

A Brief Rejoinder to Valentini

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Laura Valentini's gracious but incisive response to my criticism helpfully clarifies her own position and puts into greater relief the point of contention between us. She says that my claim that she rejects global egalitarianism is a "misunderstanding" since she only rejects "full-blown cosmopolitan equality" and not global egalitarianism as such. However, the basic difference between both remains unclear.

I should first note that Valentini's basic aim in her book, namely to discover a distinctive third position, is to be commended and encouraged. In fact, bold, ambitious undertakings of this sort, of developing new positions or frameworks for assessing lingering problems, is what makes for really interesting and engaging philosophical work. So my rejoinder here should not be read as a dismissal of her project. To the contrary, I will put pressure on her claim in order to encourage more investigation into the possibility of a third position on global justice along the lines she suggests.

Her approach to global justice, she stresses, is open to the possibility that certain global practices be regulated by egalitarian principles (of the sort I hinted at) although she did not argue for them in her book. But if this is so, it only reinforces my central objection that her approach to global justice is not a distinctive position that provides a third alternative to statist humanitarianism and cosmopolitan equality. As she says, my reading of her "reveals a deeper disagreement between the two of us", and this is the significant point. This disagreement in the first instance has to do with how we characterize cosmopolitan equality and what would make a position non-cosmopolitan.

Whether we should call a position "cosmopolitan egalitarian" or not might seem to some readers to be a pedantic dispute. But in the context of the present discussion this is more than a terminological quibble, for my claim in my review is that the interesting and crucial difference between humanitarian obligations and cosmopolitan egalitarian obligations reduces to the difference between sufficiency and equality (or sufficientarianism and egalitarianism). What is substantively at stake in the debate on global distributive justice, in fact what I would consider the fundamental challenge, is whether global distributive principles should be sufficientarian or egalitarian. Valentini, in contrast, takes the dispute to involve not just the pattern of distribution

but also the grounds and recipients of distribution. Our disagreement, as Valentini also points out, far from being merely semantic, is ultimately a disagreement about what is really at issue in the debate.

In my view, Valentini's position as clarified in her reply is more clearly a variant of cosmopolitan egalitarianism. Valentini offers two reasons why her position is distinctive from cosmopolitan egalitarianism and occupies a middle position. One of them is that she takes the basic recipients of distribution to be states. This alone, however, does not make her position anti-cosmopolitan since she also conditions the normative standing of states on their respecting the equal freedom of their respective individual members (freedom here defined as independence). Cosmopolitans do regard individuals, in the world as a whole, as the basic units of equal moral concern and, in this sense, adopt a normative individualist position. But this does not mean that a global distributive principle that takes states to be the recipients is non-cosmopolitan, if the qualification of states to be recipients of justice is contingent on how they treat individuals within their borders. For instance, if states' normative status as recipients of global justice is conditional on the respect for the equal freedom of each individual (as in Valentini's theory), this is not fundamentally distinguishable from the cosmopolitan position. Cosmopolitans can allow states to be the main recipients of global distribution for a variety of reasons, including administrative, heuristic, or appeal to the virtues of a division of labour. Their position remains basically cosmopolitan if what fundamentally guides their vision is how individuals fare under the distributive arrangement.

Her other reason for distinguishing her position from a cosmopolitan egalitarian one is her understanding of the grounds of global obligations. But the ground of a principle and the pattern of the principle are distinct, and a principle is egalitarian depending on its pattern and not its ground. What distinguishes cosmopolitan *egalitarianism* from statist *humanitarianism* is not that the former is grounded in justice and the latter is not, for it is open to humanitarians to say that their minimalist commitments are nonetheless obligations of justice (and some will indeed hold this). More to the present point, cosmopolitan egalitarianism need not be tied to any particular ground of equality. Valentini herself recognizes this (allowing that there can be relational and non-relational grounds for cosmopolitan equality), but this then only further confirms my point that the ground of a principle is distinct from its pattern.

To make my central point from a different direction: Valentini means to only reject "full-blown" cosmopolitan equality, meaning by this the position that egalitarian principles for the global domain are identical to those for the domestic one. That is, on this view, global egalitarianism is just domestic egalitarianism writ large. As I noted in my review, while this is certainly descriptive of some cosmopolitan egalitarian positions,

“full-blown” cosmopolitan equality is only a variant of cosmopolitan egalitarianism. Valentini may well be correct that global egalitarian justice is not simply domestic justice replicated in the global arena but should take the more limited though egalitarian form she suggests. But to claim that this is a distinctive (and non-cosmopolitan) position and not just a variant of cosmopolitan equality distracts from the key dispute about global distributive justice, which is that of sufficiency versus equality. And appealing to the dimensions of grounds and recipients does not necessarily provide a resolution of this quarrel nor does it bring the two sides to a common middle ground. Statist humanitarians can accept that humanitarian obligations are obligations of justice but insist that these global obligations remain sufficientarian in form; and cosmopolitan egalitarians can accept that states are the recipients of distributive justice but insist that the global distribution remain egalitarian in form.

In short, Valentini’s thesis that there is a third approach rests on a particular characterization of cosmopolitan egalitarianism which includes features that are not essential to the view. However, since cosmopolitan *egalitarianism* is neither (i) uniquely based on some specific moral grounding nor (ii) incompatible with involving the state in its distributive enterprise, Valentini’s acceptance of global distributive principles with egalitarian pattern and whose normative starting point is the equal freedom of individuals puts her on the cosmopolitan side even though she denies the team colours. As noted above, this is not a quibble over a label but a comment on what the debate between statist humanitarianism and cosmopolitan egalitarianism is really about.