miller’s metric argument comes uncomfortably close to assuming what it is supposed to be demonstrating – the falsity of global egalitarianism.

III. The Dynamic Problem

The second objection to global egalitarianism I want to consider is what Miller calls the ‘dynamic problem’. It derives from considering the fates of two fictional countries, ‘Affluenza, [which] decides to use up its resource endowment rapidly to sustain a high level of consumption’, and ‘Ecologia [which] chooses to conserve resources by adopting

²¹ Note that this is a somewhat different, and less promising, approach than that offered by writers such as Charles Beitz (1979), who seek to defend global versions of Rawlsian principles on the basis that there is global cooperation. Different countries, and individuals in different countries, often cooperative even in the absence of shared cultural understandings. Consider, for instance, trade between China and the West.

²² Miller 2007, 13-14; Miller 1999a, ch. 2; Miller 2002; Miller 2008.

a strict policy of sustainable development'.²³ The problem for global equality of opportunity is whether to redistribute from Ecologia to Affluenza after Affluenza has splurged on consumer goods. Miller holds that no global egalitarian answer to this question is satisfactory.²⁴ We might refuse to redistribute, and hold Ecologia's and Affluenza's citizens responsible for their choices. But this has two counterintuitive results: it fails to account for those citizens who may dissent from their compatriots' decisions, and for those who were not born when those decision were made. So we might alternatively redistribute to restore equality between the two countries. But this introduces two further sources of counterintuitiveness: it would create perverse incentives, and be unfair to the prudent Ecologists.²⁵

I agree that neither of these global egalitarian responses seems wholly satisfactory, and largely for the reasons that Miller outlines. But equality of opportunity for advantage has an alternative which seems to avoid Miller's objections. We should redistribute but only insofar as advantage levels do not reflect how responsibility has been exercised. This redistributive objective is not 'to preserve equal access to advantage

²³ Miller 2007, 68. The example is very similar to a famous case from Rawls (1999, 117-8), which I have discussed elsewhere [Author's Publication B]. Miller's (1999b) first statement of the example was published around the same time as Rawls', and he discusses Rawls' use of it in Miller 2006. Both Rawls and Miller present a second comparison between countries with different population policies.

²⁴ Miller 2007, 69-74.

²⁵ Miller considers two further options. We might prevent countries from making decisions that affect advantage levels; or we might require them to admit anyone who wants to join, so Affluenzians can move to Ecologia. Miller objects that these fail to account for the value of self-determination. I set this aside as I do not propose any variant of these strategies.

over time' as Miller suggests the redistributive strategy intends.²⁶ Because, following Arneson,²⁷ I take the relevant advantage levels to be *lifetime* advantage levels, there is no injustice or even inequality in Affluenzians being disadvantaged later in life, provided that they were sufficiently advantaged by early life consumption. But while redistribution will be limited for that reason, some will be required as generations of Affluenzians after the first will be disadvantaged for their whole lives relative to Ecologians, without being responsible for that disadvantage.

Clearly my position is immune to Miller's objection that the unborn will be disadvantaged by a policy that holds Affluenza responsible for its choices, as it does not propose to hold future generations responsible for events prior to their birth. What of the objection that holding Affluenzian dissenters responsible is also unfair? There are two possibilities here. If the dissenters' lifetime advantage levels are lower than Ecologian levels, then they are entitled to be compensated until levels are equalized. If the dissenters' lifetime advantage levels are (at least) equal with Ecologian levels, on account of their early life consumption, then they are not entitled to compensation. Either possibility seems to treat the dissenter fairly. The fact that they have dissented may have some ethical significance, as it may reduce their responsibility for the national decisions that have been taken. But it does not have so much significance that dissenters can claim

²⁶ Miller 2007, 70.

²⁷ See, e.g., Arneson 2000.

the benefits of both their preferred policy (long-term advantages) and the implemented policy (short-term advantages), without bearing the burdens of either policy.²⁸

My position seems to cope well with Miller's objections to a policy of holding countries responsible for their choices, but how does it handle his objections to a redistributive policy? The objection that redistribution 'leaves very little incentive for states and their citizens to behave in the responsible way that Ecologia'²⁹ has done is undermined where redistribution takes the form I have suggested. Under my proposal it is no longer the case that 'profligate societies can expect to find themselves compensated from the stocks of resources saved or accumulated by societies that have shown themselves to be more prudent'.³⁰ A society which quickly spent its resources on consumption could claim no assistance from other societies later on as the accompanying boost to early advantage levels would still count when assessing their members' fair lifetime shares.

It might be replied here that, while it is true that Ecologists' motive to conserve resources to help themselves later in life may be retained, part of the motivation for the Ecologists' prudent behaviour was that that allowed them to advantage their descendents. This second motivation – and hence, the desirable behaviour it supported – is undercut where their descendents will only have the same claims on resources as Affluenzian descendents. But I do not believe that it follows that, under equality of

²⁸ Miller (2007, 119-23, 130-34, 161) seems to agree; indeed, he would even hold dissenters responsible for their nations' decisions, provided they are engaged in and benefiting from cooperative practices. Pierik 2008 disputes the relevance of the cooperative practice model when considering national responsibility.

²⁹ Miller 2007, 70.

³⁰ Miller 2007, 71.

opportunity for advantage, the Ecologists will be significantly less motivated to save for future generations, for three reasons.

First of all, it is not true that Ecologists would be prevented from increasing the resources available to their descendents under equality of opportunity for advantage. The more that is available to future generations, the more that is available to individual Ecologist descendents. Their entitlements are calculated as an equal share of global opportunities for advantage, so if the world has more advantage to be shared out, Ecologists descendents will each have a bigger share. It is true that the Ecologist ancestors will not be able to have as strong an influence on the holdings of their descendents under the scheme I propose, but the influence they do have may still be sufficient to motivate prudent behaviour. Where Ecologia and Affluenza are the same size, Ecologists will, under equality of opportunity for advantage, have fifty per cent of the influence on future Ecologists' distributive shares that they would have had under a scheme that allowed them to pass on all of their saved benefits to their descendents. This should still be sufficient to motivate a high degree of prudent behaviour, given that, in many European countries, effective tax rates in excess of fifty per cent (once income, sales, property and inheritance taxes are taken into account) do not stop well-off people from working for themselves and their descendents. Furthermore, the actual impact of current Ecologists' sustainable development policies on future Ecologists' resource holdings is rather higher than fifty per cent when one remembers that the problem only arises because the Affluenzians are setting aside so little for future generations. If Ecologia and Affluenza are of the same size and with constant populations, and the average Ecologist sets aside four units of resources for future generations and the

average Affluenzian sets aside two units of resources for future generations, then the future generation of Ecologians will receive three units of resources each, two thirds of which is from their Ecologian ancestors. So it seems that under equality of opportunity for advantage, current Ecologians will still be able to significantly advantage future Ecologians by conserving resources.

Second, although under equality of opportunity for welfare there will be some limit on the extent to which Ecologians can benefit their descendents, this may be partly or fully compensated for by a preference among Ecologians to conserve resources for the sake of future Affluenzians. Even in existing societies people are not indifferent to how foreigners fare, often giving money to overseas charity. Where, as we are assuming here, the global order is regulated by global egalitarian principles, cosmopolitan sentiments would have a much stronger grip on societies, so that many people would see benefitting foreigners as a matter of justice. This cosmopolitan motivation may not be as strong as the motivation to benefit compatriots, and certainly is not as strong as the common motivation to benefit descendents, **but** in combination with these motivations, which we have already seen will be largely retained, it may still be sufficient to ensure that sustainable policies are pursued.

Finally, on my view responsibility-sensitive positions such as equality of opportunity for advantage are most plausible where they reward socially beneficial behaviour, not prudentially beneficial behaviour.³¹ This is important in the present context because it provides an additional motivation for Ecologians (and Affluenzians, for that matter) to conserve resources. Where somebody makes a decision to consume

³¹ See [Author's Publication C].

resources, rather than save them for future generations, they are lowering the advantage prospects of future generations. This behaviour is treated as socially harmful by equality of opportunity for advantage as the view does not discriminate between benefits and burdens that fall on this generation and those that fall on subsequent generations. The heavy consumer of resources will therefore, *ceteris paribus*, be entitled to a lower level of advantage than the light consumer of resources. For this reason individuals will be motivated to save for future generations under equality of opportunity for advantage not only for the sakes of their children, their compatriots' children, and the children of foreigners, but also for themselves. While it is true, as I conceded, that cosmopolitan motives for saving are generally less impactful than familial or nationalist motives, there is not much reason to suppose that people will on the whole be less inclined to help themselves than to help their children, and people routinely show strong preferences for their own interests over those of compatriots. So this new prudential motivation, combined with familial, nationalist, and cosmopolitan motives, should be sufficient to ensure that the Ecologists' sustainable development, or something like it, is retained.

On, then, to Miller's second objection to a redistributive policy – that it is unfair to Ecologists. He says that 'justice does not seem to require transfers when inequalities in advantage can be traced back to preferences, whether individual or collective'.³² Unlike a policy of redistribution to restore equality, my position allows inequalities where they have resulted from the responsible choices of the individuals concerned, so one way in which Miller suggests redistribution is unfair to Ecologists – by asking them

³² Miller 2007, 71.

to ‘subsidize the shorter-term preferences of the members of Affluenza’³³ – is not present in my view.³⁴ But Miller also implies that there is another sort of unfairness perpetrated on Ecologia by redistribution. He suggests that it is unfair for young Affluenzians to start off with similar resources as Ecologians, where neither group had any hand in their country’s use of resources. This is because earlier Ecologians ‘made sacrifices ... in the interests of their successors’.³⁵ Now there is clearly a clash of intuitions here. My position is that it would be unfair to disadvantage young Affluenzians relative to Ecologians just because of the decisions made by their forebears. Miller differs on this point, so his final objection does show a reason to object to my position. But is it a good reason?³⁶ Leif Wenar puts the point starkly: ‘For effect, one can imagine holding the British newborn in one hand, and the Moroccan baby in the other. What will Miller say here that can justify these newborns’ very real and very unequal futures?’³⁷

Although Miller cites Dworkin and Cohen as support for his view that ‘justice does not seem to require transfers when inequalities in advantage can be traced back to

³³ Miller 2007, 71.

³⁴ At least, where individuals are responsible for their preferences. This seems consistent with a qualification Miller makes of his view: ‘preferences which have arisen in certain ways ... may provide grounds for compensatory transfers’ (2007, 71n.19).

³⁵ Miller 2007, 71.

³⁶ In support of his position, Miller suggests that the young Affluenzians’ complaint is primarily against their predecessors, but ‘it does not seem to be a matter of justice that our predecessors should leave us with any particular level of per capita resources, so long as the level does not fall below that required to sustain the institutions that make a decent life possible’ (Miller 2007, 72). I do not see any reason why we should accept this extremely minimalist conception of intergenerational justice.

³⁷ Wenar 2008, 410.

preferences whether individual or collective’, that final word - ‘collective’ – carries his position away from Dworkin’s and Cohen’s egalitarianism, and the global egalitarianism they have inspired. **The rationale for this move is presumably to respect self-determination: if Ecologists’ collective preferences for conservation of resources did not result in greater inheritances for future Ecologists that would be a significant external constraint on Ecologia. Yet** Miller himself dismisses ‘the moral case for inheritance’ in individual cases as ‘fairly weak’, on the basis that the inheritor ‘has, in general, done nothing to deserve the gain she receives’.³⁸ We might doubt whether self-determination could really be so important that we should replace these liberal intuitions with communitarian ones.³⁹ Furthermore, Miller clearly sees self-determination as subject to some legitimate constraints, as he insists on global duties to protect basic needs. To assert that constraints only become objectionable where they go beyond those of Miller’s own theory is to beg the question against global egalitarianism.⁴⁰ It is again the case that Miller’s resistance to global egalitarianism relies not on some internal defect of the position, but rather on invoking a very strong assumption that is at odds with the assumptions of global egalitarians.⁴¹

³⁸ Miller 2007, 150.

³⁹ Cf. Miller 2007, 141-3.

⁴⁰ Barry and Gilibert 2008, 1036.

⁴¹ Tan (2008, 458) suggests that national responsibility and global egalitarianism are compatible, but he gives global justice priority, contrary to Miller’s assumptions: ‘if global justice can be shown to include some egalitarian commitments, then national responsibility will have to be understood within these parameters set by global justice’.

VI. Conclusion

I have argued that Miller's criticisms of global egalitarianism does not threaten its coherence or appeal where the view is stated in one of its stronger forms. The metric problem implicitly assumes that cultural understandings are the only legitimate way of identifying what counts as advantage, but that is an assumption always or almost always rejected by global egalitarianism. The dynamic problem only presents a problem for global luck egalitarianism on the assumption that nations can legitimately inherit assets from earlier generations – again, an assumption very much at odds with typical global egalitarian assumptions.

The assumptions invoked by these two objections do not have the same relationship to global egalitarianism. The cultural understandings assumption probably contradicts global egalitarianism. Although I ventured a way in which one might try and defend global equality of opportunity by basing it on empirical assumptions about cultural understandings, I think that a 'global' equality of opportunity of this sort is not really a form of global egalitarianism as the underlying moral position is consistent with treating people in different nations in substantively unequal ways (it just so happens, the hypothetical position claims, that cultural understandings are sufficiently universal to support global equality of opportunity). The national inheritance assumption probably does not contradict global egalitarianism, but it is certainly a highly controversial assumption rejected by a large majority of global egalitarians, and contrary to the ethical individualism that gives global egalitarianism much of its appeal. By making these assumptions, Miller loads the dice by **denying global egalitarianism access to the moral resources its proponents typically draw upon, and assumes what he intends to show.**

References

Arneson, R. J. 1989. Equality and Equal Opportunity for Welfare. *Philosophical Studies*, 56, 77-93.

Arneson, R. J. 1999. Equality of Opportunity for Welfare Defended and Recanted. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 7, 488-97.

Arneson, R. J. 2000. Welfare Should Be the Currency of Justice. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 30, 497-524.

Arneson, R. J. 2011. Luck Egalitarianism – A Primer. In C. Knight and Z. Stemplowska (eds), *Responsibility and Distributive Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Barry, C. and P. Gilibert. 2008. Does Global Egalitarianism Provide an Impractical and Unattractive Ideal of Justice? *International Affairs*, 84, 1025-39.

Beitz, C. 1979. *Political Theory and International Relations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Cohen, G. A. 1989. On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice. *Ethics*, 99, 906-44.

Dworkin, R. 2000. *Sovereign Virtue: The Theory and Practice of Equality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Dworkin, R. 2003. Equality, Luck and Hierarchy. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 31, 190-8.

Freeman, S. 2006. Distributive Justice and *The Law of Peoples*. In R. Martin and D. A. Reidy (eds), *Rawls's Law of Peoples: A Realistic Utopia?* Oxford: Blackwell.

Hare, R. M. 1981. *Moral Thinking: Its Levels, Method, and Point*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Layard, R. 2005. *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science*. London: Penguin.
- Miller, D. 1999a. *Principles of Social Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Miller, D. 1999b. Justice and Global Inequality. In A. Hurrell and N. Woods (eds), *Inequality, Globalization, and World Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Miller, D. 2000. *Citizenship and National Identity*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Miller, D. 2002. Two Ways to Think About Justice. *Politics, Philosophy, and Economics*, 1, 5-28.
- Miller, D. 2006. Collective Responsibility and International Inequalities in *The Law of Peoples*. In R. Martin and D. A. Reidy (eds), *Rawls's Law of Peoples: A Realistic Utopia?* Oxford: Blackwell.
- Miller, D. 2007. *National Responsibility and Global Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Miller, D. 2008. Political Philosophy for Earthlings. In D. Leopold and M. Stears (eds), *Political Theory: Methods and Approaches*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Moellendorf, D. 2002. *Cosmopolitan Justice*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Nussbaum, M. 2000. *Women and Human Development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pierik, R. 2008. Collective Responsibility and National Responsibility. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 11, 465-83.
- Rawls, J. 1972. *A Theory of Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rawls, J. 1993. *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Rawls, J. 1999. *The Law of Peoples*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sen, A. K. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Singer, P. 1993. *Practical Ethics*, 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tan, K.-C. 2008. National Responsibility, Reparations, and Distributive Justice. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 11, 449-64.

Wenar, L. 2008. Human Rights and Equality in the Work of David Miller. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 11, 410-11.