

**Equality and Global Justice: Tracing the Scope and Grounds of  
Egalitarianism**

by

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## **Abstract**

In this thesis, I examine the nature of egalitarian theories of distributive justice and their applicability to the global realm. I begin by laying out why it is that equality matters and how it is that we ought to understand egalitarianism as a doctrine. In response to a series of objections to the aim of distributive equality, I maintain that we have strong reasons to value equality above and beyond simply ensuring that people have enough, and that the egalitarian aim properly conceived does not involve perverse consequences. I subsequently extend this understanding of the value of economic equality to the global context, and argue that the objectionable relations of power and domination that exist internationally point to the need to limit global inequalities. Finally, I conclude my discussion by forwarding a more in-depth account of the grounds of egalitarian justice, and by examining two internally egalitarian objections to global egalitarianism. Both of these objections, I argue, are most plausibly understood as entailing an expansion of egalitarian concern to the global realm. Given that the global economic order generates the conditions under which duties of egalitarian justice are triggered, I conclude that the proper scope of egalitarian justice is global.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Should principles of egalitarian distribution be global in scope? One legacy of the Rawlsian project in political philosophy has been a concern with how to apply the sophisticated ideas of justice developed within *A Theory of Justice* outside the domestic sphere. While Rawls himself rejected the idea that substantive egalitarian principles could govern distributive relations outside of the state, thinkers such as Charles Beitz (1999 [1979]) and Thomas Pogge (1989) applied what they saw as the universalist foundations of Rawlsian liberalism to the global sphere. For both philosophers, qualities particular to the global realm – specifically, the interdependence between nations which points to the existence of a global basic structure and renders the world a scheme of social cooperation (Beitz 1999 [1979]: 137; Pogge 1989: 236-240) – entail that the distribution of goods produced by the global economy ought to be governed in accordance with the Rawlsian difference principle that maximizes the position of the worst-off.

In recent years, an extensive body of literature has come to the forefront of the field of global justice exploring questions related to global egalitarianism and the importance of limiting global inequalities. With advances in the organization and institutionalization of global trade, greater attention has been paid by world actors to the still-extensive nature of global inequality and poverty, and this development has been mirrored within the currents of political philosophy. The tension between nationalism and liberal individualism present in contemporary liberal theory has been confronted within a series of debates on the question of the scope of our ideal theories of justice. On the one

hand, philosophers following the example of Rawls have constructed methods for understanding the scope and grounds of egalitarian justice that have limited it to the domestic context. For these philosophers, duties of justice may apply globally,<sup>1</sup> but our specifically egalitarian concern with the relative levels of resources people have available to them only apply between individuals who share a state context, due to the special quality of the relationships co-citizens are held to share.<sup>2</sup> On the other, philosophers such as Charles Beitz, Thomas Pogge, Simon Caney and Kok-Chor Tan have argued that the universalism underlying contemporary liberal theory entails an appeal to moral cosmopolitanism. These thinkers have often applied the framework of Rawlsian political theory, in a variety of ways, to the global terrain,<sup>3</sup> arguing that the distributive implications of national borders constitute a morally arbitrary division between peoples analogous to the kind that Rawls famously denounces with regards to talents and abilities.

In this thesis, I explore how we should understand equality and justice, both within the realm of the state and within the realm of the modern global political landscape. In doing so, I will defend a conception of egalitarianism that views socio-economic or distributive equality as morally important for reasons derived from our

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<sup>1</sup> Nagel (2005) is something of an exception here, as while Nagel believes in the validity of egalitarian claims within the nation-state, he does not believe that demands of justice are explicable without the enabling condition of a sovereign power. For Nagel, our duties to the global poor must then be understood as distinctly humanitarian in character, meaning that they hold in virtue of people's absolute needs rather than their relative needs, in the absence of a fully sovereign global order.

<sup>2</sup> For understandings of egalitarianism that limit it to the domestic sphere with specific reference to the literature on global justice, see R. Miller (1998); Rawls (1999); Risse (2006); D. Miller (2007); Sangiovanni (2007); and Blake (2008).

<sup>3</sup> In addition to Beitz and Pogge, several of the most well-known elaborations of global egalitarianism include a treatment of Rawls and how his view is most plausibly read as entailing principles of global egalitarian justice. See Darrel Moellendorf's cosmopolitan extension of the principles of Rawlsian political constructivism (2002: Chap. 2), or Kok-Chor Tan's emphasis on the morally arbitrary nature of global inequalities (2004: 55-61; 2012: Chaps. 6-7) for examples.

concern for the moral equality of human beings, and the valuable nature of the social relations that obtain when people live in an equality of standing with others.

In my second chapter, I look at what I consider to underlie our considered egalitarian concern, and argue that the intuition towards egalitarianism is best understood as elaborating “a complex social and political ideal of how people should best live together” (O’Neill 2008: 139). Against influential objections forwarded by Harry Frankfurt and Derek Parfit, I argue that economic equality is valuable for the way it alleviates the kind of stigmatizing relations of power and dominance that occur in a structurally unequal society, and for the way it promotes and engenders relations of mutual (self-)respect among people. The view I forward here is similar to what has been called social or democratic egalitarianism, in that it sees the value of equality as emanating from the value of certain kinds of relations between people, and not from an ideal of distributive equality that is plausibly separable from our concern with the equal respect that all individuals deserve (Anderson 1999; Scheffler 2003, forthcoming).<sup>4</sup> However, as opposed to some explications of what is demanded by the idea of a community of equals, I see the social ideal of equality as necessitating a robust concern with distributive equality. With this examination of the value of equality and the demands that egalitarian justice produces within the domestic sphere, I hope to demonstrate why relations of equal respect matter, and establish a foundation for why they continue to matter when transposed to the global context.

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<sup>4</sup> In Scheffler’s terms, the view I uphold is a *relational* view of the value of equality. This is in contrast to a purely distributive view, where the value of distributive equality is held to be normatively autonomous from social considerations and distributively self-sufficient, in that distributive egalitarians hold that “equality is capable all on its own of generating a presumptively authoritative principle of distribution” (forthcoming: 33-34).

In my third chapter, I move on to the debate over global distributive justice, and evaluate which of our reasons for valuing economic equality in the domestic context have a fully global scope. I argue that the global realm instantiates objectionable relations of power and domination between moral agents that entail the need for a limit on the extent of allowable distributive inequalities between parties. I do not defend any particular substantive principle for how global inequalities ought to be ameliorated here, nor is this one of my aims; the goal is simply to defend the fundamental global egalitarian claim that at least some international inequalities stand in need of justification *as* inequalities.

Finally, in my fourth chapter, I examine the ongoing debate concerning the grounds of egalitarian justice. Building on my first chapter, I present in greater specificity the norm-generating conditions I consider necessary to trigger egalitarian concern between individuals. I describe these conditions in terms of what Darrel Moellendorf calls the ‘principle of associational justice,’ where duties of egalitarian justice are owed between individuals who have a moral duty of equal respect to one another if those persons are co-participants in a relevantly strong and morally important association. I contrast this view with two other associational accounts of egalitarian duties, as forwarded by philosophers who limit the scope of egalitarian justice to individual states, and argue that neither thinker provides a compelling reason for their limiting thesis.

Having put forth what I believe to be a plausible account of the scope and grounds of egalitarian justice, and having rejected several objections to the expansion of this concern to the international realm, I hope to have made a strong case for the need to limit morally important global inequalities. An egalitarian approach to global justice preserves the dignity of all persons by mitigating harmful relations of power and domination that

give some the greater ability to determine our shared global order. If we accept the universalist premise as to the moral equality of persons, and affirm the value of individuals being able to lead certain kinds of lives that involve living in relations of equal standing with one another, we should concern ourselves with the ongoing alleviation of global inequality.

## Chapter 2

### Why Does Equality Matter?

#### Introduction:

Over the past few decades in political philosophy, there has been extensive attention paid to the field of distributive justice, with much of the relevant literature concerning the role that the ideal of economic equality should play in understanding what a just distribution should be. Egalitarian doctrines are motivated by the principle of equal respect for the inherent dignity of persons, what might be called the thesis that all human beings are moral equals, and are therefore entitled to some level of equal treatment on that basis. While there have been a variety of ways of understanding the scope and demandingness of this egalitarian commitment, all egalitarian theories attribute some importance to the pursuit of social or economic equality.

In this chapter, I consider how we should conceive of egalitarianism within the framework of distributive justice: for what reasons and to what extent should we value distributive or economic equality among persons? In doing so, I will look at a pair of objections to the notion that economic inequality is something we should be *prima facie* concerned with in creating a just distribution of resources. The first, made by Harry Frankfurt, charges that a distribution ought to be considered just so long as everyone within the scope of that distribution has *enough*; that they meet the criterion of sufficiency. Against this claim, I will argue that we have numerous reasons to value equality above and beyond a concern that every human being possesses adequate resources, and that distributing resources according to the criterion of sufficiency alone is

inadequate for guaranteeing many of the things human beings find necessary for a fulfilling and meaningful life.

The second objection, put forth by Derek Parfit, challenges the idea that equality *per se* is a desirable aim, given its unattractive consequences, and contends instead that distributive justice should be concerned primarily with raising the standard of living of those who are worse off. In response to this objection, I will contest the normative force of what Parfit calls the Levelling Down Objection, and argue that his understanding of the possible terrain of egalitarian thought is excessively narrow and does not allow space for the most intuitive forms that an egalitarian theory of distributive justice might take. My goal in this chapter will be not only to neutralize these two objections of their power against a distinctly egalitarian conception of distributive justice, but also to deploy them in order to understand how we should understand egalitarianism as a doctrine and why socio-economic equality is in fact an important ideal for reasons of justice.

### Section 2.1: The Challenge from Sufficiency

In his essay, “Equality as a Moral Ideal,” Harry Frankfurt denies that economic equality is a morally important aim. Rather, Frankfurt proposes that what should be given weight from the perspective of morality is “not that everyone should have *the same*, but that they should have *enough*” (1998: 134). This is what Frankfurt calls the “doctrine of sufficiency,” which contends that if everyone had enough, it would be “of no moral importance whether some had more than others” (1998: 134-35). As Frankfurt puts the point elsewhere, what is of genuine moral concern is not formal, but substantive: it is “whether people have good lives, and not how their lives compare with others” (1997: 6).

When a person evaluates the quality of their life, what they must take into account is “how closely the course of his life suits his individual capacities, meets his particular needs, fulfills his best potentialities, and provides him with what he himself cares about” (1997: 6-7). Particularly important for Frankfurt is that none of these considerations depend on the person in question measuring their circumstances with the circumstances of anyone else. By contrast, he argues that a concern with equality can actually have damaging effects, as it can alienate people and distract them from discovering what they really care about and what will actually satisfy them (1998: 136-37).

Frankfurt’s claim then is that what motivates the egalitarian intuition in the kinds of situations that are typically cited as problematic for reasons of inequality is “not the fact that some of the individuals in those situations have *less* money than others but the fact that those with less have *too little*” (1998: 146). Situations that are deemed morally troubling by egalitarians for reasons of inequality derive their intuitive force not from the presence of inequality per se, but the levels of deprivation and poverty that often accompany radical inequality. Under a different set of social circumstances, where such destitution would not be an ever-present fact of daily life and each individual would have enough to meet their basic needs, or live a decently-satisfying life,<sup>5</sup> economic inequality would not be a matter of significant moral concern. We are, after all, relatively unmoved

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<sup>5</sup> How exactly the sufficientarian thesis is to be understood is a matter of debate, both for those who accept some version of it as well as for those who reject it. As Paula Casal points out, if the threshold for sufficiency is low, then sufficientarian concern may be of a narrowly humanitarian character, with the consequence being that this makes the sufficientarian view that much more vulnerable to egalitarian critiques of the kind I advance here. On the other hand, if the threshold for sufficiency is high, the sufficientarian can no longer claim that what is doing work for the egalitarian in pointing to the worst-off as a reason for desiring equality is actually the doctrine of sufficiency. Where ‘enough’ is stipulated in broad enough terms, the doctrine of sufficiency may then be no more immediately intuitive than egalitarianism; for this reason, Casal suspects that much of the intuitive desirability of the doctrine of sufficiency lies in the ambiguity over how the threshold for sufficiency is defined. For further discussion on this point, see Casal (2007).

by the discrepancies in wealth between the rich and the merely well-to-do.<sup>6</sup> To whatever extent then that we find the egalitarian motivation plausible, Frankfurt argues that this intuition is parasitic on the logically independent doctrine of sufficiency (1998: 147).<sup>7</sup>

Following Paula Casal's influential characterization of the debate, we can then understand sufficientarianism as being comprised of two separate theses. The positive claim made by the sufficientarian stresses the importance of people living above a certain threshold, as being free from deprivation. The negative thesis denies the relevance of certain additional distributive requirements (2007: 297-98). The positive thesis, it must be said, is already embedded in any credible understanding of egalitarian theory; the notion of moral equality which underlies egalitarian thought plausibly stems from an existing concern for persons' well-being, and respecting the dignity of persons entails concern for their interests.<sup>8</sup> What marks the sufficientarian's challenge to egalitarianism then is the notion that we have no reasons above and beyond reasons of sufficiency to ensure further measures of distributive equality among a population. As long as everyone has 'enough,' however that is to be defined, a distribution is just.

We might then say that our first and most basic reason for valuing equality is, in line with the sufficientarian, in order to relieve suffering or severe deprivation.

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<sup>6</sup> This point is made notably by Roger Crisp in his essay "Equality, Priority and Compassion." For Crisp, what ought to govern our distributional ethics is the principle of compassion, which entails giving absolute priority to those who fall below the threshold at which compassion enters (2003: 758). His view is then a hybrid between Frankfurt's sufficiency thesis and the notion of priority, which will be examined later on in this chapter.

<sup>7</sup> He will also go on to say in a later paper that when egalitarianism has intuitive plausibility, this plausibility is "grounded in the more basic requirements of respect and impartiality" (1997: 11).

<sup>8</sup> As Pablo Gilabert has put it in discussing the relationship between principles of (global) sufficiency and principles of (global) equality, "Equal respect and concern for every human being involves caring not only that they have the ability to survive and avoid the most egregious threats, but also that they are able to live an autonomous and highly meaningful life. Once one starts developing an impartial concern for the well-being of all by acknowledging the former, it seems arbitrary not to extend it so as to acknowledge the latter as well." (2012: 167)

Alleviating existing instances of severe poverty will realistically demand the transfer of wealth and other resources from those who are well off to those living under conditions of objectionable scarcity. Notably, however, this reason is not itself specifically *egalitarian* in character: the strength of this reason for motivating a move towards a more equal distribution of resources is based not in any reference to the undesirable nature of social or economic inequality, but is instead “a function of the urgency of the claims of those who are worse off” (Scanlon 2003: 203). Indeed, Frankfurt himself will say we may often have reason to move towards a more equal distribution on the grounds of ensuring that everyone is above a given threshold (1997: 3-4). What motivates this possible reason for valuing economic equality could more accurately be described as *humanitarian* concern: the belief that human beings have certain vital interests that ought to be defended, and that harms such as poverty and deprivation violate these interests and should be eliminated wherever they occur. Frankfurt is correct to say that this reason for desiring equality is not itself motivated by any real egalitarian commitment, but is rather a contingent fact dependent on our appreciation that those who are the worst-off in our current world are within the threshold of humanitarian concern. To care about raising the living standards of the global poor, we do not need to be concerned with equality per se; a humanitarian understanding of the duties we owe to one another by virtue of our common humanity and the need that all human beings have for certain life-sustaining goods will suffice.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> As alluded to earlier, humanitarian concern and the concern that people have ‘enough’ may be one and the same – indeed, this is how I read Frankfurt’s (admittedly vague) understanding of what sufficiency entails – but this depends on how the sufficientarian thesis is elaborated. (For example, Crisp (2003) ties sufficiency to the threshold at which compassion is no longer relevant. Again, what this means in terms of absolute levels is unclear.)

The challenge should be taken seriously: why should we care about equality as opposed to simply raising the living standard of the worst off to an acceptable measure? As Frankfurt points out, much of the usual popular rhetoric concerning equality gains its force from drawing attention to absolute standards of poverty, rather than concerns directly related to the relations that obtain between individuals. Could it not then be the doctrine of sufficiency that properly underlies our duties of justice to the worse-off?

I argue that this criticism is off-base. In thinking that our reasons for valuing equality are consistently reducible to concerns with absolute deprivation, Frankfurt fails to appreciate the properly political dimensions for valuing economic or distributive forms of equality. In response to Frankfurt, he is correct that economic equality is not of *intrinsic* moral importance, but this point is based in a misunderstanding of how egalitarian doctrine has traditionally proceeded, and does nothing to make his point that we should focus on ensuring only that people have *enough* instead. In truth, there have been egalitarians who have made the claim that economic equality is intrinsically valuable, and that therefore any deviation from this standard must be justified accordingly as a departure from a morally worthwhile state,<sup>10</sup> but this is not the version of egalitarianism which I mean to advocate here. On the contrary, I advocate an egalitarian approach to distributive justice that is importantly concerned with economic equality as a measure for ensuring that the social, political and moral equality of persons is guaranteed.

To conclude from the non-intrinsic nature of socio-economic equality that it is therefore not a valuable aim for distributive justice is certainly false. We have many

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<sup>10</sup> Larry Temkin is one such philosopher who has made this argument. See Temkin (1993: Chap. 9); and Temkin (2003) for details.

reasons for valuing economic equality, the strongest of which come from our understanding that all individuals are to be considered moral equals, and that they then ought to be held in equal standing to one another and to have the same rights of autonomy and self-determination. Against the negative thesis contained within the doctrine of sufficiency, I will now propose three reasons for why equality must be relevant in determining a just distribution of resources above and beyond reasons of sufficiency. These reasons are what I will, borrowing a term from Martin O'Neill, call 'strongly egalitarian,' in that while they do not affirm the intrinsic value of equality, they reveal a strong series of connections between the various motivations we have for being egalitarians. The egalitarian concerns that underlie these 'strongly egalitarian' reasons should not be understood as plausibly separable from a concern with equality itself, given the close connection between economic equality and its relevantly desirable effects. More precisely, the reasons I intend to give in support of egalitarianism should instead be understood as a compilation of mutually supportive elements that "together constitute a complex background picture of how people should live together as equals" (O'Neill 2008: 125).

Employing a second classification suggested by Thomas Scanlon, I will understand those reasons that are authentically egalitarian – that is, those reasons which truly take some measure of equality as their basis – as being fundamentally comparative and non-specific. Egalitarian reasons are concerned with "the relation between the levels of benefit that individuals enjoy" and do not take as their concern the "absolute levels of these benefits;" it is importantly the difference between what two groups enjoy that matters for reasons of equality (Scanlon 2004: 6-7). This is not to deny that there may be

valuable reasons for desiring equality that are not strongly egalitarian, or that do not derive from the strongly egalitarian reasons I advance here. I merely emphasize the reasons I do because I feel they most accurately reflect what underlies the specifically egalitarian commitment to equality.

## Section 2.2: Why Equality Matters

The first reason I would like to give for why economic equality matters above and beyond reasons of sufficiency has to do with the way in which economic inequality can lead to the creation of stigmatizing forms of status for members of worse-off groups. To borrow the words of Thomas Scanlon, we can cash out this first ‘strongly egalitarian’ reason in terms of (1) “the belief that it is an evil for people to be treated as inferior, or made to feel inferior” (2003: 204). Where social practices such as rigid class or caste systems “[confer] privileges of rank or [require] expressions of deference,” these practices are objectionable because of the stigmatizing nature of the harms they produce for those who lack said privileges (ibid.). For analogous reasons, we might also object to the ways in which such status harms are experienced by individuals in societies characterized by significant economic inequality, which similarly confer on their members objectionable inequalities in social status with respect to their differing levels of means and power. Economic inequality, by restricting the life opportunities of the worse-off, can not only result in those with less options being denied access to socially-privileged positions of respectability, but can furthermore bestow degrading and objectionable feelings of inferiority on those who suffer from relative deprivation.

This objection may be understood as targeting two distinctly intolerable yet interconnected consequences of economic inequality. As Rawls has put it, significant political and economic inequalities can “encourage those of lower status to be viewed by both *themselves* and by *others* as inferior” (Rawls 2001: 131, emphasis mine). In other words, it is simultaneously an evil of significant socio-economic inequality that (1a) the worse-off can come to think of themselves as inferior, *and* that (1b) those who experience socially desired levels of privilege and status can come to think of themselves as superior to their fellow citizens. Such political and economic inequalities then may engender the vicious attitudes of “deference and servility on one side and a will to dominate and arrogance on the other” (Rawls 2001: 131). Following Scanlon, we might understand these kinds of status-harms as being comprised of an objectionable form of treatment (e.g. being treated as inferior or not being treated as an equal) and a resultant experiential component (the first-person lived experience of being treated *as* inferior), both of which should be considered morally objectionable and a relevant concern of justice (2003: 212).

What is a matter of justice here is not only that an individual might be treated differently on the basis of their socio-economic status or rank, but that they might, though not necessarily through any *intentional* action on the part of relevant social institutions,<sup>11</sup> reasonably come to experience their status as diminishing their self-worth, and understand themselves as inferior to others on this basis. Economic inequality can not

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<sup>11</sup> Scanlon specifies that for such feelings of shame and inferiority to be regrettable for reasons of egalitarian justice, they must be caused (whether intentionally or unintentionally) by existing institutional arrangements, and must be of a sort that could be met his separate criteria of reasonability (See Scanlon (1998) for this view developed in greater detail). So, for example, the hypothetical claims of a white nationalist that institutional efforts at including and accommodating the experiences of visible minorities and immigrants in the public life are threatening to her sense of standing and self-worth are not reasonable, and therefore need not invoke egalitarian sympathies.

only result in individuals being treated as if they are unequal, but can involve persons reasonably experiencing themselves as unequal to others as a result. The harm involved is a denial of equal standing. What is then crucial to understand about the kinds of harms that are produced by stigmatizing differences in status is that, in weakening the self-respect or self-worth of the badly-off, such status harms affect the most fundamental moral interests that human beings possess. Self-respect of the kind that can be injured by the experience of socio-economic inequality or relative deprivation is a necessary good for a happy and fulfilling life.

Importantly, this reason for valuing equality is not itself derivable to concerns with sufficiency, as such problematic forms of stigmatization have as their basis the specifically relational character of status, and therefore provide reason for the elimination of difference as such as opposed to simply ensuring that all people meet some pre-determined criterion of 'enough.' That there are bound to exist, within a social context, certain goals and positions which are regarded by that society as important yet which can only be achieved by a limited number of persons is a matter of moral concern. Even if the achievements of those who are better off are fully meritocratic in character, and not rooted in the practices of discrimination and unequal levels of opportunity that so often ground real-world inequalities, it is still *prima facie* regrettable that the nature of these achievements can serve to undermine the grounds of other people's self-worth (Scanlon 2003: 214-16). It must be said that the point of concern here is not that people have naturally different talents and abilities, but that the way in which society is structured will necessarily end up advantaging certain talents and abilities over others, and so potentially have the effect of weakening the self-respect of those who are unable to attain particular

socially-desired positions for morally arbitrary reasons. This may not always be an immediate concern for justice – whether or not it is will likely depend on the nature of the social inequalities in question and the historical circumstances and institutional practices that produced them – but these inequalities in status are to be considered undesirable where they exist.

The stigmatizing nature of political and economic inequalities also has a separately objectionable consequence. Where I focused above largely on individuals' experience of the harms produced by stigmatizing differences in social status, there also exists a more holistic manner in which economic inequality can have harmful effects on the health of a society and the individuals within it. This category of harms (2) “emphasizes damage to the bonds between people: what might be called the loss of fraternity resulting from great differences in people’s material circumstances, accomplishments and the social importance accorded to them” (Scanlon 2003: 212). What makes this reason egalitarian in character is that, while fraternity is not itself a comparative good, it appropriately derives from relational concerns as to the stigmatizing nature of status and hierarchy; the social goods of solidarity and community can only be produced through an ongoing engagement with comparative and non-specific egalitarian goals. In societies characterized by inequality and class stratification, individuals are prone to becoming alienated from others with different economic means and who occupy different social positions. Importantly, this is a harm that is experienced by both the better off and worse off alike. An absence of social fraternity affects the manner of relationships that members of *all* social positions are capable of forming, and potentially restricts the

number of situations or activities that an individual might feel comfortable taking part in by virtue of their economic status (Scanlon 2003: 213).

We can understand a lack of social fraternity as being harmful in two main ways. Firstly, on an interactional level, encounters between members of different class status may involve varying levels of anguish and discomfort, where the form the interaction takes may lead to shame, pity or resentment on the part of either party. This can also make it difficult for valuable social relationships to form outside the boundaries of existing class divisions, as individuals' points of reference may vary wildly by level of education and social bracket, effectively creating and reproducing insular pockets within society as opposed to encouraging people to think of their fellow citizens as equals.

Secondly, on a more sociological level, economic inequality and class stratification create different and wildly estranged social groups with potentially profoundly disparate interests and aims that they wish to see represented within the structure of their culture and their government. Where people's means and capacities are vastly different, the kind of political and social policies that reflect their interests will be as well.<sup>12</sup> This can generate, and over time entrench, marked social tensions between different groups, tensions which undermine the health of a society and which often find their expression in violence and extensive social disharmony. As opposed to encouraging social ideals of community and solidarity, economic inequality can then have the effect of

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<sup>12</sup> The point being advanced here could be likened to Rousseau's claim of what happens when the general will becomes subordinated to particular interests: "But when the social bond begins to be relaxed and the State to grow weak, when particular interests begin to make themselves felt and the smaller societies to exercise an influence over the larger, the common interest changes and finds opponents; opinion is no longer unanimous; the general will ceases to be the will of all; contradictory views and debates arise; and the best advice is not taken without question" (Rousseau 1973: 247-48).

exacerbating conflict and further engendering attitudes of self-interestedness and insensitivity to others.

The final reason I would like to explore for why we should value the elimination of economic inequalities, as opposed to merely guaranteeing sufficiency, is that (3) socio-economic inequalities allow for objectionable relations of power and domination. Economic advantages in the forms of wealth or property can have the effect of creating imbalances in individuals' respective ability to exert political or social influence. This can undermine the workings of democratic institutions or create situations in which the wealthy can effectively determine the conditions of their larger social and institutional contexts to work in their own favour.

This reason is also related to the (notionally extrinsic) concern we have that people's valuable freedoms are protected. As G.A. Cohen has argued, inequality in means can constitute a loss of freedom where one's relative lack of means can render them liable to interference by other people (2001: 3). In a liberal capitalist society, money and the institution of property structure people's access to various freedoms (2001: 12). If, for example, I want to visit my relative on a train, my ability to do so is contingent on whether or not I have enough money to purchase the ticket. If I attempt to board the train otherwise, I am made subject to measures of coercion – yet, as Cohen notes, there is no deficiency in my ability to take the train other than my being interfered with, either by being physically prevented from getting on the train, or being physically ejected from the train (2001: 13).<sup>13</sup> As Cohen succinctly puts it, “[t]he value of money is that it gives you

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<sup>13</sup> This point is also investigated in detail in Cohen (1979) and in Waldron (2006).

freedom,” and the freedoms that money bestows on its possessor consequently grants them greater power as well (2001: 14).

As such, to lack money is to be liable to interference in the form of those coercive measures of protection adopted to preserve the right of property. What the construction of money points to, above all else, is a series of social relations of constraint (Cohen 2001: 14). In societies where economic inequality is great, and the wealthy thereby possess greater and greater means to obtain and defend their property, the freedom of the worse-off is substantially limited in terms of what they have access to and what activities they may be allowed to pursue. Even understanding freedom in the narrow sense as lack of interference, a certain lack of freedom accompanies deprivation that does not stem from deprivation itself (as in the case of someone who simply lacks the ability to perform a certain activity), but from the relative disadvantage incurred by those who are worse off because of the greater ability of the wealthy to set the material terms and conditions of their shared social context.

I bring this point into my discussion of the relations of power and domination that inequality can engender as I consider it to be a crucial implication for our understanding of the importance of economic equality that money is, relevantly, as Marx once made the claim, “social power in the form of a thing” (1973 [1939]: 157-58). As Scanlon efficiently puts it, “Those who have greater resources than others... can often determine what gets produced, what kinds of employment are offered, what the environment of a town or state is like, and what kind of life one can live there” (2003: 205). This is perhaps no more obviously exhibited than in the labour market, where local laws, and the inequalities in power that produce them, often favour the rights of ownership, who have

greater ability to lobby for their interests and to have them reflected in the make-up of the legal system. Such imbalances weaken the bargaining power of workers and leave them in the precarious situation of either working for (sometimes far) less than their labour is worth, or contesting their treatment and facing unemployment and possible severe deprivation as a result. Given that economic inequality also weakens the fraternal bonds between people, entrenched inequalities give rise to attitudes that validate and promote the vicious acquisition of power over others for its own sake, as a socially valuable harbinger of status and success. These inequalities in power, as themselves emanating from inequalities in wealth and resources, can have the effect of further stratifying and embedding social hierarchies that devalue the life prospects of the worse-off and undermine their capacities for autonomy and fulfillment.

A separate outcome of unequal access to wealth and the bases of social power is that this can undermine the procedural fairness of democratic institutions. As Scanlon again makes the point, “Some forms of equality are essential preconditions for the fairness of certain processes” (2003: 205). If two different parties are greatly unequal in the capacities they can bring to bear in influencing a shared institutional context, then the very compositional structure of those social and political institutions important to the democratic process can be corrupted to the benefit of the powerful. This could involve explicit changes to the rules and laws that govern a shared association, or simply the informal maintenance of unfair background conditions that undermine the fair grounds of competition.<sup>14</sup> For both Scanlon and Rawls, this begets an appeal to the idea of equality

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<sup>14</sup> For Scanlon, the need for the political process and for the everyday functioning of society to be conducted under ‘fair grounds of competition’ plays perhaps the “most central role” in Rawls’s egalitarian theory of justice (Scanlon 2003: 211-212; Cf. Rawls 1971: 224-227).

of opportunity, the notion that no one should be disadvantaged based on background conditions beyond their control or other morally arbitrary facts about them. In order for what Rawls calls the ‘fair value of political liberties’ to be preserved, citizens must have not only equal formal rights, but also “the education necessary to fulfill their role as citizens, and the means required to participate in political discussion” (Scanlon 2004: 32; Cf. Rawls 1971). This implication is twofold: firstly, it entails that all citizens be given the substantive opportunity to affect the political process, in that they possess the positive capacity to act within the public sphere; and secondly, it entails that no individual should have the (political or economic) means to shape the democratic process in their own interests, as this undermines the self-determining abilities of the worse-off.

While this concern with equality may at first seem fully parasitic on the value we place on freedom, it is also what I have defined as a ‘strongly egalitarian’ reason for valuing equality. Our reasons for objecting to relations of power and domination between persons are coherently relational and non-specific: no matter how well-off an individual might be by the criterion of sufficiency, we would still object to their being subjected to odious forms of coercion by virtue of the position they occupy in society. What makes this reason egalitarian then is that relations of power and domination are themselves necessarily comparative, and occur as a natural consequence of significant economic inequalities. Indeed, the suggestion here is that our reasons for valuing equality and our reasons for valuing freedom are not as orthogonal as they are sometimes assumed to be, but are themselves often derived from the same underlying values.<sup>15</sup> In order to ensure

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<sup>15</sup> We may, for example, see in the argument that equality is necessary in order to preserve freedom – indeed, that the two are closely and inextricably linked – notable echoes of Rousseau’s famous claim that “freedom cannot subsist without [equality]” and that therefore “no citizen [should] ever be wealthy enough

that all individuals affected by a series of political institutions have equal say under those institutions, and therefore equal ability to determine the relevant material conditions that govern their life opportunities, it is crucial that there exist measures of maintaining economic equality.

Thus far, I have detailed three strongly egalitarian reasons for why economic equality is valuable, each of which derive from a concern with the morally important relations that obtain between people. However, Frankfurt's challenge to distributive equality has an unlikely counterpart from within egalitarian theory. The idea that equality is a valuable aim for distributive justice is also challenged by certain 'social egalitarian' thinkers who nevertheless accept the premise that ideals of social and political equality ought to govern the relations between people in a society. As Will Kymlicka explains the motivation, these philosophers are committed to the view that "once we have abolished inherited class stratification, any inequalities that result from individual talents or choices are simply 'details of the countinghouse' to be 'forgotten or ignored'" (Kymlicka 2006: 13).<sup>16</sup> For those social egalitarians who follow the example of Michael Walzer in

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to buy another, and none poor enough to be forced to sell himself' (Rousseau 1973: 204). Similarly, Scanlon's discussion at the end of "When Does Equality Matter?" points to the conceptual harmony between liberty and equality when the value of each is properly understood.

<sup>16</sup> For notable examples of the family of views I am here referring to as 'social' egalitarianism, see Tawney (1931); Walzer (1983); Anderson (1999); D. Miller (1999); Scheffler (2003, 2005); and Wolff (1998). By social egalitarianism, I am largely referring to those views which understand the value of equality in terms of the valuable social and political relations that obtain between people, and which have at their core the ideal of constructing a 'community of equals.' This emphasis on equality as a social and political ideal can entail varying strengths of concern for questions of distribution; one can be a social egalitarian and still maintain something similar to Frankfurt's doctrine of sufficiency, or, alternatively, one could begin from the premise of the social ideal of equality and construct a more radically socialist theory of how people ought to live as equals. In current political philosophy, these views have been typically forwarded in response to what Elizabeth Anderson has dubbed 'luck egalitarianism,' and, more broadly, what Samuel Scheffler has described as 'distributive' theories of equality. I will not delve into the debates concerning luck egalitarianism here. For discussions of the applicability of a broadly social egalitarian framework to global justice, see Nath (2011); Sanyal (2012); and Schemmel (2012).

contrasting ‘simple’ distributive equality with the idea of ‘complex’ equality,<sup>17</sup> social equality only necessitates equality in economic distribution to the possibly minimal extent that extensive economic inequalities threaten to establish objectionable class barriers, or forms of dominance over persons, or otherwise limit people’s capabilities to function as equal citizens.<sup>18</sup> According to Walzer, where inequalities in some manner of social good do exist, the emphasis should be on constructing institutions so as to prevent these inequalities from undermining social equality; while redistribution may still be necessary at times, the primary goal should not be to redistribute wealth, but to “make money harmless” (1983: 107). For proponents of this understanding of egalitarianism, since the value of equality is not fundamentally a question of distribution, sufficiency

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<sup>17</sup> As Kymlicka discusses, many such understandings of social egalitarianism find modern purchase in the attempt, associated with Michael Walzer, to replace ‘simple’ distributive theories of equality with ‘complex’ understandings of the proper spheres in which each social good should be distributed (2006: 25-26). Complex equality so obtains when “different people get ahead in each of the various spheres of distribution, but because they are unable to convert their advantages from one sphere into another, none is able to dominate the rest” (D. Miller 1995: 2). As Walzer puts it, this means that “no citizen’s standing in one sphere or with regard to one social good can be undercut by his standing in some other sphere, with regard to some other good” (1983: 19). With regards to economic resources then, so long as the social good of money remains within its proper sphere and does not allow any individual greater purchase over the rest of society by virtue of their greater wealth, equality is maintained. If inequalities in money threaten to become an issue, we ought first to strengthen the boundaries between the market and other spheres of distribution, instead of redistribute wealth (D. Miller 1995: 14). I will not attempt to focus in any depth on Walzer here, except to say that my own view is that the social fact of the link between distributive and social equality within liberal capitalist societies is much stronger than Walzer makes it out to be, and that any attempt at creating a society governed by relationships of equal standing will necessitate a robust appeal towards distributive equality.

<sup>18</sup> This is the claim made by Elizabeth Anderson, who, in articulating her theory of democratic equality, holds that “everyone [ought to] have effective access to enough resources to avoid being oppressed by others and to function as an equal in civil society” (1999: 320). For Anderson, egalitarianism “only guarantees a set of capabilities necessary to functioning as a free and equal citizen and avoiding oppression” (1999: 327). Her theory of democratic equality, with which my view shares certain affinities, is then largely sufficientarian with respect to how resources should be distributed (see also Casal 2007: 322); although her explication of the capabilities approach is meant to guarantee significant access to important forms of functioning. My disagreement with Anderson is then largely centred around the greater concern I have for the possibility that economic inequality can undermine equal standing and weaken the ability of the worse-off to meaningfully self-determine.

may then be the favoured criterion for distributing goods in instances where inequalities are not seen as challenging an individual's public standing.

This understanding of what is required for achieving equality of standing seems to me flawed. While I agree with the emphasis social egalitarians place on equality as being first and foremost a valuable ideal for governing interpersonal relationships, I do not see this emphasis on equality as a social ideal as demanding only a narrow concern with social mobility, or with people's effective access to certain kinds of social functionings.<sup>19</sup> As Samuel Scheffler argues, the objection to understanding equality solely as a distributive value is not that social equality and distributive equality are competing ideals, but that "in order to appreciate the bearing of equality on distribution, one must begin by understanding equality as a broader ideal that governs the relations among members of society more generally" (forthcoming: 5). Indeed, as I have argued to this point, social equality is best understood as entailing strong measures of distributive equality, as distributive inequalities are relevantly capable of harming the worse-off and weakening the overall health of a society. Equal standing and our underlying egalitarian concern for the well-being of the worse-off are closely connected to the presence of various kinds of economic inequalities within a society. As Martin O'Neill has made the point, there exists a "deep social fact" that connects gains in distributive equality with substantive improvements in the morally important relationships between people (2008: 150). It then appears to me that any conception of social equality that does not place an appropriately heavy emphasis on the need for limiting distributive inequalities is likely to be more

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<sup>19</sup> For a fuller discussion of the strong distributive implications of relational egalitarianism, and the need for consistent relational egalitarians to accept the importance of distributive equality, see Schemmel (2011).

concerned with ensuring a merely formal equality of status than it is with realizing a truly substantive conception of what it would mean for people to live as equals.

What both Frankfurt and social egalitarians such as Walzer fails to realize then is that equality in distribution may be necessary for an individual to achieve what he considers as constituting ‘enough’ – that in order for someone’s life to ‘suit their individual capacities, to meet their particular needs, and to provide them with what they care about,’ they will need to be able to meaningfully determine the course of their own lives, free from the forms of domination that arise from, and, in turn, characterize unequal societies.<sup>20</sup> And as I have argued, this entails a concern with socio-economic inequality and inequalities in distribution. One cannot meaningfully self-determine within the context of a society marked by entrenched class divisions and permeated by inescapable relations of power and hierarchy, and economic inequalities are the most consistent source of these divisions in modern liberal capitalist societies. In order for the things that I value and find meaningful to find expression in my life, I have to have the power to shape the material foundations of my social reality in such a manner that no one else’s interests are arbitrarily privileged over mine by virtue of the greater level of resources they command. By Frankfurt’s own account of what it is meaningful for people to have access to in their own lives, he should then accept the exceptionally pressing concern that

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<sup>20</sup> Walzer, of course, does emphasize the importance of freedom from domination (or tyranny, as he also refers to it), but by this he means the monopolistic control of certain social goods against their common social meanings. For Walzer, the need to eliminate domination entails that “No social good x should be distributed to men and women who possess some other good y merely because they possess y and without regard to the meaning of x” (1983: 20). (In the case of money, the appropriate principle of distribution is free exchange in the marketplace.) My point, then, is that distributive inequalities are more closely linked to the capacity to meaningfully self-determine than this picture admits, and that while the project of neutralizing relationships of hierarchy and power that Walzer embarks upon is a valuable one, such relationships can produce status harms beyond the effect they have on one’s explicitly public standing.

socio-economic inequality has for individuals to autonomously determine the direction of their own lives. Similarly, the social ideal of equality and the social egalitarian objective of equal social standing demand that there be considerable limits to the level of acceptable inequalities between individuals.

Indeed, what I think the challenge from sufficiency overlooks is exactly this extent to which equality is an importantly *social* ideal. As has been argued by the social egalitarians I referenced earlier, we do not value equality for purely formalistic reasons, but for reasons that are derived from the relations that obtain between morally equal persons. To this extent, I agree with social egalitarians that a concern with economic equality and with one's relative material holdings must be grounded in an appeal to the valuable nature of certain kinds of relations between persons. As Scheffler puts it, "equality is a complex ideal whose distinctively egalitarian aspects cannot be identified, nor their appeal appreciated, independently of their connections with the other values, such as reciprocity and respect, that also help to define the ideal" (forthcoming: 32).<sup>21</sup> Socio-economic equality matters insofar as (1) its absence involves stigmatizing status-harms that may (1a) weaken the self-respect of the worse-off, and (1b) generate objectionable attitudes of domination and servility; (2) it allows for the formation of meaningful fraternal bonds between all who belong to a common association; and (3) inequality allows for unacceptable relations of power and domination. It might also be said that, following our reasons for objecting to inequality on the grounds that it allows for unacceptable relations of power, economic equality is to a certain extent necessary for

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<sup>21</sup> For Scheffler, one of the important distinctions between distributive theories of equality (such as luck egalitarianism) and relational theories of equality (of the kind being advanced here) is that the former holds the value of distributive equality to be *normatively autonomous* from other concerns (forthcoming: 33).

the protection of persons' valuable freedoms. In addition, each of these reasons, I argue, entails a strong concern with how various resources and social goods are distributed, and the problems that can arise when they are distributed unequally. A proper understanding of the social ideal of equality necessitates an ongoing concern for the comparative levels of wealth and resources that individuals have to draw upon.

What is important about these factors specifically is that when taken together, they provide a coherently and distinctively *egalitarian* foundation for why equality matters. Status inequalities weaken the self-respect of the worse-off and generate servility and deferential behaviour. Social hierarchies of the kind that involve stark distinctions in status will almost certainly involve objectionable relations of power and domination as well, in addition to undermining healthy fraternal social relations. Relations of power and domination will serve to reproduce and entrench inequalities in status, and strain relations between members of different social classes or groups. The strongest considerations at play in motivating egalitarian sympathies are deeply interconnected and conceptually inextricable. One objectionable result of inequality has as its consequence the production of another.

As Martin O'Neill articulates the point, the reasons to which egalitarianism appeals "are themselves generated by distinctively egalitarian concerns with the badness of servility, exploitation, domination, and differences in status," where the badness of these outcomes can best be understood "by virtue of the contrasting value of certain kinds of fraternal, egalitarian social relations" (2008: 130). This is then a fundamentally social understanding of the reasons for why distributive equality matters, where equality in distribution is taken to be a relevant aim for the same egalitarian reasons that we ought to

respect persons. Our ideals of social equality form a basis for, and in turn are conceptually inextricable from, our ideals of distributive equality, where these are both taken to emanate from the same egalitarian concern for the respect we owe our fellow persons. Indeed, this is one of the advantages of understanding egalitarianism as I have outlined it thus far: to see concerns of social, political and distributive equality as emanating from the same foundational concerns makes the egalitarian motivation that much more plausible and accessible, and it puts modern egalitarians into a conversation with previous generations of egalitarian thinkers who have understood the ideological terrain similarly.<sup>22</sup>

Certainly, there are other relevant arguments that could be employed here for the value of equality, and I do not mean to suggest by their omission that arguments founded on different values than the ones I have presented here lack normative force.<sup>23</sup> Rather, as will become clear in following sections, I have focused on the reasons detailed above for what I have called their strongly egalitarian credentials, and for their ability to avoid some of the more pressing objections that have been forwarded against egalitarianism. Over the remaining course of this chapter, I will look at another influential objection that has been put forth against the value of a specifically egalitarian approach to distributive justice: the Levelling Down Objection, as developed most famously by Derek Parfit. I

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<sup>22</sup> I have already made brief reference to how the understanding of egalitarianism I advance in this chapter aligns with how Rousseau conceived of the importance of equality. Similarly, O'Neill claims that Rousseau "can plausibly be seen as endorsing the full set of egalitarian considerations... from the significance of avoiding domination, to the harms of unequal status, to the significance of eradicating inequality as a condition for the preservation of the secure self-respect of all" (2008: 129). For further discussion of Rousseau's critique of economic inequality, and his relationship to modern egalitarian theory, see Neuhauser (2013).

<sup>23</sup> There are, of course, other possible arguments that might be given in favour of eliminating economic inequalities, including the positive correlations that have been found between greater inequality and numerous undesirable social maladies, such as higher crime, or poor health/higher mortality, etc.

will argue that, while this objection may have force against a specific reading of what egalitarianism entails, it is not a forceful objection to egalitarianism as I have understood the doctrine so far.

### Section 2.3: Parfit and the Levelling Down Objection

In the preceding sections of my paper, I looked at the sufficiency objection to egalitarianism, and why it is that equality matters over and above concerns that people have enough. I argued that justice in distribution requires understanding the relations between individuals in a particular context, and that we therefore have reasons of social equality (among a host of others) to promote distributive equality. As I understand the ideal, equality reflects a complex conception of the kinds of values that ought to be taken into account in governing morally important relationships between persons. Accordingly, I depart from other elaborations of the ideal of equal standing that downplay the importance of economic equality in achieving this goal.

In what follows, I will look at another view that has been posed in opposition to egalitarianism, this time by Derek Parfit in his influential lecture, “Equality or Priority?” Like Frankfurt, Parfit attempts to explain away arguments for equality as plausibly emanating from a separate source, what he calls the Priority View, which he develops in order to avoid the Levelling Down Objection to egalitarianism. In the following two sections, I will explain the reasoning behind Parfit’s rejection of egalitarianism, before calling into question his understanding of the possible territory of egalitarian debate and clarifying how it is that we should plausibly think of egalitarianism as a doctrine.

The question that animates Parfit in his lecture is how we can make a distribution better. He distinguishes between two approaches: one by which we attempt to improve a distribution by aiming for equality between different people, and another by which we attempt to improve a distribution by giving priority to those who are worse off (2000: 82). These separate approaches reflect the goal of the committed egalitarian, and what he goes on to call the Priority View. In brief, the Priority View states that benefiting people matters more the worse off those people are (2000: 101). Appealing to a similar idea to the notion of diminishing marginal utility, Parfit claims that priority should be given to the worse-off because “[j]ust as *resources* have diminishing marginal *utility*, so *utility* has diminishing marginal *moral importance*” (2000: 105, emphasizes his).

Before developing what he thinks ought to underlie our distributive concerns instead of equality, Parfit distinguishes between two different approaches to believing in equality: the Telic approach and the Deontic approach. Telic egalitarians, according to Parfit, believe that it is in itself bad if some people are worse off than others, and that inequality is bad for this reason (2000: 84, 90). When we aim for equality, it is in order to make the situation better. As a result of this emphasis on inequality itself as what we should seek to eliminate, the scope of the Telic view is not bound to any sort of particular context, but applies independently of whether or not two unequal persons have ever met one another or are even aware of the other’s existence (2000: 97-99). That there is inequality is itself a concern for justice.

Deontic egalitarians, on the other hand, are defined as those egalitarians that value equality not because they think that equality is intrinsically worthwhile, but because they believe that some other moral reason entails aiming for an equal distribution (2000: 84).

The upshot of the Deontic approach is that we aim to rectify inequalities not to make the outcome *better*, but because there exist separate reasons of justice that demand it.

Inequality is not *bad* on this view; it is *unjust* (2000: 90). It may, for example, be unjust that some people are treated differently from others in receiving a particular good, that they are denied their fair share of a particular distribution of resources. On Parfit's account of the Deontic position, since injustice "necessarily involves wrong-doing," distributive inequality is only unjust by virtue of the manner in which it has been produced (ibid.). According to Parfit, Deontic egalitarians therefore hold that what is bad about inequality is never the unequal state of affairs itself, but always the injustices which have produced it.

Parfit examines both these views and, for separate reasons, finds them wanting. The Telic view's emphasis on equality as in itself desirable is rejected for permitting the achievement of a more equal distribution through lowering people's levels of resources. As Parfit explains,

If inequality is bad, its disappearance must be in one way a change for the better, *however this change occurs*. Suppose that those who are better off suffer some misfortune, so that they become as badly off as everyone else. Since these events would remove the inequality, they must be in one way welcome, on the Telic View, even though they would be worse for some people, and better for no one.

This implication seems to many to be quite absurd. I call this *the Levelling Down Objection*. (2000: 98)

Even if Telic egalitarians hold a pluralist view, whereby they might affirm values other than equality as necessary to take into account in effecting a distribution, they are still

beholden to the absurd consequence of their view that, in the event of ‘levelling down,’ the ensuing distribution would at least in part be preferable for its greater equality, even if no one has benefited from this move towards equality.

The Deontic view then might seem like a more preferable alternative, as Parfit believes that, due to its being grounded in values other than equality, it escapes the Levelling Down Objection.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, Parfit thinks we may have difficulty reconciling some of our intuitions about when it is appropriate to redistribute resources with the view that inequalities are only bad when they are the result of wrongdoing. One example he gives may make this point clear. If some sort of natural process – manna falling from the heavens, perhaps – made some people significantly better off by virtue of nothing more than mere chance, this would be an inequality which did not arise from injustice nor any kind of wrongdoing on the part of the recipients. Yet it would seem absurd to say that, if we decide the outcome would be better if the manna were equally distributed amongst many, or given to those who are worse off, we would be unable to do so simply because the inequality that arose from this distribution was *natural*, and therefore not in itself bad on the Deontic view (2000: 96-97).

Under the Priority View, however, we can make sense of redistribution in this instance. If we consider it morally more important to benefit those who are worse off, there is nothing keeping us from redistributing in instances where inequalities have not been brought about by unjust means. (This is Parfit’s ‘Telic’ version of the Priority View,

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<sup>24</sup> This point has been contested. Martin O’Neill argues that we can recast the Levelling Down Objection such that its force is maintained against a Deontic view. He phrases the revamped claim as “It would be absurd to think that we can have reason to act so as to bring about equality, even if doing so makes everybody worse off” (2008: 142). Since I am not supporting a Deontic view in this paper, as I will go on to question the significance of the distinction Parfit draws between Telic and Deontic egalitarianism, I will not take the time to further weigh in on this claim.

which states simply that “if benefits go to people who are better off, these benefits matter less” (2000: 105).) As Parfit puts it, the chief difference between egalitarians and Prioritarians is that egalitarians are concerned with relativities – “with how each person’s level compares with the level of other people” – whereas Prioritarians are concerned “only with people’s absolute levels” (2000: 104). Priority is given to benefiting those who are worse off, but this is not because doing so reduces inequality, but rather because the absolute levels of those who are worse off demand more immediate concern. For the Prioritarian, while the fact that some person is worse off than another person gives them priority in receiving a given benefit, what is bad is not that some people are worse off than others, but that some people “are worse off than *they* might have been” (ibid.). Where inequalities are not bad for anyone, the Priority View then offers no reason to object to them; under the Priority View, attempts at aiming for equality are a “mere means” for benefiting those who are worse off (2000: 105).

Parfit’s position is then similar to sufficientarianism insofar as it also places emphasis on deprivation per se, rather than people’s relative levels of wealth. Consequently, despite the fact that the notion of giving priority to the worst-off is itself *prima facie* compatible with egalitarianism, there remain some crucial distinctions between the Priority View and egalitarianism in terms of on what grounds we owe a stronger claim of beneficence to the worse-off, and in what ways we might enact these benefits. Where egalitarians see the relative position of the less advantaged as triggering duties of justice, Parfit’s version of the Priority View rephrases the egalitarian concern as entailing a non-relational concern with people’s absolute levels of well-being. Similarly, the relevant distinction between Parfit’s view and Frankfurt’s is the emphasis Parfit

places on benefiting those who are worse off beyond the point of any pre-determined criterion of sufficiency. His is a 'pure' version of the Priority View; Parfit attaches no moral importance to relational considerations, nor does he think it important for there to be thresholds beyond which priority ceases to be a factor.

Given that its concern is then only indirectly with equality, Parfit declares the Priority View safe from the Levelling Down Objection. As opposed to Telic egalitarian views which naturally see the relations between people as generating the reasons for why equality is important, the Priority View is what Parfit calls a 'non-relationally egalitarian' view; one that does not view inequality itself as bad or unjust, but which more loosely "has a built-in bias towards equality" (2000: 106). Equality is good "only because it increases the moral value of [the benefits we distribute to people]" (ibid.). We can then derive an argument against egalitarianism from this train of thought, which goes something like: "We should not appeal to equality *per se* in determining what would be an appropriate distribution, because equality by itself does not give us any reason to distinguish between improving people's life conditions or making them worse off. Rather, we should seek to improve the position of those who are worse off. In this sense, we still aim for equality, as to raise the position of the worse-off is to bring about a more equal distribution, but we value this move to equality only by virtue of what it entails about the absolute level of the person being benefited." For Parfit, the Priority View then provides a broader and less counter-intuitive grounding for our commitment to a fair distribution.

#### Section 2.4: Illuminating the Value of Equality

Support for the Priority View largely derives from the impression that a concern with equality as such involves implausible and imprudent consequences regarding what path we should take in order to reach a more equal distribution. For those, like Parfit, who adopt a more consequentialist orientation, the idea that equality would be just as valuable whether or not we raised the living standards of the worse off or reduced the living standards of the better off – in such a way as to benefit no one – is an absurd and deeply counter-intuitive proposal.

However, this objection does not mean we need to give up on egalitarianism, but rather that we need to take more care in determining what exactly it is that makes us egalitarians. To this end, there is reason to believe that Parfit's division between Telic and Deontic egalitarianism is far too neat, and that Parfit ends up muddying our understanding of egalitarian concerns more than he clarifies them. The separate principles he outlines as emanating from Telic and Deontic understandings of the value of equality do not by themselves map the possible terrain covered by an egalitarian outlook, and the sharpness of the Telic/Deontic distinction overlooks what truly underlies and motivates egalitarian sympathies. Building on arguments made by Martin O'Neill in his essay "What Should Egalitarians Believe?" and building on my earlier discussion of why we should consider equality valuable, I will now examine why the division Parfit makes does not best capture our intuitions towards egalitarianism, and why, accordingly, the Levelling Down Objection should not frighten us away from adopting an egalitarian stance. In doing so, I will hope to shed further light on what inspires and impels appeals to egalitarianism, and how it is that we should best understand egalitarianism as a doctrine.

What leads Parfit to develop the Priority View is that he wants to capture a number of intuitions he has as to when we might think it valuable to distribute resources that he does not think can be adequately captured by egalitarianism. However, Parfit's discussion of the possible avenues an egalitarian approach to distributive justice could take mischaracterizes the theoretical terrain, and obscures our most intuitive reasons for being egalitarians. In attempting to determine what it is that underlies egalitarian motivations, Martin O'Neill criticizes the conceptual divisions at play in Parfit's argument, claiming that, in its most attractive and plausible versions, egalitarianism is neither Telic nor Deontic in the sense Parfit describes (2008: 121). Parfit's characterization of the possible varieties of egalitarianism is misleading, as he claims that egalitarians must either hold that unequal states of affairs are in of themselves bad, or that unequal states of affairs are only bad when they are brought about by unjust means. There is then no room for the internally coherent view that economic inequalities can be within the scope of justice regardless of whether or not they are brought about by unjust means. To refer back to our earlier reasons for valuing equality, a society should be taken to be unjust if it (re)produces social relations that give reason for some to regard themselves as inferior to others, or if it produces significant imbalances of power, regardless of whether or not these relations were themselves the result of wrong-doing.<sup>25</sup> To put the point in Parfit's preferred terms, such inequalities are bad irrespective of whether or not they have

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<sup>25</sup> Scanlon argues this point forcibly, claiming that our objection to inequalities in status would apply even in the case of "institutional arrangements that, while they did not have the aim of *expressing* inferiority, nonetheless had the effect of giving rise to feelings of inferiority on the part of most reasonable citizens." Economic institutions "which yield such great disparities of wealth and income that some people experience shame and humiliation because they must live in a way that is far below what most people in the society regard as minimally acceptable" are therefore unjust regardless of whether or not they have created these disparities or simply allowed them to come about (2003: 213).

been brought about through injustice. Furthermore, our considerations for the importance of equality should not be characterized as Deontic or fully extrinsic, as the deeply interconnected nature of our reasons for valuing equality point to a common foundation and a common concern with the ideal of persons autonomously enjoying an equality of standing with others (O'Neill 2008: 128).<sup>26</sup> The Telic/Deontic distinction that Parfit suggests in order to frame his discussion of egalitarianism then unhelpfully obscures why it is that we should want to get rid of distributive inequalities in the first place.

The reason for the importance of this distinction is that how we understand the value of equality will determine the role it plays in our conceptions of justice. Given the reasons for why we should consider inequality undesirable, “[w]e need not appeal to “some other moral reason” over and beyond the badness of states of affairs, in order to motivate a concern for the elimination of inequality” (O'Neill 2008: 124). The fact that a given state of affairs is unequal, and that people are made worse-off by it, is enough to motivate the moral claim for equality independent of whether or not this state of affairs was brought about via wrong-doing. In truth, given that the great majority of existing inequalities (on both the national and international level) have at some point involved or emanated from past injustices, our reasons for desiring equality will often be in part motivated by historical concerns, but these need not be our only reasons for wanting an improved state of affairs. That the state of affairs is bad or could be better is enough to motivate egalitarian concerns.

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<sup>26</sup> Touching on Rousseau, O'Neill cheekily refers to the kind of self-respect at play here in enjoying an equality of standing with others as “in essence, an egalitarian conception of *amour-propre*” (2008: 128).

My reason for rejecting the appeal of both Parfit's Priority View and the Levelling Down Objection should by now begin to be clear. The level of intuitive appeal that the Priority View has as a credible opponent to egalitarianism is largely dependent on how forceful one takes the Levelling Down Objection to be. Yet if we take equality to be of non-intrinsic importance, where the value of equality is dependent instead on the strong relationships that exist between economic equality and the various social goods that are its consequence, this objection loses its immediacy.<sup>27</sup> The Levelling Down Objection operates under the presupposition that there exist instances wherein a society is characterized by some level of inequality where eliminating inequalities in wealth or property could occur in such a way that no one would be benefited from it. However, our previous discussion of the reasons for why equality matters should temper our willingness to accept this claim. For in the majority of instances where a society is characterized by inequality, it is not merely the lack of *material* goods or resources that harms those individuals who occupy the poorer positions in these societies. The disadvantages faced by those who are worse off also include the harms produced by stigmatizing relations of power and domination, and the non-existence of such social goods as a sense of fraternity between social equals. Just as instances of material inequality can have negative social effects, so can the elimination of material inequalities produce tangible social benefits, especially for members of disadvantaged groups.

In light of this account of the value of equality, I suggest that the presupposition that gives the Levelling Down Objection its force is false. Even if all the excess material

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<sup>27</sup> The distinction being drawn upon here is between material resources and people's *actual well-being* of the kind that underlies the egalitarian concern with material resources. For a discussion of this point, see Wolff (2001).

wealth possessed by the better-off members of society was confiscated such that no other person materially benefited from this confiscation, this would still not amount to a true case of “levelling down” in the sense that Parfit uses the term. For Parfit, an instance of “levelling down” occurs when the removal of an inequality makes some people worse off, and is better for no one. Since no one would be improved by the move towards an equal distribution in the event of a true levelling-down scenario, it then seems absurd that we should value equality in this instance, or regard inequality as itself a bad. The force of the objection comes from the (eminently reasonable) idea that equality is not valuable if its pursuit makes some worse than they were before and improves no one.<sup>28</sup>

To be sure, egalitarians ought to agree with this claim. As I have mentioned, the concern for human dignity that underlies egalitarian claims as to the moral equality of persons is one that properly involves concern for their well-being,<sup>29</sup> so where redistribution fails to improve the quality of life of those it targets, egalitarians would be remiss to support it. Yet if such a carelessly strict process of equalization were to occur, it seems likely that, even if no one gained materially, there would still be social benefits in terms of the enhanced levels of solidarity and fraternity the society in question would experience, and the increase in self-respect to the worse-off.<sup>30</sup> Of course, we may still have mitigating reasons that do not emanate directly from concerns about equality that tell against the poor utilization of resources, reasons which derive from separate concerns

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<sup>28</sup> Parfit mentions this as a consequence of what he elsewhere goes into detail as the “person-affecting view.” Under the person-affecting view, what is bad must be bad *for someone*. So for a given choice to have a bad effect, there must be someone for whom the choice has made them worse-off. See Parfit (1984: 363 (Chap. 16)) for more on the larger meta-ethical view being forwarded here.

<sup>29</sup>As Christine Sypnowich has put the point, redistribution of wealth is sought in order “to ensure greater equality of flourishing. If redistribution cannot improve the flourishing of the disadvantaged, then it should not be pursued.” (2003: 339)

<sup>30</sup> For versions of this claim, see Wolff (2001) and O’Neill (2008).

as to persons' levels of well-being, or autonomy, or to various rights-claims. However, these reasons are each fully compatible with a pluralistic conception of what egalitarianism entails.

The point is that if such a confiscation of excess wealth were to ensue – what might otherwise seem like a quintessential extension of the Levelling Down Objection – this would still not be an example of “levelling down” in Parfit’s sense because we have good reason to think that the disappearance of such inequalities would, in any of several possible ways, improve the position of the worse-off. The deep social fact of the link between inequality and those ‘distinctively egalitarian concerns with the badness of servility, exploitation, domination, and differences in status’ entails that the elimination of inequality, within a specific kind of relational context, will almost always have the effect of benefiting *someone*.<sup>31</sup> By worsening the position of the best-off, we might eliminate social relationships characterized by objectionable relations of power and the stigmatizing behaviours that arise from these relations; or we might improve the self-respect of the worse-off; or we might improve the sense in which all members of a society are able to interact with one another as social equals, by virtue of the elimination of established class barriers. And, in the hypothetical event where the disappearance of economic inequality would not improve the position of the worse-off, the egalitarian view I have outlined is in no way wedded to the conclusion that there is anything desirable about such a gain in equality. On this view, economic equality is not held to be intrinsically valuable, but is itself founded upon separate judgments as to the moral

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<sup>31</sup> As O’Neill puts it, “all or almost all gains in equality involve a benefit of some kind to at least some individuals” (2008: 146).

equality of persons and as to the kinds of social and political relationships that this equality demands. While the worry underlying it should nevertheless be heeded by egalitarians, the Levelling Down Objection then loses its normative force as an objection to egalitarianism given the (non-intrinsic) reasons for why equality matters.

Conclusion:

In this chapter, I have outlined how it is that I think we should approach egalitarianism as a doctrine by virtue of examining why equality matters. The thesis that all human beings are moral equals, and are therefore equally deserving of concern for their moral interests, lies at the core of a properly egalitarian concern. The egalitarian ideal involves a complex understanding of what kinds of relationships are essential for preserving our dignity as human agents, and how society therefore ought to be arranged. With respect to distributive justice, this entails that inequalities in wealth and power ought to be substantially limited in order to best realize the egalitarian ideal of individuals enjoying an equality of standing with others. Our reasons for valuing economic equality then derive from the value we place on persons being social and political equals – on people being capable of recognizing themselves as equal to one another, and on being equally capable of influencing their shared political context – as well as our existing concern for individual well-being.

In my next two chapters, I will look at how our reasons for valuing equality in the domestic context translate to the global realm, and investigate how it is that we should understand global egalitarianism given why it is that equality matters. In doing so, I will

defend the validity of my conception of global egalitarian distributive justice against a variety of competing notions of how to understand the scope of egalitarian duties.

## Chapter 3

### Power, Inequality and Global Egalitarianism

#### Introduction:

Having examined why it is that socio-economic equality is valuable and what reasons we have for desiring a broadly egalitarian distribution of resources, I would now like to move on to the question of among whom duties of egalitarian justice are required. This is the topic of the *scope* of egalitarian justice, which involves determining “the proper set of agents among whom principles of distributive justice apply” (Tan 2012: 1). Specifically, in this chapter, I will focus on whether or not our reasons for valuing equality limit a properly egalitarian concern to the domestic context, or whether egalitarian principles of distributive justice should be expanded to encompass the international domain.

Egalitarianism, I have argued, credibly derives from the premise that human beings are imbued with an inherent dignity that ought to be respected, and that this moral status entails that social institutions should operate according to a principle of equal respect that is compromised by relational harms such as domination and exploitation. Notably, this thesis rests on a universalist moral premise, the principle that human dignity is inherent to all human beings, and that therefore all human beings ought to be treated as equals. What treatment is required will depend on how that person stands in relation to and in association with others,<sup>32</sup> but what establishes egalitarian concern in the first place is exactly this appeal to universal human dignity.

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<sup>32</sup> On my account, egalitarian duties require what I will call an associative context between members. This thesis should not be thought to comprise the whole of egalitarian thought, as both humanity-centred

The moral universalism underlying egalitarianism as I have thus far described it is comparable to the position Thomas Pogge has defined as ‘moral cosmopolitanism.’ Moral cosmopolitanism “holds that all persons stand in certain moral relations to one another: we are required to respect one another’s status as ultimate units of moral concern... [which is] a requirement that imposes limits on our conduct and, in particular, on our efforts to construct institutional schemes” (Pogge 2008: 175). The central idea here is that every human being is a unit of ultimate moral concern *for everyone*, irrespective of status or nationality. There is no legitimate moral reason for one’s compatriot to generate greater moral concern by virtue of that fact alone.<sup>33</sup>

Given that our egalitarian concern for the inherent dignity of persons starts from the same starting point as the moral cosmopolitan thesis, numerous philosophers have asked if we can plausibly limit this egalitarian concern to the domestic sphere.<sup>34</sup> If we allow that egalitarianism is the proper model for distributive justice domestically on the basis of the moral value we accord to *all* persons, then why should this concern stop at the boundaries of the state? If we have a legitimate ground for complaining about inequalities at the domestic level, then, at least on the face of it, it seems as if we have equal reason for doing so at the global level (Beitz 2001: 106). While this line of reasoning as presented is perhaps too quick, and overlooks what is distinctive about both the national and global contexts, the challenge has merit. In a world characterized both by

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egalitarians and traditional luck egalitarians deny that duties of egalitarian justice are associative in character.

<sup>33</sup> For specific investigations of this claim, see Goodin (1988) and Arneson (2005).

<sup>34</sup> Accounts of this sort have been suggested by Beitz (1983: 595); Tan (2004); Caney (2005); and Gilibert (2012).

deep levels of interdependence and deep levels of inequality and extreme poverty,<sup>35</sup> the dignity we accord to all persons is continuously being degraded by inadequate living conditions, inadequate access to basic needs, and an inability to properly effect any kind of meaningful change to these circumstances. When we take into account the extensiveness of modern globalization and global economic integration, as well as the extensiveness of global poverty, the claim that justice only demands egalitarian consideration at the domestic level then seems to require further justification.

Furthermore, as Kok-Chor Tan has pointed out, “the benefits and burdens of economic globalization are far from being equitably distributed and shared among the world’s population” (2004: 30). Global income inequality has risen since the mid-1980’s,<sup>36</sup> and while there has been debate over how to understand the value of these figures,<sup>37</sup> or whether or not the role globalization has played has been especially pernicious,<sup>38</sup> there is no doubt that the extent of global inequality is a matter of immediate concern. The income gap between the fifth of the world’s people living in the wealthiest

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<sup>35</sup> According to Chen and Ravallion, the number of people living on under \$2 per day (the World Bank’s benchmark for denoting severe poverty – a benchmark which Ravallion notes is “clearly somewhat arbitrary” (2012: 509)) in 2005 numbered over 2.5 billion (2010: 1598-99).

<sup>36</sup> According to Branko Milanovic, in 2012, the Gini coefficient was “about 70.” Thanks to the rapid economic growth of China and India, the GINI coefficient declined (by 1.8%) for perhaps the first time since the Industrial Revolution, but it is as yet uncertain whether or not this can represent a trend, and global inequality is still higher than it was 30 years ago (Milanovic 2012: 7-8). As Milanovic mentions, the mean incomes of countries will have to continue to converge and internal inequalities will have to be kept in check in order for this pattern to continue.

<sup>37</sup> See Branko Milanovic (2007) and (2012) for detailed discussions on the difficulty of arriving at a measure that accurately captures global inequality between persons (what he calls ‘Concept 3 inequality’). For example, the lack of household surveys in many parts of the world before the mid-1980’s makes attempts at calculating of Concept 3 inequality for earlier periods imprecise. He also mentions the potential for national accounts to involve disreputable or exaggerated figures regarding mean incomes, as well as non-participation in surveys as other problems involved with arriving at a true measure of global inequality.

<sup>38</sup> One of the claims pushed by neo-liberal economists and supporters of economic liberalization has been that globalization has had a positive impact at relieving extreme poverty in the developing economies of China and India. For a response to this ‘skilful defence’ of the existing global economic order, see Pogge (2008: Chap. 1).

countries and the fifth of the world's people living in the poorest countries "was 74 to 1 in 1997, up from 60 to 1 in 1990 and 30 to 1 in 1960" (UNDP 1999: 3, cited in Pogge 2001). Inequalities in overall wealth are exponentially more troubling: as a separate UNDP report claims, the cost of achieving and maintaining "universal access to basic education for all, basic health care for all, reproductive health care for all women, adequate food for all and safe water and sanitation for all is... less than 4 percent of the combined wealth of the 225 richest people in the world" (UNDP 1998: 30, cited in Pogge 2001). Indeed, even if we could completely equalize the individual incomes of everyone within their national borders, this would still only reduce global inequality by no more than one third (Milanovic 2006, cited in Cavallero 2010: 16). What this points to is the extensive role that factors such as nationality and place of birth play in determining a person's life prospects.

The broad claim that our egalitarian concern cannot be limited to the domestic sphere, and that some distributive principle must be applied internationally with the specific purpose of ameliorating global inequality has come to be known within the literature as global egalitarianism. Supporters of global egalitarian justice claim, at a minimum, that there should be limits to the level of acceptable global inequalities that can be admitted above and beyond a solely humanitarian or sufficientarian concern, or that at least some international inequalities stand in need of special justification *qua* inequalities (Barry and Valentini 2009: 487).<sup>39</sup> In this chapter, I will argue in support of

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<sup>39</sup> Barry and Valentini do well to note the diversity of views that can be admitted under the basic framework of global egalitarianism. In particular, they mention that "global egalitarian conceptions can be distinguished in terms of which subjects, goods, and distributive standards they deem to be of ethical relevance in assessing distributive shares" (2009: 487-88). In this chapter, I will not specify or otherwise delineate between the variety of positions that could be taken in forwarding a conception of global egalitarianism, as this would take my discussion too far afield. Instead, I will focus on defending the broad

the basic global egalitarian thesis. I will begin by interrogating which of the reasons I have already considered for valuing equality in the domestic context are translatable to the global context. I will conclude that our primary reason for wanting to limit global inequality is in order to remedy the objectionable relations of power and domination that obtain within a deeply unequal global realm, including the damage this produces to the procedural fairness of international institutions. Accordingly, I will argue that an outcome of international asymmetries in power is that the existing global order, as represented by what might be called the international property regime and a series of global institutions responsible for regulating trade and finance, is relevantly capable of harming the global poor, whose interests are not represented in its current make-up and who lack the substantive ability to change it.

### Section 3.1: Which of Our Reasons Matter Globally?

In this section, I examine which of our reasons for valuing equality in the domestic context have global scope. In my previous chapter, I detailed three ‘strongly egalitarian’ reasons for why socio-economic equality matters within a given association: that inequality produces stigmatizing relationships between moral equals; that economic inequality allows for objectionable relations of power and inequality; and that economic equality better allows for the expression of valuable ideals of community and fraternity. Two of these reasons have at their core the idea that economic inequality undermines the conditions under which persons can relate to one another as equals, and can accordingly

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claim universal to all global egalitarian views that justice necessitates limits to the acceptable levels of global inequality.

harm the worse-off. The other points to the positive value that human beings find in being in a specific kind of community with one another, as well as the better chance that all human beings have for flourishing in a society which reflects this ideal of fraternity.

The most obvious and immediately apparent distinction between the domestic context and the global context is that of the distance between moral agents. Since the relationships that exist between members of different nation-states are more diffuse, and may not include any sort of direct, interactional component, we might then be tempted to conclude right away that our duties to members of different societies are less important or are somehow subordinate to our duties to fellow compatriots. Of course, this same lack of interaction between individuals exists within the context of individual societies, and may even be one of the reasons for supporting a more egalitarian distribution of goods, as entrenched divisions between groups may undermine a substantive commitment to the principle of equality of opportunity. However, the domestic appeal to redistribution is usually justified through the notion that members of the same society ought to be treated as equals within it and have reciprocal obligations to ensure equal treatment. Our reasoning for this includes the fact that societies, as they involve widespread interaction between co-citizens and a mutual public life that governs these interactions, are sites in which their members experience significant inequalities as harms. Similarly, the norms by which this mutual public life is governed generally find their expression in a set of shared institutions that have coercive force over the members of this society.

Consequently, philosophers have argued that the boundaries of the state represent a peculiar normative context for thinking about justice. I do not challenge the basic claim that our duties to those with whom we share a state may take a different form than our

duties to those with whom we share an international order. However, I will challenge the conclusion that many philosophers have drawn from the different properties of national and international associations, which is that egalitarian duties of distributive justice ought to be limited to the domestic sphere.

In examining our reasons for being egalitarians, we can immediately see a disjunction between the applicability of our ideals for motivating egalitarian claims in the domestic context and their potential applicability in the global context. The reasons I have given pertaining to the harm inequality produces to the self-respect of individuals and to the corresponding value individuals place on fraternal social relations have uncertain validity outside of particular societies. Instead of a shared international context in which all who inhabit the global context are accustomed to seeing one another as members of the same social order, the actual global order contains an extensive number of social, cultural and national divisions that are shaped by the different values and ideals of distinct peoples.

In the global context, it is far more difficult to show that there exists a fully universal standard of what members of different cultures consider to be a valuable marker of status. The grounds for what constitutes individuals' self-respect is likely to vary between cultures, which often have differing notions of what ought to be valued and what it is good to aim for. And while this is not to say that universal grounds for what undermines self-respect might not exist, or that there might be important status-harms occurring between members of different nations,<sup>40</sup> it is unlikely that these harms will be

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<sup>40</sup> A possible example here might be of a poorer nation whose local economy is by necessity focused on tourism, so that the opportunities residents have for employment are largely centred around attending to the needs of vacationing members of wealthier nations. For a brief defence of the notion that global inequality

significant or widespread enough to inspire appeals to *global* egalitarianism. Likewise, it is difficult to show that the value people place on interacting with and viewing one another in a fraternal manner transcends national boundaries. A lack of community between members of separate nations may be regretted as less than perfect – perhaps we can, in line with some historical interpretations of cosmopolitanism, imagine a single world state in which all persons come to view one another as fellow citizens of the world – but it is unlikely to be experienced as a harm by those in question, and may be psychologically unattainable as an ideal. The specific reference point for relations of status and community are those with whom we share an immediate social context; with whom we may interact regularly, or against whom we are judged in reference to a certain social standard. Given this variation in social and cultural values, as well as the distance that mediates interaction between members of different societies, there does not appear to exist the same sort of potential for ongoing relations between social equals to be undermined by stigmatizing differences in status outside of the nation-state.<sup>41</sup>

While the absence of a globally shared set of values and understandings render certain of our reasons for valuing equality in the domestic sphere unsuitable for defences of global egalitarianism, I argue that the final reason I have given for valuing economic equality domestically also reveals the importance of understanding egalitarian claims to apply globally. On the account I am putting forward, what necessitates the expansion of egalitarian concern to the global realm is the way in which global inequality, due to the

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can act as a source of humiliation for individuals and can harm their self-respect, see Beitz (2001: 103-105). For a more skeptical take, see Kala and Keba (2011: 149-153).

<sup>41</sup> This point is discussed by Rawls in his *Law of Peoples*. For Rawls, “when the duty of assistance is fulfilled, and each people has its own liberal or decent government,” any further feelings of stigmatization and inferiority between the global poor and the global rich are unjustified (1999: 114).

extensive relations of interdependence that constitute the current international order, allows for problematic relationships of power and domination that have the ability to drastically limit individuals' life chances.

### Section 3.2: Institutions, Property and the Nature of Global Egalitarian Concern

I claim that the global order is a relevant site for egalitarian justice because the inequalities in wealth and power that exist outside the scope of, and in between, individual societies are capable of affecting individual's highest-order moral interests and diminishing their legitimate right to self-determination. In claiming that the global order is a relevant site for egalitarian justice, I highlight two relevant aspects of the existing global order: the presence of international institutions that codify and legitimate certain relations of power, and the further existence of what Eric Cavallero has termed the international property regime, which is realized both through the formal rules of relevantly non-voluntary global institutions, as well as the informal activity of imperialist state actors.

Before moving forward, it might be best to examine what exactly I mean by the notion of an international property regime. The international property regime is the system of norms, procedures and authoritative bodies that identifies what belongs to whom and which authoritative agents and procedures are demanded for settling property disputes and for enforcing judgments when more than one sovereign jurisdiction is involved (Cavallero 2010: 19). As Eric Cavallero observes, there exist substantial

transnational property holdings<sup>42</sup> that presuppose, and, in turn, are guaranteed through, an integrated (and coercively enforced) international system of property norms. This system is comprised of international private law (which is not compulsory against sovereign states) and voluntary bilateral and multilateral treaty agreements between nations, which have been agreed upon in order to secure the foreign investments of individuals and corporations. As stipulated by these agreements guaranteeing a uniform set of principles, rules and norms by which the right of property is to be respected internationally, every individual worldwide is under coercive mandate to respect foreign holdings, whether by their own government or by international judiciary bodies (2010: 19). Importantly, the voluntariness of this system is of a merely formal character. Assent to internationally agreed-upon rules of trade and property law can be enforced through the threat of sanctions both formal and informal, as implemented by either states or global institutions.<sup>43</sup> What the system of international property law entails is not only that “individuals (as well as corporate entities) can be subject to coercive rulings that issue from foreign jurisdictions, from international bodies, and even from civil-society forums[,]” but also that the terms and conditions of existing property arrangements are maintained through the ongoing threat of political interference (2010: 19-20, 26-27).

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<sup>42</sup> For example, Cavallero cites the total amount of US assets held by foreign investors in 2005 as being \$13.6 trillion – or, more than the entire US GDP for that year (2010: 19).

<sup>43</sup> In addition to formal sanctions, the failure of a state to comply with international property law can be disincentivized through exclusion from economically beneficial treaties and organizations: “Even when rule-making and applying bodies lack their own independent power to impose sanctions through coercion, they have the capacity to encourage conduct by providing incentives and permitting the imposition of sanctions; moreover, withdrawing from them may be costly to members (if only because of the sometimes considerable loss of benefits)” (Cohen and Sabel 2006: 165). Cavallero also notes the history of coup d’etats promoted by the West in response to attempts at nationalization in nations such as Iran, Guatemala and Cuba, among others, as an example of how the international property regime is enforced (2010: 23-28). The point, I take it, is that imperialism is one manner in which nations have historically (and to this day) maintained their interest in and relation to property abroad.

The extensiveness of this international property regime means that a sufficientarian approach to global redistribution will be inadequate to the task of remedying global injustice. It is not just whether or not individuals have a sufficient amount of goods and resources (although the problem of global poverty, where millions fall below this measure, is undeniably the most urgent task that global justice faces), but that they live in a system of fundamental economic inequality where the same relations of power and domination that emanate from these inequalities serve to reproduce and maintain them. In order to establish a level playing field where national and individual actors are not unfairly held captive to the interests of more powerful parties, global inequality as such must be confronted. It is not only that the existing global order allows for and generates various injustices, but the unwarranted imbalances in power themselves that constitute this order that are objectionable. That the global order as constructed gives certain parties the ability to determine the fates of others and thereby undermine their ability to self-determine (whether individually or collectively) is itself a reason for establishing limits on the acceptable levels of global inequality.

We can identify three main kinds of relationships that emerge outside of the scope of individual nation-states, in which profound inequalities between parties reproduce objectionable relations of power and domination of a similar kind as those that trigger egalitarian concern in the domestic context. These are 1) the relationships that exist between states; 2) the relationships that exist between states and international organizations that are capable of instantiating formal or informal sanctions; and 3) the relationships that exist between multinational corporations and the global labour force. Principally, as I have suggested, the imbalances in power that characterize these

relationships are important because of the effect these inequities have on individuals' highest-order moral interests, such as the ability to live autonomously and to lead a meaningful and fulfilling life.

The first and most fundamental way in which global inequality can instantiate problematic relations of power in the international sphere is reflected in the asymmetry in power that exists between poorer and wealthier nations. Not only are many of these inequalities deeply rooted in historical practices of colonialism and foreign exploitation that had the effect of substantially impeding the economic development of poorer nations, but they also continue to bear on the ability of developing nations and their citizens to realize their own interests. Extensive economic inequality between nations entails inequalities in the expertise, competence, and bargaining power that different parties can bring to bear in negotiations about the terms of their mutual interactions (Pogge 2005: 723).<sup>44</sup> This allows wealthier and more powerful nations, whose advantages often derive from historical injustices and arbitrary facts of geography, to set the conditions of the agreements they make with poorer nations so as to privilege their own interests at the expense of foreign nationals. Agreements concerning, for example, trade policy (requiring that another nation open its markets while retaining protectionist measures for domestic industry), defence (including the establishment and retention of foreign military bases), and foreign aid (such as an insistence on tying aid to specific conditions) can be constructed so as to serve the interests of the more dominant party.

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<sup>44</sup> For example, in the Uruguay Round negotiations leading up to the establishment of the WTO, the *Economist* reports that many of the representatives of poorer countries lacked the resources and information to negotiate effectively and that they ultimately “had little understanding of what they signed up to” (*Economist*, Sep. 23, 1999 (Cf. Pogge 2008: 233; Eskelinen 2011: 49)).

An emergent consequence of this asymmetry in power that exists between separate nation-states is the way in which more powerful nations then have a greater capacity to determine the shared terms and conditions of various institutionally binding international agreements. This is the second main respect in which global inequality has a negative impact on power relations and the human dignity of the powerless. This asymmetry extends even to the rules and procedures by which global institutions arrive at decisions.<sup>45</sup> For example, institutions such as the World Bank and IMF operate according to weighted voting structures, which ultimately places the vital interests of less powerful nations at the interest of more dominant parties such as the United States. As Charles Beitz makes the case, the decisions made by the World Bank concerning sponsorship of development initiatives “primarily interest the less developed countries which are its clients” but its board of governors cast votes “in proportion to each country’s ownership of capital stock in the Bank” (2001: 108). As a result, the wealthier nations that invest in the World Bank can set the terms and conditions under which less prosperous nations are allowed to receive financial support for their own projects. This gives lending countries the ability to shape the domestic policy of receiving countries so as to fit their own interests, including through demands on domestic policies that must be adopted in order to receive sponsorship.

For example, in her recent study of land conflicts in the Aguán Valley in Northern Honduras, Tanya Kerssen notes that the World Bank’s emphasis on ‘market-led agrarian

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<sup>45</sup> This is similar to the argument discussed in the previous chapter that economic equality may be necessary in order to preserve the procedural fairness of institutions. In my telling, the potential of economic inequality for undermining procedural fairness is principally a by-product of the greater levels of power that economic inequality gives wealthier parties to shape the conditions of their shared social context.

reform' (as embodied by the 1992 Agrarian Modernization Law that expedited the nation's movement toward land titling), which entailed the removal of existing state supports for agriculture, led to the "mass displacement, unemployment and outmigration" of the area's peasant population (2013: 121). In response to the Latin American debt crisis of the late 1980's, the World Bank and IMF demanded "far-reaching austerity measures to cut public spending and increase foreign exchange revenues[.]" including a combination of privatization, liberalization and deflationary monetary policy that rendered landed peasant farmers even more vulnerable to the economic pressures that were gripping the region (2013: 22). Instead of promoting the transfer of land to the poor, these neo-liberal reforms backed by the World Bank and the USAID then had the effect of leaving peasants at the mercy of wealthy elites, who applied tactics of intimidation and manipulation in order to acquire the land necessary to form large agribusiness firms that continue to receive World Bank support (2013: 30, 122).<sup>46</sup> Newly landless workers flooded into the United States in search of work, while Hondurans who stayed to work for the country's land barons continue to place themselves at the risk of violence and various industry- and police-led campaigns of terror. The asymmetry in wealth and power between states, as codified in international agreements and organizations, can effectively undermine local democratic attempts at self-determination and can leave members of economically vulnerable societies, as Beitz aptly puts it, "exposed, without any effective

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<sup>46</sup> As Nina Lakhani reports, the International Finance Corporation – the private lending arm of the World Bank – lent \$30m to agribusiness Corporation Dinant as recently as 2009, a company that has been accused by local NGO's of both direct and indirect violence against peasant farmers in the Aguán (*Guardian*, Jan. 13, 2014).

recourse, to the consequences of decisions importantly affecting their life prospects which originate elsewhere” (2001: 107).<sup>47</sup>

It might be objected to the idea that international relations of trade and development establish a *prima facie* case for global egalitarian concern that these relations are comprised of voluntary agreements between states, which are accountable to their people and which have the ability to reject or change the conditions of their agreements. As such, egalitarian duties need not be extended beyond state boundaries, as states are still the relevantly impactful actors in these situations with regards to their own citizenry. However, as Joshua Cohen and Charles Sabel note, in the case of global rule-making bodies such as the World Trade Organization, opting out is not a real option: “the WTO is a “take it or leave it” arrangement, without even the formal option of picking and choosing the parts to comply with” (2006: 168).

In joining the WTO in order to participate as fully as possible in the global economy, member states are not agreeing to substitute the domestic rules that they have settled on with the universal laws of efficient commerce. Rather, they are agreeing to remake their rules, in domain after domain, in light of the efforts, recorded in international standards regimes, of all the others to reconcile

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<sup>47</sup> This is not to say that forms of local self-determination, while valuable, will necessarily result in egalitarian policy. For example, David Miller has brought up the value of national self-determination as an argument *against* global egalitarianism. For Miller, the ideal of national responsibility is incompatible with appeals to cosmopolitanism or global egalitarianism, and the valuable nature of national communities for their members entails that global justice “must be understood as justice for a world of culturally distinct nation-states each of which can legitimately claim a considerable degree of political autonomy (2007: 278). This means that we should respect nations’ decisions as reflecting their people’s collective right to self-determination; while a policy of global sufficiency may be necessary in order to realize this ideal, Miller argues that a policy of global egalitarianism would undermine it, correcting for nations’ reckless policies and punishing the prudent (2007: Chap. 3). The relationship between equality and self-determination is complex and beyond what I can respond to here, but I will point to the need for self-determining acts to adhere with broader principles of justice in order for them to be meaningful *as* manners of achieving self-determination, whether individual or collective in scope.

distinctive domestic regulations with general standards that are also attentive to the interests of others elsewhere. (Cohen and Sabel 2006: 172)

Given that this is the case, and that all involved parties know this to be the case, there is then a “direct rule-making relationship between the global bodies and the citizens of different states” (2006: 168). Examples of such institutionally-demanded rule changes include the reduction of regulatory barriers to trade, the adoption of demanding laws concerning intellectual and other property rights, and a potential insistence on other policies of economic liberalization that can leave individual citizens and workers vulnerable to the effects of the world market. These measures come with the threat of sanction for WTO members who do not obey, as well as the punishment of non-admittance for those who fail to adopt these measures in the first place (2006: 165). What this entails is that there exist international institutions that are relevantly non-voluntary, capable of being directed by wealthier and more powerful nations, and coercive in their ability to effect sanctions and influence state policy, while having the ability to significantly impact the opportunities people have to determine the shape and structure of their lives.

How exactly the imbalance in bargaining power preserved by the structure of the WTO is capable of harming the global poor is exemplified by the case of the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement. This agreement was developed out of the initial Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations that ended up creating the WTO, and was a necessary condition for joining the WTO. It was generated by the desire of developed nations to preserve the intellectual property rights of their pharmaceutical industries, among other patent-holding firms, in the developing

world, where generic drug production was driving down prices. Before the TRIPS agreement was signed, ‘copycat’ industries in the developing world were able to avoid cost-prohibitive research and development by developing knock-off medicines which they could then sell at prices closer to the long-run marginal cost of production in order to turn a profit. The goal of the TRIPS agreement was to establish uniform minimum standards concerning the obtainability of intellectual property rights and the extent to which nations were responsible for enforcing them, in order to further the expansion of a global intellectual property rights regime.

However, the establishment of this global intellectual property regime ended up working to the strong disadvantage of developing nations. The mandatory measures specified for enforcing intellectual property rights, as supervised by the World Intellectual Property Organization, “can cost more than a year’s development budget for the poorest countries” (*Economist* 1999: 89, cited in Pogge 2008). The extensiveness of mandatory policing measures and the cost of deviating is one of the effects of a lack of understanding and negotiating power on the part of the poorer nations: the 28,000 page agreement was drafted exclusively through the world’s powerful trading blocs, and was an overlooked cost of gaining access to the markets of more prosperous nations (Pogge 2008: 233). Patents on intellectual property such as biological organisms or medically useful molecules can directly or indirectly “impede access by the global poor to basic foodstuffs and essential medicines” (Pogge 2008: 225).

As a result, this intellectual property regime intensifies the global burden of disease, which involves over 18 million deaths per year from diseases which are capable of being prevented, cured or treated. This global burden puts “great strains on the

economies of many poor countries, communities, and families, thereby perpetuating their poverty” (Pogge 2008: 222-23). The protections on intellectual property rights that serve to grant monopoly pricing powers to the creators of certain life-sustaining products allow them to raise the price for, among other things, pharmaceutical goods well beyond what it costs to manufacture them.<sup>48</sup> What this entails is that the WTO-TRIPS Agreement, by demanding monopolies for the holders of intellectual property patents, renders poorer individuals incapable of affording life-sustaining medicines and treatment, thereby undermining the interest all individuals have in living free of disease. What’s more, the intellectual property regime born out of the TRIPS Agreement contributes to the pandemic nature of diseases such as HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis<sup>49</sup> by making it more expensive for the often over-taxed states and NGO’s responsible to prevent and treat diseases that overwhelmingly target the developing world.

Not only is the existing global order an undemocratic site that manifests extensive relations of class and power, but it actively undermines efforts at democratization within developing nations, and is constructed to the clear disadvantage of the global poor and others who lack the formal and substantive ability to lobby for their own interests. This is because there exists a series of international property norms that allow for what Leif

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<sup>48</sup> Pogge claims that the market value of pharmaceutical goods is usually as much as “10 to 30” times as expensive as the marginal cost of production (2008: 226).

<sup>49</sup> The latter of which is a condition for which there has been very little effort on the part of pharmaceutical companies in devising new treatments for, despite its prevalence in the developing world (tropical diseases and TB combine for 12 percent of the total disease burden) and despite the fact that the World Health Organization declared tuberculosis to be a global health emergency. In fact, while there were 1,393 new drugs approved between the years of 1975 and 1999, only three of these were indicated for tuberculosis, a clear sign of the way in which the market-oriented nature of the modern pharmaceutical industry overlooks and ignores the poor (Pogge 2008: 236-37). Appropriately, since the TRIPS Agreement passed, there does not appear to be any greater level of investment in the kind of pharmaceutical research that focuses on developing countries, despite the greater incentives that patent protection was supposed to give companies to focus on diseases that significantly afflict the global poor, as well as the Doha Declaration that stipulates the agreement’s purpose as ‘to promote access to medicines for all’ (Kyle and McGahan 2009).

Wenar characterizes as the current “global traffic in stolen goods” (2008: 2) and that actively incentivize corruption and self-enrichment on the part of political leaders. For many resource-rich nations such as Nigeria and Burma, their plenitude has become an obstacle to economic development due to the existing international property regime.<sup>50</sup> Since any group “controlling a preponderance of the means of coercion within a country is internationally recognized as the legitimate government of this country’s territory and people[,]” this also means that this group, whether democratically-elected or not, is internationally recognized as able to both borrow freely in the country’s name and to freely dispose of the country’s national resources (Pogge 2008: 118-119).<sup>51</sup> If an authoritarian ruler arrives to power in a coup, and borrows huge sums of money or sells off the country’s resources in a bid for personal enrichment, this transfer of ownership is legitimated by the background conditions of the existing global economic order. Far from rooted solely in factors internal to these nations, this ‘resource curse’ exists because of the way in which internationally acknowledged rules and norms recognize and legitimate transfers of ownership that emanate from non-democratic seizures of power. What this confers is the privilege wielded by any government, whether legitimate or illegitimate, to unilaterally “impose internationally valid legal obligations upon the country at large” (Pogge 2001: 355)

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<sup>50</sup> As Wenar notes, the presence of natural resources in a country correlates with authoritarianism, and the presence of oil, gas and minerals in a country increases the risk of civil war and the possibility of coup attempts. What this entails is that the presence of resources in developing nations, rather than an accelerant to growth, has actually been an impediment to it, as the added revenue streams opened by the presence of oil, gas or minerals can serve to further tighten an avaricious leader’s stranglehold over his people (2008: 3-5).

<sup>51</sup> Pogge refers to the former as the international borrowing privilege, and the latter as the international resource privilege. As Wenar further puts it, the customary international rule that whosoever can maintain coercive control over a population has the authority to sell off its resources is a violation of the most basic principle of the market, and an accession to the principle that “might makes right: specifically, [that] might vests the legal right to transfer property” (2008: 12-13).

International resource corporations and the developed nations they sell to maintain this system despite the harm it produces because it allows them “stable access to natural resources regardless of who takes power in poor countries” (Wenar 2008: 13-14). As a result, instead of belonging to a nation’s people, the benefits accrued by the sale of natural resources under the existing international property regime allow dictators, who naturally lack the people’s assent, to unilaterally use these proceeds in order to crush popular or democratic resistance. What is important then about the internal repression and strife that afflicts resource-rich developing nations is that these conditions emanate from the rules and norms of a global property regime that is endorsed and willfully maintained through the activities of dominant national and economic actors. The international property regime as currently maintained and imposed on the developing world foreseeably creates a democracy deficit in those nations, which undermines local democratic attempts at self-determination and props up and incentivizes authoritarian rule.

Furthermore, the terms and conditions of international trade and property relations amplify the asymmetries in power between multinational employers and the global labour force. This is the third and final main respect in which global inequality has a negative impact on social relations that impairs human dignity. As David Held argues, “There is a clear disjuncture between the formal authority of the state and the spatial reach of contemporary systems of production, distribution and exchange which often function to limit the competence and effectiveness of national political authorities” (1995: 127). With modern globalization and the contemporary era of interconnected global markets, the mobility of capital has surpassed both the mobility of labour (which is limited by

coercive border arrangements, as well as human beings' ties to their local communities) and the control of national economic policy (which is in turn limited by wider international conditions) (Held 1995: 128-131). This gives multinational corporations, which typically organize their production, marketing and distribution on a global basis, the ability to unilaterally determine the terms and conditions of their employment agreements with members of the global work force, who can number among the world's poorest and who often lack alternative opportunities for receiving subsistence wages.

What makes this internationalization of production conceivable is the existence of various international protections and guarantees for the rights of property. The international property regime, as enforced by the activity of foreign states and global institutions, guarantees the un-level playing field between multinational corporations and workers. By making the removal of regulatory barriers to trade a condition of admission to beneficial international trade agreements, international organizations such as the WTO limit the amount of domestic protection that exists for workers. Moreover, since corporations have greater mobility than their corresponding labour force, and can move production at will without an analogous level of risk, they can thus dissuade independent attempts by workers to gain better wages and safety conditions with the threat of relocation.

What is relevant about each of the relations of power I have discussed so far is that the international order they reproduce is capable of harming those who therefore have no say in its operation. People have a right to participate in the construction and maintenance of institutions that affect their highest-order moral interests. As I put it in my first chapter, it is crucial that 'all individuals affected by a series of political

institutions have equal say under those institutions' in order for everyone to be able to determine the shared material conditions that govern their life chances. I see this as a fundamental extension of the importance of democratic principles of self-rule, and a necessary condition for the full achievement of an autonomous life. For social rules to be justifiable, they need to be capable of being changed by any large majority of those on whom they are imposed. This emphasis on the need for democratic global institutions entails a restructuring of many of the rules of existing international associations,<sup>52</sup> but it also demands independent limits on the ability of individual parties to influence the nature of international agreements. What makes our concern with unfair agreements and institutions that exclude the global poor and ultimately reproduce their circumstances *egalitarian* is that it is an explicit consequence of global inequality that wealthier parties (whether directly or indirectly) have the greater ability to construct and determine the shared norms and guidelines that apply for the world at large. Thus it is crucial for significant limits to be placed on the level of acceptable global inequalities, in order to remedy the significant disparities of power and influence that serve to maintain the current unjust global order.

Beyond democratic reform, this entails a fundamentally comparative concern with global inequality, with the greater capacity certain parties have to shape the morally important global associations that individuals across the planet are involuntarily subject to. For the agreements passed through international institutions to truly reflect a democratic character, poorer nations must have greater resources to bear upon *in explicit*

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<sup>52</sup> For suggestions on how existing international institutions and the overarching global order might be made more democratic, see Archibugi (1993); Held (1995, 2004); Pogge (2008); Caney (2005: Chap. 5, 2006); Archibugi & Held (2011).

*reference to the capacity of wealthier nations to stack the decks against them in bilateral, multilateral and fully international negotiations.*<sup>53</sup> That the interests of particular individuals and populations are not reflected by the global order is not solely a matter of non-representative institutional design, but is itself a reflection of the unequal abilities of different parties to determine the shared living conditions under which everyone will live.<sup>54</sup>

As I mentioned earlier, one of our objections to economic inequality is that it allows those with access to greater resources the greater ability to determine what gets produced in an area, what kinds of employment are offered, what the environment of a town or state is like, and what kind of life one can live there. Nothing inherent to this objection limits its scope to the national domain. While the parallel phenomena of gentrification and forced migration are generally considered within the context of individual societies, processes of globalization have given way to transnational communities of global elites who perform the role of gentrification in a variety of global cities and beyond (Rofe 2002). Given the contemporary mobility of capital and the international property regime that guarantees the global right to property, the possibility for wealthy actors<sup>55</sup> to transform the character of urban and other spaces regardless of

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<sup>53</sup> As Teppo Eskelinen argues with reference to the WTO, while many agreements drafted and passed through the WTO are produced by and biased in favour of the developed nations, the genesis of this problem lies not specifically in the institutional make-up but in the pre-existing power relations that allow states to undermine the fairness of these institutions. The World Trade Organization itself, as at least requiring consensus for all trade agreements and featuring independent bodies for resolving disputes, is thus “theoretically very democratic” – yet their greater resources and their ability to block out developing nations from the benefits of trade allow wealthier developed nations to shape the terms and conditions of WTO agreements in their own favour (2011: 49-50).

<sup>54</sup> Similarly, this is not to say that egalitarian redistribution is enough to mitigate the formation of morally objectionable relations of power. Fully democratic institutional reform and restructuring are a necessary complement to the achievement and maintenance of important distributive aims.

<sup>55</sup> It is not necessary to see these actors as individual professionals, as have traditionally been associated with gentrification. In the case of many forms of new-build gentrification that involve the undertaking of

national boundaries has emerged as a viable method through which the displacement of local populations can take place.<sup>56</sup> As Neil Smith argues, the logic behind gentrification “is now generalized; its incidence is global, and it is densely connected into the circuits of global capital and cultural circulation” (2002: 427).

The greater connectivity between geographically dispersed locations and the extensiveness of the modern global financial and property regimes have produced greater patterns of transnational migration. For this reason, Atkinson and Bridge have concluded that processes of global migration by social elites and the concurrent population displacement of the poor entail that neighbourhoods ought to be articulated “as the site of the reproduction of a wider set of power relations and contacts which operate at local, urban, regional, and international levels” (2004: 7). Inequalities between differently naturalized parties can then produce many of the same harms that are present between significantly unequal co-nationals. Urban displacement, whether literal or symbolic, a loss of identity and control over one’s overarching material circumstances, and a loss to the right of the city can all occur as a result of specifically *global* inequalities. And while there are clear cultural reasons for processes of gentrification to occur more prominently within the local context, the mobility of capital and the global nature of the financial services economy (including, most significantly, the global housing market) have allowed for gentrification to become a genuinely global process.<sup>57</sup>

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new projects of redevelopment, the process of gentrification is spurred along by large corporate developers. See R erat et al. (2010) for a discussion of the characteristics of new-build gentrification.

<sup>56</sup> For examples and case studies concerning the role globalization and the global institution of property plays in the gentrification of modern cities, and the resulting uprooting of local populations, see Smith (2002); Rofe (2002); Atkinson and Bridge (2005); Butler and Lees (2006); and Pow (2011).

<sup>57</sup> Janoschka et al., in discussing the forms gentrification has taken in Spain and Latin America, mention the existence of various forms of ‘global’ gentrification in Latin American city centres where gentrifiers are often foreign tourists or business people from North America or Western Europe migrating for leisure or

What is worrying about existing global imbalances in power is that they unfairly give more powerful parties the capacity to determine the meaningful life chances others receive, an inequality in capability that is incompatible with the idea of equal standing. Furthermore, the inequalities that confer these greater capabilities are specifically connected to the comparative levels of resources that distinguish different actors, and have nothing to do with the absolute levels these actors have to draw upon. A principle of global egalitarian distribution would mitigate the relations of power that marginalize the global poor and alleviate the damaging effects of these relations. The nature of the existing global order and the extensiveness of the economic interdependencies that connect people across the world then each support a robust commitment to global egalitarian justice.

#### Conclusion:

In this chapter, I have argued that the global order is *prima facie* a relevant site for egalitarian concern, as a result of the objectionable relations of power and domination that exist globally and that are structured through international institutions and global regimes of property. I focused on three kinds of relationships wherein global asymmetries in wealth and power could have a harmful impact on individuals' highest-order moral interests and negate their capacities for self-determination. These are the relationships

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lifestyle reasons. The presence of these populations and the consequent influx of consumption and retail from them can both supplement traditional developer-led gentrification processes and ground what has been referred to as symbolic gentrification, where the economic and material make-up of the neighbourhood comes to change so that the gentrifiers become the neighbourhood's symbolic occupants (2013: 1243-44). This is then a harm related to the unequal standing enjoyed between the gentrifying population and the area's pre-existing occupants, as well as the concomitant status harm perpetrated upon those who are displaced through such processes of 'urban renewal.'

that exist between states, the relationships that exist between states and international institutions (which reproduce the asymmetries in wealth and power that exist between states), and the relationships that exist between multinational corporations, which are relevantly outside the scope of any one nation-state, and the global labour force.

Inequalities in wealth and power within the context of these relationships are relevantly capable of harming and excluding the global poor, and have undermined local democratic attempts at self-determination in their communities.

The principle of equal respect applied to the global arena then entails that all individuals should be able to live free of relations of power and domination that might violate their ability to autonomously choose their own meaningful and fulfilling lives. I have argued thus far that objectionable relations of power and domination are a natural consequence of significant socio-economic inequality, as inequalities in wealth and property condition peoples' access to decent choices and limit their capacities to relevantly determine their own lives. Equal standing of the kind that is demanded by the moral equality of persons is then relevantly threatened by global inequality. In order to mitigate the objectionable relations of power and domination that apply globally, as well as the greater ability these inequalities provide some to shape the shared material conditions under which everyone lives, we need to invoke egalitarian principles that are concerned with the comparative relations that obtain between moral agents on an international basis.

## Chapter 4

### **Associational Justice and the Grounds of (Global) Egalitarianism**

#### Introduction:

In my first chapter, I argued that our reasons for valuing equality are grounded in the relations that obtain between morally equal persons, and the way in which distributive inequalities are capable of harming individuals and impeding their capacity to meaningfully self-determine their own lives. The specifically egalitarian desire for socio-economic equality has to do with the valuable nature of certain kinds of relations in which individuals occupy positions of equal standing with one another, and the need for morally important relationships to not be characterized by objectionable relations of stigma and domination. Consequently, I characterized economic equality as an important ideal for reasons of political and social equality.

In this chapter, I take up the more specific task of outlining the narrower norm-generating conditions under which egalitarian obligations apply. I will begin by briefly sketching out in greater detail what I consider to be the grounds for a properly egalitarian concern, arguing that egalitarian duties apply within a strong, enduring association that regularly affects the highest-order moral interests of its members. The global economic order, as a site that constitutes a significant part of the background rules and conditions that regulate people's public relationships and thereby regularly affects the highest-order moral interests of all associated, is accordingly a relevant site for egalitarian concern.

My approach is then what has come to be known within the literature surrounding global egalitarianism as an 'associational' account of the conditions necessary for triggering egalitarian duties. Associational accounts determine the scope of principles of

distributive justice by virtue of who belongs to a particular association. In my second and third sections, I will explore two alternative associational accounts of the grounds of egalitarian justice as forwarded by philosophers who understand the scope of egalitarian concern as being limited to the domestic sphere. Firstly, I will look at the coercion account, as forwarded most notably by Michael Blake, who argues that egalitarian concern arises from the need to justify coercion to all who share a state context. Since the manner of legal coercion exercised by the state is at odds with a liberal commitment to autonomy, the distribution of goods within a nation (and only within a nation) must be of a kind that could not be reasonably rejected by anyone, which Blake argues entails an appeal to the difference principle. Against this account, I argue that coercion is not a necessary condition for establishing egalitarian obligations, and that a concern for autonomy and morally important forms of coercion ought to entail global egalitarian principles of distribution.

Secondly, I will look at the reciprocity account, as forwarded by Andrea Sangiovanni. Sangiovanni argues that egalitarian duties only exist within a scheme of reciprocity in the mutual provision of a central class of collective goods necessary for developing and acting on a plan of life. Since the goods necessary for developing and acting on a plan of life are those which Sangiovanni thinks are guaranteed only by the state and one's fellow citizens, the scope of egalitarian obligation does not extend beyond national boundaries. In my response, I challenge this claim, arguing instead that the goods required to develop and act on a plan of life necessitates certain advantageous global background conditions, from which the guarantees of the state cannot be plausibly discriminated. My aim is to defuse the plausibility of those accounts of egalitarianism

that see it as most plausibly contained within the domestic sphere. While I do not pretend to cover all of the arguments that might be pressed against global egalitarianism here, I hope to buttress the account I have given by taking on two of the more sophisticated egalitarian arguments that have been pressed against global egalitarianism.

#### Section 4.1: Identifying the Grounds of Egalitarian Justice

Taking into account the injustices produced within the international realm as a result of comparative asymmetries in power, the international realm is then *prima facie* a focus for egalitarian concern. How, then, should we understand the duties that this international order imposes on us, and how should we understand the international order as a site of justice? In my previous chapter, I argued that the global order is a relevant site for egalitarian concern due to the way in which the myriad interrelationships and interdependencies that constitute it allow for the formation of objectionable relations of power and domination between parties that can drastically affect people's life chances. In order to supplement this account, and in order to remove any potential ambiguities about what underlies a properly egalitarian concern, I would now like to specify in greater detail what conditions must be present in order to trigger duties of egalitarian justice.

In order to develop a proper understanding of why egalitarian justice ought to apply globally, it is important to examine what set of conditions must be present in order to trigger egalitarian concern. This has to do with what Mathias Risse has called the 'grounds' of justice. The grounds of justice are the "set of norm-generating conditions or considerations that must be present for demands of justice to become applicable among individuals who share these conditions" (Risse 2008: 1). As I argued in my first chapter,

our reasons for being egalitarians are fundamentally social in character, and derive from the equal respect owed to persons within a morally important shared context. My view is then broadly associational, in that it sees duties of egalitarian justice as being dependent on the presence of existing associational relations between persons, as opposed to simply inhering in persons *qua* human beings.<sup>58</sup> For asymmetries in power between agents to take on a morally objectionable character, it is necessary that there exist some sort of context in which these asymmetries are capable of frustrating individuals' highest-order moral interests. In the following section, I will outline the grounds for egalitarian justice in terms of what Darrel Moellendorf has called 'the principle of associational justice,' where duties of egalitarian justice hold "between persons who have a moral duty of equal respect to one another if those persons are co-participants in an association that meets certain conditions" (2009: 30).

Before explaining what kinds of associations trigger duties of egalitarian justice between members, I would like first to make a crucial point concerning what delimits the presence of an association. Namely, that the existence of an association is not dependent on its members recognizing themselves *as* members. As Moellendorf puts it, "the mere fact of association among persons regardless of the justification of the association can produce duties" (2002: 48). For an association to trigger egalitarian considerations, it does not matter how that association is justified, how its members understand the boundaries of membership, or whether the association is intentional; all that matters is

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<sup>58</sup> Notable examples of philosophers who have forwarded associational defences of global egalitarianism include Beitz (1999 [1979]); Pogge (1989); and Moellendorf (2002, 2009). I oppose this view here to what Simon Caney has called 'humanity-centred cosmopolitan egalitarianism,' which holds that "egalitarian principles of distributive justice obtain at the global level, and they obtain *even if there is not a global association*" (Caney 2011: 507, emphasis mine).

that it is of a requisite sort to produce obligations between members.<sup>59</sup> For example, if an agreement between A and B produces unintended consequences for C, neither A nor B can claim they do not owe any duties to C on the basis that C was not party to the original agreement. “The fact of association plus the entitlement of all of the associates to equal respect produces duties of egalitarian justice” (Moellendorf 2002: 34).

With that being said, what kinds of associations require that egalitarian consideration be given to all members? Following Moellendorf, I will understand those associations that trigger duties of egalitarian distributive justice among members as being relatively strong, as constituting a significant part of the background rules and conditions for the various relationships of their public lives, and as regularly affecting the highest-order moral interests of the persons associated (2009: 32). I will now go over these conditions in greater depth, building on my previous chapter in order to better show how the global economic order is representative of the manner of association that should be seen as establishing egalitarian duties among its members.

The first question is what it means for an association to be strong enough to trigger duties of justice. The crucial distinction here is what distinguishes associations from mere interactions. A one-off interaction as guaranteed by a contract between otherwise unassociated parties is enough to demand a) that the contract is agreed upon by both sides and meets separate conditions of justice and b) that the duties stipulated by the contract are carried out by both parties to the letter. However, this is not enough to establish a continuing level of concern between both parties once the contract is fulfilled.

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<sup>59</sup>This is Moellendorf’s response to Yael Tamir’s attempt at limiting egalitarian duties to co-nationals by claiming that a “shared sense of membership” is required in order to generate duties (2002: 35; Cf. Tamir 1993: 102).

For relations between persons to trigger associational duties of justice, as opposed to simply necessitating the basic moral concern that ought to govern all inter-personal interactions, these relations have to be of an ongoing, enduring nature.

One way of understanding an association to be of such a relevantly enduring nature – although I am open to the possibility that this may not be the only way to understand an association as relevantly strong enough to trigger duties of justice – is if it is “comprehensively governed by institutional norms” of conduct (Moellendorf 2009: 32). If the actions taken within a given association are conducted according to institutional rules and norms that determine which forms of conduct are allowable and which are not, then it follows that this association is strong enough to demand duties of justice among its members. The question then becomes whether or not the global economic order represents such an institutionally-governed association, as opposed to simply being comprised of a series of weaker interactions between relatively self-sufficient parties. This claim appears to me fairly self-evident; as discussed earlier, there exist international institutions that establish and sometimes enforce standing rules and norms for how parties should act in the international sphere, as well as international norms governing transnational property rights and holdings. The global economic order then meets the appropriate ‘strength’ conditions for an association to generate duties of egalitarian justice between its members.

The second point to look at in further detail is what it means for an association to be ‘constitutive of a significant part of the background rules for the various relationships of their public lives.’ As I have attempted to show in previous chapters, our reasons for valuing economic equality between persons are fundamentally social in character, and

relate to the way in which asymmetries in wealth and power can damage one's capacity to form healthy public relationships. Concerns with 'the badness of servility, exploitation, domination, and differences in status' arise in light of the interdependent interactions that take place within a shared public sphere. This reason for egalitarian duties between members of a common association is intimately connected with the third stipulation I have given, that for an association to generate duties of egalitarian justice it must regularly affect the moral interests of its members. As Moellendorf explains it:

Because associations affect a person's moral interests, they naturally yield moral questions that do not arise among nonassociates, namely, questions about the morality of the principles that govern it or the justice of the association. The fact that persons are associated makes it sensible to question whether the institutions or principles that govern their association are just. No such question is sensible in the absence of an association. (2002: 32)

Specifically, that an association determines a sufficient amount of the background rules that regulate a shared public life entails that it is an association that affects the highest-order moral interests of all members. All members of a society have an interest in those goods that are dependent on healthy public relationships, including, very broadly, the relationships that govern their work and their economic interactions, and the relationships that determine their capacity for political participation. An individual's public identity, including the social position they occupy and the formal economic and political relationships they take part in, greatly determines the bases for their own self-identity, in addition to thoroughly influencing the chances they have for leading a fulfilling and meaningful life.

By now, it should be apparent why membership in the global economic order is capable of establishing duties of egalitarian justice. The global economic order is a relevant site of egalitarian consideration because it shapes a significant portion of the background rules that regulate peoples' public lives, and consequently is capable of affecting their highest-order moral interests. Arguments of this sort have often been expressed through the notion that there exists a global basic structure that is profoundly and enduringly impactful on people's lives.<sup>60</sup> Since global institutions and practices are capable of defining people's various social positions and constraining and shaping their life chances and options, it follows that principles of justice are required to assess the background conditions against which individuals and associations interact (Tan 2004: 27-29). In my previous chapter, I discussed a number of relationships that are capable of profoundly impacting people's lives, and that reproduce substantial asymmetries of power. These include, most obviously, the relationship between employer and employee, which can be greatly influenced by the demands made by such global economic institutions as the WTO and World Bank for the liberalization and de-regulation of trade. Similarly, an individual's capability for political participation, where this participation is understood as entailing the democratic ability for members of a polity to shape their collective reality, can be threatened by the coercive capacities of various international institutions. Since these injustices emanate from comparative and non-specific global asymmetries in wealth and power, I conclude that this establishes a need for egalitarian principles of justice to be applied globally.

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<sup>60</sup> See Pogge (1989: Part Three); Buchanan (2000: 703-715); Tan (2004: Chap. 2); and Follesdal (2011: 53-62) for arguments to this effect.

To recap: the main reason for understanding duties of egalitarian justice as applying globally is the profound impact the existing global economic order has on the entire world's population, where this global association is comprised of an indefinite number of interdependencies and interrelationships that determine the capacity that *all* individuals affected have to determine their own meaningful and fulfilling lives. Considerations of global egalitarian justice are then grounded in the existence of morally important global associations between members who owe a duty of equal respect to one another. Associations such as the global economic order, as enforced by international institutions regulating trade and property arrangements, are governed by norms of conduct that determine the background conditions that both enable and constrain individual action. Since this order reproduces the same manner of objectionable relations of power and domination that are present in the domestic sphere, and that consequently threaten the inherent moral value we ascribe to all persons, it follows that our egalitarian concern must apply beyond the boundaries of the individual nation-state.

#### Section 4.2: The Challenge from Coercion

However, not all who allow for the possibility of egalitarian justice agree that the reasons we have for valuing equality within individual societies can be understood globally. The first alternative understanding of the grounds of egalitarian justice I would like to look at is the coercion approach, as forwarded notably by Michael Blake in his essay, "Distributive Justice, State Coercion, and Autonomy."<sup>61</sup> Coercion theorists argue

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<sup>61</sup> Notable versions of the coercion approach to understanding distributive justice have also been advanced, with varying emphases, by R. Miller (1998); Nagel (2005); and Risse (2006).

that egalitarian considerations apply only within a normatively forceful coercive framework. This claim can be conceived as entailing that egalitarian considerations only apply within the boundaries of the state, or it can be understood as necessitating the expansion of duties of egalitarian justice to the global realm.<sup>62</sup> As my aim here is only to establish the validity of global egalitarian justice, and not to refute certain accounts of what triggers egalitarian considerations, I will only be looking at the former class of arguments.

Following Christian Barry and Laura Valentini, I will understand this position as containing both a normative claim about what circumstances are necessary in order to invoke egalitarian considerations, and an empirical claim about how the current global order fails to replicate these circumstances (2009: 493). The normative claim that Blake puts forth in his essay is that egalitarian considerations arise as a result of our concern for individual autonomy and the subsequent need to justify the specific forms of political and legal coercion that exist within nation-states. For Blake, the political and legal institutions we share at the national level create a need for distinct forms of justification (2008: 658). We have duties of distributive justice that apply globally, but these duties are of a different character than the duties we have to those with whom we share a coercive state context. The empirical claim here is that those forms of coercion that are normatively relevant do not exist at the international level. Egalitarian duties, or duties which target ‘relative deprivation,’ as Blake refers to them, only exist within the context of a coercive legal order.

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<sup>62</sup> For an example of a coercion theorist who accepts the existence of global egalitarian duties, see Valentini (2011), especially Chap. 6. Blake (2011) terms views of this kind ‘expanded coercion’ accounts.

Egalitarian distributive justice then derives from a concern we have as to the autonomy of those with whom we share a coercive legal context. Blake grounds his theory of distributive justice on the liberal value of autonomy, and the need for institutional contexts, as relevantly capable of threatening individual autonomy, to be “justifiable to all” (2008: 663).

The idea of autonomy reflects an image of individual human agents as creating value by their creative engagement with the world; their allegiances, choices, and relationships constitute sources of value. This creation of value can be destroyed or respected by institutions in the world. (2008: 667)<sup>63</sup>

In order to respect each individual’s right to autonomy, the set of options available to them must “provide adequate materials within which to construct a plan of life that can be understood as chosen rather than forced upon [them] from without” (ibid.). What this liberal respect for autonomy entails is that all coercive practices must be capable of being justified to those coerced. For Blake, coercion “demonstrates contempt for the individual coerced” (2008: 666); it expresses “a relationship of domination, violating the autonomy of the individual by replacing that individual’s chosen plans and pursuits with the plans of another” (2008: 670). The state, as an inherently coercive apparatus, then requires some form of justification for its existence for those within its scope.

It is because of this concern for autonomy that leads Blake to argue that we do have duties of distributive justice that apply globally. Since some forms of poverty deny the very possibility of autonomous agency, an impartial liberalism ought to be concerned

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<sup>63</sup> Blake’s understanding of autonomy derives largely from Joseph Raz’s influential formulation from *The Morality of Freedom*. To this end, Blake specifically mentions that autonomy requires “an adequate set of options” and that autonomy is incompatible with the existence of coercion (2008: 665-670).

with both domestic inequality and global inequality, insofar as the latter involves severe deprivation of the kind that undermines the ability to live autonomously. However, since a concern with autonomy only requires ensuring that people meet a certain threshold on Blake's account, egalitarian distributive justice is then only necessary in order to justify the special forms of legal coercion practiced by the state. While Blake admits there exists coercion on a global scale, it is not of the relevant kind to establish an egalitarian concern with relative deprivation. Coercive global agreements and the international norms they establish "do not engage in *the same sort of* coercive practices against individual moral agents" that states do (2008: 664, emphasis mine).

Indeed, for Blake, only the kind of coercion that is practiced by the state is capable of being justified through an appeal to distributive shares, as only the state is both coercive of individuals *and* necessary for them to live autonomous lives (2008: 676). The direct, ongoing coercive practices that are the specific domain of the state, such as the various forms of legal coercion and taxation, are those that demand special justification for those who are subject to them, as these practices violate autonomy. For legal coercion to be justifiable, it must be of a kind that could not be reasonably rejected by anyone within its scope. This demands that a given social distribution be justifiable to those who would be least favoured by it, which in turn requires that, following Rawls, our distribution be to the greatest advantage of the worst-off.

As such, while egalitarian principles ought to determine how distributive justice is meted out at home, Blake contends that principles of sufficiency are all that are required for the larger global context. Each state has a duty of justice to the global poor, as all human beings have the right to exist as autonomous agents, but that duty only extends so

far as is necessary for the elimination of such forms of absolute deprivation as famine and extreme poverty (as well as other autonomy-denying social practices which may be harmful to living autonomously, such as caste hierarchies (2008: 669)). In the global context, distributive obligations are then necessary only insofar as they are required to relieve absolute deprivation. In the national context, however, more stringent duties arise as a result of the shared legal context that is simultaneously capable of threatening, as well as being necessary for, the formation and protection of persons' autonomy.

There is an immediate sense in which this account seems normatively powerful. The idea that we owe duties of sufficiency to those with whom we do not share a common legal context, and more stringent duties to those with whom we do, seems to accommodate both the sense in which we consider ourselves to have duties of justice to the global poor as well as the sense in which we might think that our duties are more demanding to those with whom we are more closely associated. Furthermore, if applied globally, the criterion of sufficiency would involve a dramatic change from the current global distribution of goods, and would demand an end to viciously unjust patterns of extreme deprivation and want. While I earlier rejected sufficiency as a desirable distributive principle for the domestic context, some may think it more intuitive when applied to the international domain, as certain considerations for why it is that we should value equality are weaker or may not apply given the weaker associations which apply globally.

However, I argue that we should reject coercion accounts of this sort insofar as they limit egalitarian justice to the domestic sphere. To this end, we can consider two main criticisms of Blake's account. The first targets the moral claim that egalitarian

duties are only triggered in the presence of a particular kind of coercion. The crux of this criticism is that, at best, Blake establishes that coercion is a sufficient condition for distributive obligations.<sup>64</sup> However, this is not enough to say that the kind of coercion that Blake identifies as characterizing the domestic sphere is a *necessary* condition for establishing egalitarian distributive duties; for this claim to follow, Blake would have to show that all situations in which we would think it necessary for reasons of justice to effect a given distribution derive from a concern for the autonomy of persons. He then fails to establish that egalitarian considerations are necessarily limited to the domestic context, as we may have reasons emanating from separate concerns that successfully establish egalitarian duties.<sup>65</sup>

Consider an example similar to one developed by Simon Caney of two small, deeply interdependent societies, each with analogous roles for their citizenry where certain individuals vary in their talents and needs, and accordingly occupy different positions based on where they currently are in their lives. These societies – following Caney, I will refer to them as Coercia and Anarchia – are by and large identical to one another, and are both capable of being described as cooperative enterprises for the purpose of securing the advantage of their members. However, one of these societies is governed by a coercive set of laws and practices, whereas the other is not. This latter society is absent of “the core idea of coercion... according to which coercion exists

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<sup>64</sup> Although this claim has been subjected to scrutiny as well. Andrea Sangiovanni has contested the premise that non-voluntary subjection to a system of comprehensive societal norms can do *any* work to ground egalitarian distributive obligations, arguing instead that coercion “is at best a causal means or instrument for ensuring compliance with distributive obligations that hold independently” (2012: 81). For more, see Sangiovanni (2012).

<sup>65</sup> Wollner (2010); Caney (2011); and Sangiovanni (2012) each develop substantive versions of this argument.

where one agent makes threats to others to impose a disadvantage on them if they do not do what the threatener wants” (2011: 519). Against the suggestion that such a society is unthinkable, Caney replies that this is beside the point: “To imagine a society without coercion is simply to imagine one where people do not make threats against one another and do not force people to do things against their will” (2011: 520). Supposing the existence of such a society, would this distinction alone change the character and extent of the duties its members owe to one another?

The question posed is then whether or not it is plausible to conclude that members of the coercive society hold different obligations to their fellow citizens than members of the non-coercive society. If we suppose that both societies constitute what Rawls might call a “scheme of cooperation without which no one could have a satisfactory life” (Rawls 1971: 15), what is the normative difference between the role that members of Anarchia play in guaranteeing their fellow citizens access to the advantages produced by a mutually beneficial social life and the role played by members of Coercia? For coercion theorists to maintain the normative claim at the centre of their view, they need to produce a plausible explanation for why *only* the presence of coercion is capable of generating egalitarian concern, and not other forms of morally important relationships.

The second criticism targets the normative-empirical claim that normatively salient forms of coercion do not also exist at the global level. By Blake’s own admission, global institutions and the global economic order have great coercive force. Why, then, should more demanding duties of egalitarian redistribution only apply within specific kinds of cases where coercion is present? For Blake, the answer appears to be that the state (and only the state) is necessary for the inculcation and development of peoples’

autonomous powers; international legal institutions are not. But, as mentioned, nothing is said about why this necessary for establishing specifically egalitarian duties. The relevant question then is not whether or not those forms of coercion particular to the state are of a different kind than those practiced in the international sphere. Certainly, we can allow this and still maintain a commitment to global egalitarian justice. What has to be shown is that the forms of coercion present at the state level are the only forms capable of establishing a comparative and non-specific egalitarian concern for the quality of life opportunities individuals have available to them.

If our concern is with autonomy, it seems quite apparent that internationally instituted rules and norms also enact coercive limits on individuals' capacity for self-development. As Arash Abizadeh has convincingly argued, the very system of states and borders that establishes the domestic context comprise a "vast network of ongoing coercion by foreign states" that in turn has a pervasive impact on people's life opportunities and economic prospects by restricting their possibility for movement (2007: 348).<sup>66</sup> Following this criticism, the effect that the state system has on everyone's autonomy – by establishing coercive international borders that forbid free movement – requires that this system be justified to all who are disadvantaged by it, which requires that the same distributive principles demanded by the domestic context be instituted within the larger global context.

It seems difficult to say then that the kind of coercion engaged in by the state within its own borders is the only form of coercion capable of establishing egalitarian concern between co-associates, given the basic moral interests affected by forms of

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<sup>66</sup> This point is also made by Tan (2004: 176-77).

coercion that exist beyond the boundaries of individual states. To the extent that the distinction between intra-state and inter-state coercion can be clearly made, it seems to lack any further normative underpinnings; what is the added egalitarian significance of pervasive, ongoing forms of state coercion being codified in and regulated by a system of law?<sup>67</sup> If what we value for reasons of egalitarian justice is autonomy (and I think it clear that this is one of the things underlying our egalitarian concern for the equal standing of all), then it seems arbitrary to identify the scope of egalitarian duties as ending at the very same coercive boundaries that constitute the establishment of the state. Since foreign nationals can also be subject to ongoing legal coercion by virtue of their very exclusion from membership in another community, not to mention through the decisions and sanctions produced by international bodies, the argument from coercion then appears to be either circular or normatively inert. The very framing of the nation-state, and the coercive methods undertaken to uphold it, have as their effect the exclusion of those beyond its boundaries; if our reason for egalitarian duties is derived from the need we have to justify impactful forms of legal coercion, it then seems difficult to limit egalitarian justice solely to the national context.

This is especially the case given the often dramatic effects that internationally abided by laws and norms have for persons' autonomy: in determining their ability for movement, in determining the global context that conditions their potential for employment, and in determining the manner of domestic economic and political policies

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<sup>67</sup> For Abizadeh, the suggestion that a coercive network of law is necessary in order to trigger concerns with relative deprivation is 'perverse:' it seems to imply that so long as the state mistreats people coercively without subjecting them to the rule of law, it owes them no further consideration than if it hadn't coerced them at all (2007: 350-51).

their respective nations can pursue without fear of sanction. These institutions may not necessarily produce the kind of direct, immediate<sup>68</sup> coercion that states are capable of, but this distinction seems unimportant for determining egalitarian duties given the extensiveness of the consequences of international coercion. Even if we hold, as Blake appears to, that what is relevant in assessing legal coercion is that it is necessary for the development of peoples' autonomous powers, the extent of global interdependence renders it so that, in many cases, and especially with regards to poorer nations, states alone cannot guarantee the collective goods necessary for the autonomous development of their citizens. Indeed, this is what drives so many nations to surrender certain of their sovereign powers and enter into agreements with their fellow states concerning important matters such as trade and defence that are regulated by binding international rules and norms.

If we are truly concerned with ensuring the autonomy of all persons, we should concern ourselves with mitigating the ongoing global relations of power and domination that apply (1) between states; (2) between states and international institutions (such as the WTO or the World Bank); (3) and between multinational corporations and members of the global labour force. The inequities in power that can come to characterize these relationships can in turn drastically limit the possible life chances of individual persons in ways that they have no democratic ability to protest; an Indian day labourer suffering from tuberculosis lacks even the formal power to lobby against the WTO-TRIPS agreement that prevents her from being able to afford medicine. What this entails is,

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<sup>68</sup> Mathias Risse, who also defends a coercion-based view, has built on Blake by emphasizing the *immediacy* of state coercion as emblematic of what he takes to be the 'normative peculiarity of the state' and the particular nature of its coerciveness (2006: 685).

among other things, a global concern with the facts of relative deprivation that allows for the effective coercion produced by these relations, and which consequently impinges upon individuals' abilities to choose their own life plans. I argue then that attempts to limit egalitarian duties to the domestic sphere for reasons of coercion fail to point out a consistent morally salient distinction between the national and international context, and as such, offer no normatively compelling reason for restricting the scope of egalitarian duties.

#### Section 4.3: The Challenge from Reciprocity

I will now consider a second argument made against global egalitarianism, the argument from reciprocity, as forwarded most notably by Andrea Sangiovanni. This objection states that duties of egalitarian distributive justice are triggered only as a result of the kinds of relations of reciprocity that exist within societies. According to the reciprocity account, since the global economic order is not necessary in order to provide us with the basic collective goods for a fully desirable and autonomous life, egalitarian considerations do not obtain on a global scale.

The normative claim here is that equality "is a relational ideal of reciprocity among those who support and maintain the state's capacity to provide the basic collective goods necessary to protect us from physical attack and to maintain and reproduce a stable system of property rights and entitlements" (2007: 19-20). For Sangiovanni, we owe obligations of egalitarian reciprocity to our fellow citizens in light of the fact that they "provide us with the basic conditions and guarantees necessary to develop and act on a plan of life" (2007: 20). The notion of autonomy then plays a role for Sangiovanni as

well, although it does not determine the content of our duties to one another. What makes states important is that they provide the context necessary for individuals to live autonomously. One person's ability to make use of their talents is dependent on an existing network of social relations that takes place against an institutional framework that require the contributions of others for their preservation. What triggers the special presumption against arbitrary inequalities, on this view, is the idea of 'fair reciprocity.' As Sangiovanni develops it, this ideal entails that "those who have submitted themselves to a system of laws and social rules in ways necessary to sustain our life as citizens, producers, and biological beings are owed a fair return for what those who have benefited from their submission have received" (2007: 26-27).

Sangiovanni's empirical claim is that the crucial relations of reciprocity that obtain between fellow residents of a state do not obtain between citizens and foreign nationals. People owe egalitarian obligations to those without whom they would not been able to develop and act on a plan of life.<sup>69</sup> For Sangiovanni, the state is the crucial context of this development, and those who uphold and maintain it – through compliance with extant private law, through taxation and, in certain cases, through military service (2007: 35) – are those to whom egalitarian considerations apply. These considerations then come to neatly encompass everyone within a given society, but do not extend beyond this

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<sup>69</sup> There is a matter of some controversy over who is to be included in this group. Sangiovanni clearly wants to draw the distinction between the national and global contexts such that no one who is capable of complying with the state is beyond the realm of concern – thus, egalitarian concern should be open to 'residents' and not merely 'citizens'. (Like Sangiovanni, however, I use the word citizen at points due to its greater convenience, even though he does not limit egalitarian consideration to the naturalized citizens of a country per se.) However, his emphasis on the ability of people to *contribute* to the provision of certain important collective goods appears to leave out involuntarily disabled persons who are unable to contribute, even in the sense of compliance with extant private law (as complying with private law would, by necessity, require one to be capable of doing otherwise). I leave aside, for the time being, the plausibility of tying egalitarian consideration as closely to the ability to contribute as Sangiovanni does in his account; for a more substantial discussion of this point, see Armstrong (2009).

scope. The argument is that states are normatively peculiar because they provide the institutionalized legal systems and extended social structure necessary (Sangiovanni identifies educational institutions and the market system as of particular relevance) for their citizens to nurture and develop their talents. While the de facto authority of the state is necessary in order for individuals to develop “the individual capabilities to function as citizens, producers, and biological beings[.]” no such international institution is analogously significant (2007: 20-21).

For this reason, we owe no similar egalitarian duties to those with whom we do not share a state. Since international and regional orders lack the autonomous distributive, extractive, and regulative capacities necessary to sustain and reproduce a stable market and legal system, equality as a demand of justice cannot be applied to them (2007: 21-22). Like Blake, Sangiovanni argues that other distributive considerations may apply, but the principles that govern distributive justice at the global level will be notably different in form and content than the principles that govern reciprocal relations at the domestic level (2007: 35).<sup>70</sup>

This objection perhaps strikes closer to the core of my associational account. If the reason for egalitarian concern ultimately derives from the levels of interdependence shared between fellow associates and the moral importance of the common goods that derive from this association, then it looks possible that Sangiovanni has found a way in which the normative peculiarity of the state plausibly distinguishes the obligations that

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<sup>70</sup> Since my aim is not to develop a substantive principle along which global egalitarian obligations should be meted out, I leave open whether or not the distributive principles that apply at the global level ought, as Sangiovanni argues, to be different in content than those that apply at the domestic level. This claim seems plausible to me, especially given what I consider to be the associational character of specifically egalitarian considerations, but as my immediate concern is simply to establish the importance of egalitarian distributive concerns at the global level, I will not weigh in on it further.

exist at the domestic level from those that exist at the international level. Yet, while Sangiovanni's account of how egalitarian duties emerge is intriguing, he also fails to establish that relations of fair reciprocity, for the reasons he gives for their value, are *necessary* in order to trigger egalitarian considerations and not that they are merely sufficient.<sup>71</sup> That egalitarian duties apply within a state on the basis that fellow residents provide one another with the basic conditions and guarantees necessary to develop and act on a plan of life does not entail that egalitarian duties *only* apply on this basis.

However, even if we grant that relationships of reciprocity are necessary to establish egalitarian duties, I argue that Sangiovanni's theory fails to ground egalitarian considerations in a manner that consistently discriminates between the kind of relations that exist within the borders of individual nation-states, and the kind of relations that exist internationally. In challenging this account, I will employ what Chris Armstrong has called the 'continuum objection,' arguing that the strength of various political and economic associations is not dependent on whether or not these relationships occur within a given society, but that there instead exists "a continuum of more and less intense relations that play out across state borders" (2009: 298).

As Barry and Valentini emphasize, much of Sangiovanni's argument "depends on exactly what it means for one agent to *provide* another agent with such basic conditions and guarantees" (2009: 491). Sangiovanni's claim that reciprocity is a necessary condition of egalitarian duties is dependent on the idea that the conditions of fair reciprocity that only exist within states are what provide us with the collective goods necessary to choose our own valuable life paths. However, if it could be shown that the

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<sup>71</sup> This point is made by Caney (2011) and Armstrong (2009).

kind of collective basic goods necessary to develop and act on a valuable plan of life were also dependent on the background conditions set by the global economic order, then this claim would fail as a means to establish the thesis that egalitarian considerations are limited to the national context. We might still think that there is something normatively powerful about the idea that interactions between members of a shared society should be governed by norms of fair reciprocity, but conclude that this is not enough to establish the limiting thesis that egalitarian concern should not also be applied globally.

There are perhaps two ways we can target the claim that it is only co-residents that serve to provide us with the basic collective goods necessary to develop and act on a plan of life. Firstly, as Armstrong points out, Sangiovanni's understanding of the collective goods that are necessary in order to form and act on a plan of life may be too limited. He develops a list of seven social goods that are essential for people to be able to develop and act on a plan of life:

- 1) order and security; 2) the formal and informal requisites of economic production, distribution, and exchange; 3) environmental goods (such as clean air); 4) civic infrastructure (such as roads, bridges or tunnels, lighting, sanitation, and so on); 5) a system of cultural reproduction; 6) a system of physical reproduction (i.e., a kinship system); 7) a system of collective government (whether monarchic, oligarchic, or polyarchic). (2009: 309)

Importantly, Sangiovanni only takes the first two into account. Goods such as environmental health have clear international scope, as the externalities created by one nation can have drastic effects for the quality of life in another. Issues concerning the global commons such as climate change and ozone depletion affect everyone in the

world, and can have especially dramatic consequences for those who live in developing nations. While I will not comment here on whether or not this can ground a specifically *egalitarian* global distributive claim, it appears clear that Sangiovanni overlooks some of the necessary constituents for developing an autonomous plan of life, each of which point to the substantial role that international background factors play in determining an individual's life chances.

The second way is to question whether or not the goods Sangiovanni permits as necessary for developing a plan of life do not already establish a case for global egalitarian duties. While the maintenance of physical security is perhaps the most fundamental justification for the existence of the state, Sangiovanni allows that the system of property relations that the state guarantees is necessary for developing a life plan as well. However, more than this guarantee is required for an economic system to be successful at producing and distributing necessary goods. In contemporary times, it is increasingly difficult to draw the line between national and international factors in determining which are necessary for an economic system's success at providing its citizens with important goods. International institutions such as the WTO place a heavy emphasis on open markets and the need to limit tariffs and other protectionist measures as a condition of entry, leaving domestic economies in the developing world increasingly dependent on foreign goods – and on the presence of similarly 'open' foreign markets in the developed world.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Thomas Pogge claims that the annual loss in export opportunities due to the protectionist policies of wealthy nations amounts to \$700 billion U.S., over 10% of the aggregate gross national incomes of all developing countries combined. He further cites the former World Bank Chief Economist Nick Stern as claiming that the elimination of agricultural protection and production subsidies in the developed world “would raise agricultural and food exports from low- and middle-income countries by 24 per cent and total

In contradistinction to the understanding of the state as a ‘self-sufficient scheme of cooperation,’ the complex and highly integrated nature of modern national economies point to the global order as a site of innumerable important interdependencies between nations. Modern economies are planned with extensive reference to the rules, norms and principles of global trade, and the actions of states and international institutions alike presuppose a global division of labour. It then seems unlikely to me that Sangiovanni can find a way to clearly and consistently distinguish between the role the state plays in guaranteeing the basic goods necessary for its citizens to develop and act on a plan of life and the role played by the global background conditions that determine the context in which the state operates. As Armstrong puts it, “a broader conception of the prerequisites of economic life, incorporating formal and informal market institutions, rule systems, sets of norms, “social trust,” and so on, is necessary” for an economic system to survive (2009: 308). Since economic production, distribution and exchange are increasingly carried out on an international scale, it is implausible to understand the formal and informal institutions necessary for supporting these practices as being contained within individual states. Especially when taking into account the manner in which international trade agreements have allowed for greater regional specialization in the production of goods, a development further empowered by international bodies such as the IMF who actively counsel such specialization,<sup>73</sup> it no longer makes sense to see the formal and

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annual rural income in these countries by about \$60 billion (about three-quarters of the global poor live in such rural areas)” (2005:725-26).

<sup>73</sup> IMF Fiscal Affairs Department, “Should Equity Be a Goal of Economic Policy?” *International Monetary Fund*. January 1999.

informal institutions that comprise a successful economic system as relevantly local or national in scope.

Given the extensive globalization of the economic process, it seems plausible to read foreign nationals as “submitting themselves to various international norms which in turn considerably influence our access to resources that are central to the lives that we lead” (Barry and Valentini 2009: 492). Through acquiescence to various trade agreements and the international property regime (regardless of whether or not this compliance is of a strictly voluntary character), foreign citizens can reasonably be thought of as participants in the production of social goods necessary for *all* individuals encompassed within the larger institutional framework of the global economic order to develop and act on their own plans of life. Since Sangiovanni wants to understand the subjects of fair reciprocity as including those who are able but unwilling to work (2007: 28-29), along with anyone within the boundaries of the state who does as little as comply with existing laws, this claim should not be seen as far-fetched. The inclusion of individuals who contribute to the collective goods of a society solely through compliance carves out a plausible space for granting egalitarian consideration to those productive members of different societies, on whom the efficiency of shared economic institutions both formal and informal depend.

To sum up, the increasingly globalized form of modern economic activity points to a highly interconnected global economic order, where mutual interdependence between nations then fails to reveal a consistent line of demarcation between the kind of economic relations that occur within states and the kind of economic relations that cut through them. This order ought to be understood as comprising a continuum of economic associations of varying strengths, where the goods necessary for citizens of one country

to autonomously determine their own life plan may be dependent on the international property regime that has been imposed across the globe. Given the deeply interdependent nature of the current international economic system, Sangiovanni's version of the reciprocity account can then most plausibly be seen as establishing a case for egalitarian redistribution to have cross-border application.

Conclusion:

In this chapter, I have defended one version of the grounds of egalitarian justice, which I have called the associational account of egalitarian duties. This account states that egalitarian considerations obtain between people who have a moral duty of equal respect to one another within an association that is relatively strong, that constitutes a significant portion of the background rules and norms that regulate a shared public life, and that regularly affects the highest-order moral interests of its members. Building off of my earlier discussion of the reasons we have for valuing socio-economic equality, I understand egalitarianism as being fundamentally concerned with ensuring that the morally important relationships that structure a person's life and determine the opportunities available to them reflect a complex ideal of persons living autonomously as equals. This necessitates a comparative and non-specific egalitarian concern for the resources people have available to them, along with the assurance that all persons be free of the harms produced by stigmatizing relations of power and domination. Since the global economic order determines the background conditions that structure people's morally important public relationships, opening them up to objectionable global relations of power and domination, it is an appropriate site for egalitarian justice.

I then contrasted this account with two others that seek to restrict the scope of egalitarian duties to the nation-state. The first was the coercion view, as expounded most notably by Michael Blake. Under this view, duties of egalitarian justice are demanded in order to render the forms of legal coercion exercised by the state justifiable to each of its citizens. Against this account, I contested both the normative premise that coercion is a necessary condition for the generation of distributive obligations, as well as the normative-empirical claim that the only morally important forms of coercion for reasons of egalitarian concern are those exercised by the state. While there is a valid distinction between the forms of coercion that exist domestically and the forms of coercion that exist globally, I see no consistent reason for only the former to generate duties of egalitarian justice given that global-institutional forms of coercion are similarly capable of affecting person's highest-order moral interests.

The second was the reciprocity view, as forwarded by Andrea Sangiovanni. Sangiovanni argues that egalitarian considerations plausibly emanate from the relations of reciprocity that occur under the state, where, through various forms of legal compliance, all residents of a nation guarantee for one another the basic collective goods necessary to develop and act on a plan of life. In response, I argued that the collective goods Sangiovanni thinks are necessary for an autonomous life are relevantly dependent on the background conditions set by the global economic order. Furthermore, Sangiovanni's insistence that anyone who does as little as maintain residence in a country is owed egalitarian consideration – a claim I consider plausible, as each of the strongly egalitarian reasons I have given endorse this extension of concern – undermines his attempts at excluding foreign nationals from the same scope of concern. Not only do

foreign nationals submit themselves to analogous international rules and norms that structure our access to the goods produced within the global economy, but many arguably play a greater role in guaranteeing our access to necessary goods. Foreign workers and manufacturers occupy a more fundamental position in the cooperative scheme of the global economic order that provides individuals with necessary goods than the domestically unemployed. And while it would be perverse to tie the scope of egalitarian concern to the level of one's participation, especially where a failure to participate in the global economy may not be voluntary, it seems normatively important in determining what they are owed that foreign nationals could be doing more to provide us with the basic collective goods necessary to live autonomously than certain of our co-citizens. Accordingly, the reciprocity account as outlined by Sangiovanni is best understood as entailing global egalitarianism.

While there exist other normatively intriguing ways of targeting the claim that egalitarian justice is global in scope, I will not develop or respond to those accounts here. Rather, I hope to have shown, in light of how the doctrine of egalitarianism is to be most plausibly and attractively understood, and in light of the multiple objections to global egalitarianism I have examined in turn, the validity of extending egalitarian distributive concerns to the global realm.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

In this thesis, I have attempted to show the importance of a properly egalitarian concern and the importance of expanding this concern to the global realm. The reasons we have for being egalitarians are complex, and are intricately bound up with the importance we place on separate moral values such as freedom, respect and reciprocity. Egalitarianism, as I have explained the doctrine, involves a fundamental concern with the dignity and moral equality of all persons, supplemented by an underlying interest in their individual well-being. The egalitarian motivation is one derived from the valuable nature of certain sorts of relations between moral agents, where the equal standing of all parties is preserved. As I have argued, this preoccupation with the equal standing of persons entails a robust concern for distributive equality, as economic inequalities are capable of generating stigmatizing relationships of power and domination between parties. Where there exists a reasonably strong, morally important association between persons in which inequalities in distribution are capable of instantiating objectionable harms to the standing of those associated, duties of egalitarian justice obtain amongst members.

In the global realm, the unequal abilities of different parties to influence the terms and conditions of international agreements and the structure of the institutions that uphold those agreements have had the effect of disenfranchising the global poor and limiting their capacity for self-determination and their chances for a meaningful life. This is evident through the way in which the current global order over-represents the interests of its more powerful actors, and undermines the stability and prosperity of developing nations and their citizens. These inequalities in capability are incompatible with the

egalitarian ideal of persons autonomously enjoying a relation of equal standing with one another. The objectionable global relations of power and domination that are capable of forming between states, between states and international institutions, and between multinational corporations and the global labour force each create a case for the need to limit global inequality. The existing global order, as expressed through formal international institutions, the international property regime, and the informal activities of various powerful global actors, is significantly impactful in determining the background rules and conditions that regulate people's morally important public relationships. These qualities of the global order, which themselves reflect the deeply integrated and interdependent nature of international politics and the global economy, generate the grounds under which norms of egalitarian justice apply and render it a legitimate site for egalitarian redistribution. For these reasons, I conclude that the framework of egalitarian distributive justice, plausibly understood as emanating from a concern with the equal standing of all participants within a given association, should be expanded to the global realm, where objectionable relations of power and domination arise as a result of the relative levels of resources different global actors have to draw upon.

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