benefit from the dialectical experience that *The Platonian Leviathan* makes possible.

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**OUR OBLIGATIONS TO THE FOREIGN POOR**


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Richard W. Miller’s book *Globalizing Justice: The Ethics of Poverty and Power* sets out an original, compelling argument that “people in developed countries have a vast, largely unmet responsibility to help people in developing countries” (1). Ultimately, he argues, our obligations to the foreign poor are based upon relationships between political and economic agents in the developed world and people in the developing world that are characterized by exploitation, negligence, abuse, and unwarranted violence. Miller is aware that the very relations of transnational power that generate our transnational obligations “guarantee that transnational responsibilities will not, remotely, be met” (226).

Yet there is a glimmer of hope at the end of his book. While Miller is skeptical that the complete rectification of global injustice will be achieved in the near future, he thinks his arguments can be used to advance the cause of social movements that are united in their commitment to what he calls “global social democracy.” Miller argues that these contemporary movements can influence the foreign commitments of the dominant world powers through protest, focused campaigns, and public argument.

*Globalizing Justice* is forcefully argued and well researched, although Miller’s writing style can be slightly confusing at times. In the first chapter, Miller sets out his arguments against Peter Singer’s competing view about global justice which has its origins in Singer’s famous 1972 article “Famine, Affluence, and Morality.” Singer argued that everyone has a duty not to spend money on luxuries or frills, and to use the savings due to abstinence to help those in dire need. Miller calls this Singer’s “radical conclusion.”

Miller claims, plausibly, that the power of this argument derives from its being based not on some controversial utilitarian premises, but on adequate reflection on our ordinary moral intuitions. However, Miller thinks that reflection on another set of moral intuitions shows that Singer’s conclusion “misinterprets ordinary morality” (12). According to Miller, special concern for our children and loved ones and pursuit of expensive goals or projects...
that are “worthwhile” (14) and with which we “intelligently identify” (14) are, on reflection, not incompatible with equal respect for persons. If that is so, then we are permitted to adopt a principle of beneficence that is less demanding than Singer’s. Miller calls this his Principle of Sympathy.

Miller’s argument largely depends on our intuitions about individual cases, and it would take a discussion of each case to do full justice to Miller’s points. But there are a couple of general points that are important here. In arguing that pursuit of expensive goals and concern for partial relationships is compatible with respect for the equal worth of persons, Miller never considers the point of view of those who might be affected by a rich person’s policy to pursue an expensive goal over helping those in direst need. It is quite possible that a concern for equal respect demands that a rich person consider being himself in such a position of need, and then accepting only those principles that someone in that position could not reasonably reject.

Second, Singer has claimed, as Miller notes, that partial relationships are justified just in case the existence of such relationships makes things, on balance, go impartially better than if these relationships did not exist. Miller argues that in ordinary moral thinking, our commitment to partial relationships goes beyond even what would make things go impartially better.

Even if that is true, it seems improper for the rich to rely on their moral intuitions about how much they should favor their partial relationships or expensive goals over helping the neediest, compatible with equal respect. After all, it is precisely this area of our ordinary moral thinking that we think is in need of possible revision on the basis of further critical thought. In addition, such intuitions are likely to be systematically biased both by ordinary self-interest and possibly by the values of a wider conservative culture. Our ordinary moral thinking should not always be the final arbiter as to what is morally required or permitted.

In any case, even if Singer cannot claim that his “radical conclusion” is in harmony with all of our intuitions without further philosophical grounding, neither can Miller. For, as Miller notes, the moral requirement to save a drowning child in a nearby pond that grounds Singer’s own more stringent principle seems, without further philosophical grounding, to conflict with the Principle of Sympathy. In the end, neither Miller nor Singer can claim to rest their principles on ordinary moral intuitions alone.

Miller uses the rest of the book, starting in chapter 3, to lay out his positive theory. The bulk of the book is devoted to a dense empirical discussion of the various ways in which developed countries have incurred serious political responsibilities to foreign nations through abuses of power. Miller convincingly argues that fulfilling the unmet obligations to rectify these abuses of transnational power would impose a significant burden on the disadvantaged in developed countries, but that these burdens are rightfully shouldered by compatriots, not foreigners.

One of Miller’s key normative ideas is the notion of exploitation. According to Miller, the developed world’s “vast, unmet global responsibility” is
“primarily, a duty to avoid taking advantage of people in developing countries” (1). In such situations, people in developed nations treat people in developing nations with inadequate regard for the equal moral importance of their interests, taking advantage of their bargaining weaknesses due to desperate neediness. One of Miller’s core examples is a case involving Chinese leather workers. Miller rightly claims that the fact that the workers are made better off than they would be without the work, voluntarily accept employment, and report satisfaction with their lives does not mitigate the moral wrong of the exploitative arrangement between manufacturers and laborers.

Miller’s focus on exploitation has great intuitive appeal. But Miller’s discussion leaves some unanswered questions. It seems plausible that once the basic needs of the leather workers are met they are not being exploited in a morally objectionable way just by being made to do something they would not do if they were not in a (relatively) weak bargaining position. This view is at least suggested by Miller’s characterization of the leather workers’ situation as “stultifying” (64), and his claim that improving wages and working conditions would avoid the wrongdoing of exploitation. If Miller has a basic-needs threshold beyond which exploitation as he defines it is not morally objectionable, then clearly much hinges on how robust a conception of “basic needs” Miller has in mind.

Miller’s Globalizing Justice is an important contribution to thought about transnational justice. The book’s combination of fresh, compelling theoretical argument and deep engagement in the realities of global political and economic life are a paradigm for philosophical work on this subject, and indeed for applied ethics in general.

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THE POWER OF POLITICAL ECONOMY


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To rise to power through emulation, one must grasp the principles at the origins of the admired power: knowledge is necessary for successful imitation. When the formidable economic success of England came to be codified in political economy, European nations yearned to acquire such powerful knowledge. Emulation thus took the form of translations, the necessary step toward the appropriation of the original. Following the path of this