Cosmopolitanism: A Philosophy for Global Ethics  
By STAN VAN HOOF  

Globalizing Justice: The Ethics of Poverty and Power  
By RICHARD W. MILLER  
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With the humongous amount and variety of ethical cosmopolitan positions in the contemporary literature, Stan van Hooft’s Cosmopolitanism is a great introduction to those who would like to be acquainted with the position, as it argues for 21 essential features in ethical cosmopolitanism ((19-20); I shall not list them out here due to limited space). The area that is covered by this list is extremely extensive: partiality, universal human rights, what we owe to distant others, the self-determination of peoples and nation-states, just war theory, international relations, global governance, toleration etc. Given the limited space here, I shall not attempt to summarize his arguments for the 21 features. However, because of the extensiveness, understandably many arguments require more elaboration. Allow me to illustrate with two examples.

In chapter 2, van Hooft argues for the following justification of human rights: Building on Brock and Nussbaum, he argues that an essential feature of human beings is ‘subjectivity’, i.e. the capacity for choice, voluntary action and reflection. This is where our dignity as human beings lies. Thus social institutions and individuals should not prevent the exercise of this capacity, and should provide the resources necessary for such exercise. Since for van Hooft, obligations and rights are ‘symmetrical’, it follows that all human beings have a right to the freedom and the resources necessary for the exercise of the above said capacity.

Bypassing the issue of whether human rights should be grounded in ‘subjectivity’ (as opposed to say personhood and practicalities (Griffin 2008)), the move from duties to rights seems a bit quick. In one sense duties and rights are ‘symmetrical’ - between perfect duties and rights. Thus if X owes a duty towards Y, then Y has a right against X, and vice versa. But that does not seem to hold between rights and imperfect duties - duties which are not directed to any specific individual(s) (O’Neill 1996: 148). Thus I have a duty to give money to charity, but no one has a right against me to do that. No one can demand, or claim money from me. If that is the case, then van Hooft needs to say more about why the duty to not prevent the exercise of the above said capacity, and to provide the resources necessary for its exercise, is a perfect duty, rather than an imperfect duty, before he can establish the conclusion that all individual have the corresponding right.

In chapter 3, van Hooft frames the discussion as: a cosmopolitan is someone who would respond to the vital needs of others, whether they are near or far and irrespective of their nationality, race, caste, religious commitments, gender or ethnicity (83). He argues that this response is grounded in both the ethic of caring and requirements of justice (92-106). With regard to the former, he argues that caring can be universal in scope, yet we also have more partial kinds of caring competing with that (93-96). With regard to the latter, he appeals to Pogge’s (2002) arguments (100-106).

Juxtaposing Pogge’s arguments with the ethic of caring seems to resolve a worry with Pogge’s position: Insofar as there is only a negative duty not to harm others, one would already
be fulfilling that duty if one opts out from the institutional arrangement that causes harms. How can one therefore also be required to reform that institutional arrangement? One can now answer this question by grounding it in the ethics of caring. It is a pity that van Hooft did not highlight this enough for it to be properly appreciated.

However, I wonder why the discussion is only framed in terms of vital needs of others. It seems what is also central to ethical cosmopolitanism is that there are also more demanding global distributive principles, which go beyond the vital needs of others (e.g. Caney argues for global equality of opportunity and a global prioritarian principle (2005: 121-125)); and that they are supported by the arguments for their domestic counterparts (Caney 2005: 107). Indeed, it is this latter claim that many criticise when they object to ethical cosmopolitanism (see Miller below). Accordingly, given how the discussion is framed, it seems to have neglected this other central feature of ethical cosmopolitanism.

Nevertheless, van Hooft’s *Cosmopolitanism* does clearly and concisely outline the commitments that ethical cosmopolitanism takes on global issues. It is therefore a great starting point for those who would like to know more about ethical cosmopolitanism.

Richard Miller’s *Globalising Justice* offers a novel and refreshing approach to global justice. It concerns the kind of transnational duties that we have, i.e. our duties to foreigners. Miller sets the stage for his approach by first criticising the benevolence approach and the (ethical) cosmopolitans.

Central to Singer's benevolence approach is the demanding principle of sacrifice (9-12). Against this, Miller proposes the less demanding principle of sympathy (13-17), which (stated generally) only requires that one’s disposition (to respond to neediness) to be demanding only up to the level where greater concern (to neediness) would impose significant risk of worsening one’s life; and there is a significant risk of worsening one’s life, if one is deprived from one’s pursuit of worthwhile goals that one intelligently identifies with, but from which one could not readily detach. Since the less demanding principle of sympathy is consistent with equal respect (17-21), it is therefore more preferable than Singer's more demanding principle of sacrifice. But accordingly, the transnational duties based on the principle of sympathy is even more limited (29-30), thus restricting the benevolence approach.

According to Miller, cosmopolitans argue for more demanding transnational duties (i.e. duties of fairness that goes beyond benevolence), by extrapolating them from the domestic arena (cf. my above discussion on van Hooft’s chapter 3). They argue that since such demanding domestic duties are grounded in domestic economic interdependence, the fact of global economic interdependence thus also grounds such demanding transnational duties (31-34). Miller argues that this is true only if it is merely domestic economic interdependence that grounds such demanding domestic duties (33-36 Cf. Barry 1982). However, the fact is that they are grounded in political interactions instead, i.e. the impact of legitimate state functions (e.g. enforcement of property rights, the provision of facilities and services that everyone has reason to want the state to supply etc.) on citizens’ lives (34-43). Miller then goes on to argue that such political interactions ground four different kinds of demanding domestic duties (43-57). Nevertheless, the absence of such political interactions in the global arena means that, contra the cosmopolitans, no demanding transnational duties can be extrapolated from such demanding domestic duties.

With the stage set, Miller argues for his ‘quasi-cosmopolitanism’. It is ‘quasi’ in the sense that demanding transnational duties are not extrapolated from the domestic arena, but are grounded in transnational interactions. But it is nevertheless ‘cosmopolitan’ in the sense that when taken together as a whole, it yields a pattern of transnational duties that encapsulates everyone around the world which aims to benefit the global poor (225-234).

The ultimate aim of quasi-cosmopolitanism, according to Miller, is global civic friendship, where 'international relations [are] based on rational, enduring mutual trust in due
regard for interests and respect for autonomy…” (233). This entails ending the stark inequalities that exist in our world (230-237).

But more specifically, Miller identifies four kinds of transnational interactions, from which demanding transnational duties are based: exploitation in the transnational economy, inequity in international trade arrangements, negligence in climate harms and imperial irresponsibility (58-209). Since all of them involve people in developed countries taking advantage of those in developing countries (even in cases where both parties do better and neither ends up badly (60-62)), they therefore give rise to transnational duties, which those in developed countries owe to those in developing countries. These transnational duties come in different forms. In the case of exploitation, it involves relieving the desperate neediness that underlies exploitation, through giving up the benefits from such interactions (66-69). For inequity, it involves rectifying past inequities and altering trade arrangements (81-83). For climate harms, it involves adopting a model of fair team work which fairly distributes the burdens for containing the harms, though this grants special permissiveness to those in developing countries (92-95). Finally for imperial irresponsibility, it involves repairing and compensating for the destruction and violence done in developing countries by developed countries ((161-166) Miller's discussion here solely focuses on the US, but I think it can be extended to other countries). All these duties, according to Miller, would provide significant benefits to people in developing countries, while imposing significant costs on those in developed countries (210). Miller then ends the book by discussing how social movements and global social democracy can help to realize the transnational duties that he argued for.

However, his arguments against cosmopolitanism seem a bit quick. As Miller notes, cosmopolitans sometimes back up their arguments by arguing that the advantages and disadvantages resulting from (domestic and global) economic interdependence are undeserved. Thus the advantaged have transnational duties to benefit the disadvantaged (34-35). But Miller dismisses this as too demanding, in light of his principle of sympathy and his criticisms against the principle of sacrifice (35).

But just as Miller’s own transnational duties are not grounded in beneficence, and therefore not subject to its limits (81, 210-222), why can’t the cosmopolitans argue the same about their transnational duties? For example, they might argue that they are requirements of justice, and therefore not subject to the limits of beneficence. It is true though, “[w]hat is not deserved is not, just by that token, illegitimately obtained or wrongly used” (35); but it is not necessarily true that, just by that token, it can rightfully be kept and cannot be legitimately or rightfully annexed. I do share Miller’s rejection of cosmopolitan extrapolation, but more needs to be said here against cosmopolitanism.

Nevertheless, the arguments in Richard Miller’s Globalizing Justice are persuasive, and are backed up with extensive and rich empirical discussions. It therefore deserves serious consideration by anyone interested in the issue of global justice.

Ambrose Lee
University of Stirling
Stirling, FK9 4LA, Scotland, UK
a.y.lee@stir.ac.uk

References
