Editorial

The theme of this issue of *Theoria* is 'Special Obligations, Rights and National Responsibility'. It arises from a conference held at the University of St Andrews in October 2010 which focused on David Miller's recent work. The editors are grateful to Alice Pinheiro Walla, Jesse Anne Tomalty, Yann Allard-Tremblay and André Grahle for organising this stimulating event, and to David for graciously agreeing to reply to his commentators both in person at the conference and in print here.

The first two articles are concerned with Miller's well-known argument that individuals have special obligations towards compatriots on account of their shared national identity. Richard Child argues that this argument is threatened by the fact that citizens may legitimately reject their national membership. Miller may be right to say that citizens have a good reason to endorse their national identity, and that if they do so they have special obligations towards compatriots. But Child urges that this does not show that even those who do not endorse their national identity have such obligations. This matters because it deprives the state of the justification it needs to coerce dissenters into complying with its distributive norms.

Child allows that, insofar as citizens endorse their national identity, they might be for that reason under special obligations to compatriots. In the second half of his article Carl Knight denies this. Specifically, he argues that, where individuals are under special obligations, these either serve cosmopolitan goals or are too limited, in one regard or another, to clash with cosmopolitan goals. As such, special obligations cannot form the basis of an objection to cosmopolitanism, as Miller claims they can. In the first half of the article Knight offers a different defence of cosmopolitanism, suggesting that a common argument for cosmopolitanism, which appeals to the unfairness of treating individuals differently on account of things for which they are not responsible, can resist an objection raised by Miller where it focuses on differential advantages rather than differential treatment.

The next two articles are concerned with rights. John Pearson explores tensions between Miller's minimalist theory of human rights and his position that global justice should give people minimally decent lives. Central to the discussion is Miller's division of needs into basic needs, those generally needed for a minimally decent life, and societal needs, which are context specific. Pearson maintains that Miller must interpret basic needs narrowly, so that societal needs are needed to maintain decent lives. As Miller intends only to secure *basic* needs globally, this undermines his claim to secure decent lives for all. The shortfall of

societal need provision could be corrected, Pearson proposes, by obligations of global justice to build prosperity-creating institutions.

The focus of Ben Saunders article is Arash Abizadeh's argument that countries have no right to close their borders to outsiders as they would thereby be engaging in coercion that had no democratic justification. Miller has countered that a closure of borders can amount only to prevention, and prevention unlike coercion does not require justification. Though he raises some doubts about the argument so formulated, Saunders believes that a relative of Miller's response can be used to resist Abizadeh's argument. On either the 'pluralist' or 'inclusive' construals of the value of democracy, rights considerations are prior to democratic considerations. Furthermore, some cases of coercion appear to have non-democratic justifications, and rights themselves do not seem to need democratic justification. Given this, coercive border controls do not seem arbitrary, and so do not unjustifiably limit freedom.

In the fifth article, Luke Ulaş considers one of the central arguments of Miller's book, *National Responsibility and Global Justice* – the claim that national responsibility can be grounded in two models of collective responsibility. The first 'like-minded group' model seems less plausible the larger the group is, as larger groups are less plausibly described as relevantly like-minded. This model consequently seems inapplicable to nations. The second 'cooperative practice' model draws on an analogy with an employee-led business, an analogy Ulaş claims cannot be sustained. In particular, many actions of states do not directly benefit their citizens, and citizens do not directly participate in many of their states' major decisions. Ulaş suggests that remedial responsibility may be assigned to states, but on account of their capacity to right wrongs, rather than on account of their members' collective responsibility for those wrongs.

The issue concludes with Miller's response to his commentators.

CARL KNIGHT
ON BEHALF OF THE EDITORS

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