A Global Society of Reciprocity

Yifan Wei[1]

[1] University College London, London, UK

Correspondence: Yifan Wei, University College London, London, UK.

Abstract

This essay concerns the claim that egalitarian principles of distributive justice apply within states but not between them. The analysis will rely primarily on the arguments made in Andrea Sangiovanni's article. Due to the limit of words and attention, I shall only discuss issues of inequality of resources/wealth and focus only on Sangiovanni's arguments on relational claims.

I will first demonstrate his arguments, in relational account, how Globalist Egalitarian does not justify an obligation of distributive justice and how Internationalism, in accordance to his idea of Reciprocity, does. Later I will demonstrate, with his logic, why global distributive justice is justified and desirable. Thus, proves the claim above wrong.

Keywords: political philosophy, justice, distributive justice, global distributive justice, egalitarianism, Sangiovanni

1. Sangiovanni: Reciprocity, Internationalist and Globalist Egalitarianism

To him, any worthy discussion on a theory of Internationalism must have the premises of (A) an empirical distinction between domestic from the across-state orders, and (B) why such distinction is relevant in a justification of a claim on distributive justice.

As he rejected the claims based on Coercion and Authorship, he proposed an alternative claim of Reciprocity:

I will argue 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 a stable system of property rights and entitlements (Sangiovanni, A. (2007) Global Justice, Reciprocity, and the State (Blackwell Publishing) :19-20).

Based on empirical features, he illustrated three capacities of a modern state: extractive, regulative, and distributive, and how the across-state orders fail these criteria, and thus, dismiss their obligation of distributive justice.

1.1 Lack of Extractive Capability

Sangiovanni explained, when people associate, we create a state as a collective endeavour to promote our interest. Such institutions are not self-sustained. They draw their sociological and economic basis to exist on the support from their citizens and residents: Through taxation, they sustain their government's finances; through their political involvement and compliance they sustained the government's sociological and political base, in exchange for the guarantee of their basic capacities to function as individuals to be protected, recognised and respected. By that distinction, cross-state orders failed to extract any significant basis from each individual.

1.2 Lack of Regulative Capacity

Unlike states, cross-state orders have no direct jurisdiction over anyone that they see as their principles. Therefore, all cross-state orders need to recognise the existence of the states. They are dependent on the states' regulative capacity to inflect their regulations on the people.

1.3 Lack of Distributive Capacity

Inline and continuing the aforementioned capacities, the international orders also do not have means to distribute any resource/wealth. This is because they lack the basis "to provide and guarantee the goods and services necessary to sustain and reproduce a stable market and legal system, indeed to sustain (on its own) any kind of society at all": they lack the financing, legitimacy, jurisdiction and influence that the states have in order to

achieve this *(Sangiovanni, A. (2007) Global Justice, Reciprocity, and the State (Blackwell Publishing) :20-21).*

2. Distributive Justice by Reciprocity

2.1 Egalitarianism Justified by Reciprocity

While Sangiovanni recognises the moral arbitrariness of natural and social contingencies needs to be dealt with, or as he quoted John Rawls "we should strive 'to mitigate the[unequal] influence of social contingencies and natural fortune on distributive shares.' *(Sangiovanni, A. (2007) Global Justice, Reciprocity, and the State (Blackwell Publishing) :22)*", he refused any ground of pure egalitarianism. Therefore, he rearticulated this issue and proposed how we should approach it on the ground of Reciprocity specifically. In his imaginary conversation with one of the hypothetical citizens, he argued as follow:

Premise1: The values of people's work which are produced by appropriate use of their talents is only valuable as it is being assigned with value by the preferences of others. Should the others have different preferences, the work might have no value at all.

Premise2: The values of people's work is only meaningful as other are being law-binding, if there is no a legal binding market, the work of one's talent can be little of use for anyone else.

Premise3:   People may have talents and advantages, and these talents are only meaningful within a specific institutional framework for one to be in advantage. The framework is only existed because of other's participation that supplied framework with the basic goods that is necessary for one to be in advantage because of a certain set of arbitrary skills.

Conclusion: "by constraining yourself by principles of justice that treat your social and natural advantages as morally fortuitous aspects of your circumstances, you give others a fair return for what everyone else has given you (Sangiovanni, A. (2007) Global Justice, Reciprocity, and the State (Blackwell Publishing): 24)."

3. Global Society as the Only Viable Base

In Sangiovanni's view, the international orders failed in three criteria to generate an obligation for distributive justice: Excretive, Regulative, Distributive capacities.

However, these criteria are just instrumental means as they are only capacities that he believed to be necessary to achieve "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 a stable system of property rights and entitlements".

As Sangiovanni argues "that equality as a demand of justice is a requirement of reciprocity in the mutual provision of a central class of collective goods". The scope of which egalitarianism should apply is a question of the scope of which the members collectively achieve the mutual provision of a central class of collective goods not any other tangential matters (Sangiovanni, A. (2007) Global Justice, Reciprocity, and the State (Blackwell Publishing): 4).

3.1 Physical Attack

As Sangiovanni argued, we are protected by our state from physical attack as we have supported and maintained the domestic institutions that enforce law and order, deter outside invasions. It seems that equality should only be a relational ideal among the citizens and residences since they are the ones who supported and maintained this as a capacity of a state.

I should argue that, *de facto*, it is not entirely true. In reality, most states are small, and lack state-commanded forces that are supported by their citizens to protect their citizens. Militarily weaker countries often do not rely on their state for protection, but rather other state (etc. Vatican City and Italy) or cross-state orders (etc. NATO). In this case, the protection is not solely guaranteed by the citizens of a state through the association of their own. The egalitarian principle therefore should not only apply to the citizens of a state.

3.2 Stability

Another objective in Sangiovanni's ideal is the stability of a system property right.

One example I choose to raise is the systems that protect intellectual property rights. Efforts of protection of properties in this like are valid to be considered as a basic collective good that maintains stable systems of property right; and, in the arena of protecting intellectual property right, cross-state cooperation in law and law-enforcement are usually the only meaningful method, as effort of only any one state is usually futile as the state lacks the jurisdiction to protect the property right outside of its own territory.

A necessity for a wider collaborated work across states means that this full-protection of property right is not provided by one state, hence, the scope where egalitarianism should apply to not only the citizens of one state.

3.3 Entitlements

Entitlements vary with kinds: rights, necessities, opportunity... It is accepted that certain commodities are seen as a basic claim to the entitlement of human right: Water, food, electricity, shelter...

In a hypothetical case, the people of a state would contribute to the state, for example, through taxation. This enables the state to provide these basic commodities to all if it is needed. In nowadays; however, the most basic commodities are the goods that is most reliant on international trade (etc. crops, food, energy, internet, raw materials for all productions...), the provision of basic products is no longer an independent task. A modern state, by-in-large, cannot sustain all basic goods to entitlements alone.

This makes the scope of members that mutually provide to ensure the basic entitlements expand outside of one state.

Some may argue that these goods are paid by a fair price. The same argument from Sangiovanni's argument still applies: The benefit of trade and comparative advantage is only possible with a background institutional framework of the international market, where all economic actors in the world are participating to sustain it.

3.4 Global Society, Not State, Not Cross-State Orders

The lack of the three capabilities certainly does suggests an empirical distinction; however, these distinctions bring the states, as independent agents, no further in achieving their goals of protection and maintenance than the cross-state orders. Therefore, it is not they are relevant empirical distinctions: the state alone should not generate more obligation than the cross-state orders due to these distinctions.

The cross-state orders (argued elsewhere by Sangiovanni) and the states both cannot provide the basic goods necessary to achieve the essential obligations alone, and in some cases, it is impossible for them to achieve them together. It sometimes also requires efforts of individual actors to makes it possible. For example in the case of a international trade, it is not possible for a trade of basic goods to happen just because the state choose to implement certain policies, and there is a trade cooperation amongst state; individual economic actors also need to choose to act: to have the preference to consume foreign goods, to choose to work in a production that supplies to international instead of elsewhere...

Only when considered as a collective of global society, the states, cross-state orders, and individual actors together could they achieve all objectives of Sangiovanni's ideal. The global society would, hence, be the true "who" that "support and maintain the state's capacity to provide the basic collective goods". Thus, "equality as a demand of justice is a requirement of reciprocity in the mutual provision of a central class of collective goods" should apply to the global society as a whole.

One way to critique this is by focusing on the fact that a state, as Sangiovanni argues, is the product of a collective endeavour. When people form a state, they form an association that is featured to promote mutual interests; thus, equality is required among the members as the mere fact of each member's participation makes any benefit possible. Efforts of collaboration of global society on the other hand is not a state-liked collective endeavour; they are the product of negotiation between different bodies, each concerned the benefit of their own members.

I would argue that the fact international collaboration being reached by different bodies with own different goals, is independent from the fact that the promotion of mutual benefit is achieved by the global society as a whole. The scope of demand for equality should focus only on the fact that who actually sustained the basic goods for the institutional framework.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, I argued, in his logic, that his denial of Globalism on the ground of global order's lack of a state's extractive, regulative and distributive capacities is unfounded by his idea of Reciprocity.

As neither the states nor the global orders alone as, independent agents, deliver his objectives of provision of basic collective good, none should be considered agencies that are subject to an obligation of equality as distributive justice.

Nonetheless, when they function as one unity, as the modern states', global orders' and international basic structures (etc. free market)' natures *de facto* functions, the global society may qualify as a whole sum of people who supported and maintained the states' capacities to provide basic collective goods. Thus, the global society is

obliged with a demand of equality as distributive justice.

References

Sangiovanni, A. (2007). *Global Justice, Reciprocity, and the State,* Blackwell Publishing.