



Justice for Earthlings
Essays in Political Philosophy

In the past few decades social changes have impacted how we understand justice, as societies become both more multicultural and more interconnected globally. Much philosophical thought, however, seems to proceed in isolation from these developments. While philosophers from Plato onwards have portrayed justice as an abstract, universal ideal, Miller argues that principles of justice are always rooted in particular social contexts, and connects these ideas to the changing conditions of human life. In this important contribution to political philosophy, it is argued that philosophers need to pay more attention to the way that people actually think about what's fair, and only defend principles that are feasible to apply in the real world. To understand equality of opportunity, for example, we must explore the cultural constraints that people face when presented with life choices. *Justice for Earthlings* also explains how national boundaries make justice at a global level different from social justice.

DAVID MILLER is Professor of Political Theory and an Official Fellow at Nuffield College, University of Oxford. He is also a Fellow of the British Academy.

Justice for Earthlings

Essays in Political Philosophy

DAVID MILLER



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-61375-1 — Justice for Earthlings
David Miller
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107613751

© David Miller 2013

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2013

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Miller, David, 1946 March 8– author.

Justice for earthlings : essays in political philosophy / David Miller.

pages cm

Includes index.

ISBN 978-1-107-02879-1 (hardback)

1. Political science – Philosophy. 2. Justice. I. Title.

JA71.M4565 2012

320.011 – dc23 2012037568

ISBN 978-1-107-02879-1 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-107-61375-1 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page</i> vi
Introduction	1
1 Political philosophy for Earthlings	16
2 Two ways to think about justice	40
3 Social justice in multicultural societies	70
4 Liberalism, equal opportunities and cultural commitments	93
5 Equality of opportunity and the family	115
6 Justice and boundaries	142
7 Social justice <i>versus</i> global justice?	165
8 ‘Are they <i>my</i> poor?’: the problem of altruism in a world of strangers	183
9 Taking up the slack? Responsibility and justice in situations of partial compliance	206
10 A tale of two cities; or, political philosophy as lamentation	228
<i>Index</i>	250

Acknowledgements

Many people have helped me in writing the essays collected in this book, through discussion and comment: some of these are acknowledged individually at the beginning of each essay, but many more are not. Here I should like to add my thanks to: Richard Fisher of Cambridge University Press, for responding enthusiastically to my original suggestion for this book; Barbara Schmitz, for extended discussion of several of the themes it contains; Margaret Moore, for helpful advice on the Introduction; and last but not least, Jerry Cohen, whose untimely death has deprived me not only of a valued friend and colleague, but also someone whose powerfully argued, but contrary, views have constantly spurred me to develop my own. It is no accident that the first and last of these essays have been directly inspired by his work.

I should like to thank the publishers for permission to reprint essays that first appeared in the following places:

- ‘Political Philosophy for Earthlings’ in D. Leopold and M. Stears (eds.), *Political Theory: Methods and Approaches* (Oxford University Press, 2008). By permission of Oxford University Press.
- ‘Two Ways to Think about Justice’ in *Politics, Philosophy and Economics*, 1 (2002), 5–28. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- ‘Social Justice in Multicultural Societies’ in P. Van Parijs (ed.), *Cultural Diversity versus Economic Solidarity* (Brussels: Deboeck University Press, 2004 with the Francqui Foundation).
- ‘Liberalism, Equal Opportunities and Cultural Commitments’ in P. Kelly (ed.), *Multiculturalism Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002).
- ‘Equality of Opportunity and the Family’ in R. Reich and D. Satz (eds.), *Toward a Humanist Justice: The Work of Susan Moller Okin* (Oxford University Press, 2009).
- ‘Justice and Boundaries’ in *Politics, Philosophy and Economics*, 8 (2009), 291–309. SAGE Publications Ltd.

Acknowledgements

vii

‘Social Justice *versus* Global Justice?’ in O. Cramme and P. Diamond (eds.), *Social Justice in the Global Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009).

“‘Are They My Poor?’: The Problem of Altruism in a World of Strangers’ in *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 5 (2002), 106–27. Taylor & Francis Group.

‘Taking Up the Slack? Responsibility and Justice in Situations of Partial Compliance’ in C. Knight and Z. Stemplowska (eds.), *Responsibility and Distributive Justice* (Oxford University Press, 2011).