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## Review of *Principles of Social Justice*. David Miller. Reviewed by Dorothy Van Soest

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and change, the evolution of different types of organizational structures and their institutional development, the diversification and professionalization of staff, relationships with government, as well as parallel developments in other countries.

Serious readers who want more than a primer or an introduction to foundations, and seek a more substantial treatment of the subject, in addition to a more critical perspective, may wish to consult other studies such as the recently published *Private Funds, Public Purposes: Philanthropic Foundations in International Perspective* edited by Helmut Anheier and Stefan Toepler, (Klewer Academic/Plenum Publishers, New York: 1999. Also, chapter 20 by Paul Ylvisaker in an earlier work *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook* Yale University Press, 1987, edited by W.W. Powell, is even shorter, but has greater depth, is also more nuanced, critical but balanced in its assessment of the values, potentials and problematic features of philanthropic foundations.

Ralph M. Kramer

University of California, Berkeley

David Miller, *Principles of Social Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000. \$19.95 papercover.

Is life fair? Is life just? Contemporary theories of social justice address such fundamental questions by setting forth certain principles and normative conditions that would ideally result in justice and fairness. They are grounded in abstract philosophy and provide a critical conception of social justice that paints a utopian picture of society. They challenge us to promote greater fairness in our institutions. In *The Principles of Social Justice*, David Miller starts with the practical and real pursuit of social justice rather than beginning with the usual vague propositions about what social justice is. Thus, the book is inevitably grounded in disagreement. As the author points out at the beginning of the book, while people may be committed to social justice, they still disagree bitterly about it in practice.

This groundbreaking book explores this disagreement and its sources in order to understand how extremely divergent views about what is required to bring about justice might be reconciled when they stem from shared beliefs at a deeper level. The goal of

the book is to discover the underlying principles that people use when they determine that a situation is either just or unjust. By examining empirical research on popular conceptions of justice, the author's sensitivity to popular opinion opens the way to a closer investigation of the social contexts in which principles of justice are applied. This approach increases the political relevance of the theory of justice that is presented in the book. Yet Miller argues that, while there needs to be a culture of social justice that pervades the major social institutions and guides politicians and officials and voters, it must also constrain people's everyday behavior even when they are not in a formal institutional role.

If social justice is to constrain everyday behavior, then who and what should be included? Miller addresses issues about the scope of social justice in terms of what resources should be distributed among members of a society and what a society means. In regard to the distribution issue, he concludes that certain core resources can be identified as being of central concern to any theory of social justice such as income and wealth, jobs and educational opportunities, and health care. Miller acknowledges that other benefits might be more arguably included, such as Rawls' inclusion of self-esteem in his list of primary goods that should be justly distributed. While arguing that there is no canonical list of primary goods, in Rawls' sense, he asserts that we must be prepared to listen to claims that being deprived of access to an adequate share of one resource makes the people concerned worse off. In regard to defining the scope of a society, Miller argues that the social justice principles that we use are always applied within bounded communities such as nation-states, with issues of distribution often focused on small units such as workplaces. Based on this and other arguments related to the practical application of social justice principles, he concludes that we must think of social justice as applying within national political communities.

Miller develops a sketch of a theory of social justice that argues why it needs to be grounded in evidence about how ordinary people understand distributive justice and addresses disputed practical questions of social justice. In Chapter 4, he raises provocative questions about and then reviews research studies that shed light on the answers. This chapter is the most fascinating in the book, in the opinion of this reviewer. It provides a comprehensive review

of the research related to issues such as: people's attitudes about what people deserve based on effort expended, their beliefs about equality and inequities, their conceptions of fairness in the face of unmet needs, the impact of self-interest on how principles of justice are applied, and the effect of class membership on one's general attitude toward social inequality. The conclusions that Miller draws from the evidence are particularly relevant for anyone interested in trying to influence social welfare policy based on awareness of public opinion.

The bulk of the rest of the book is devoted to analyzing three principles of social justice—desert, need, and equality—in a more focused way. People's opinions about the application of these problematic principles are examined in order to show that a theory of justice rooted in popular beliefs can retain a critical edge and be connected to questions of political feasibility.

This is a complex and ambitious book. Instead of proposing a normative theory of social justice, Miller illustrates how different principles are used in different social contexts. His theory of justice does more than simply report popular beliefs, however. It presents principles of need, desert, and equality that are philosophically coherent and blended together to form a cohesive theory. Miller continues, in the final chapter, to be concerned about the practicality of social justice by returning to the question of political viability. He prospects for social justice in light of two tendencies—globalization and multiculturalism—and concludes, in part, that “the pursuit of social justice in the twenty-first century will be considerably tougher than it has been in the last half of the twentieth . . . and that we will have to think much harder about questions of scope, about what the universe of social justice should be in a world in which economic, social, and political boundaries no longer neatly coincide.”

Dorothy Van Soest

The University of Texas at Austin

Seymour J. Mandelbaum. *Open Moral Communities*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000. \$30.00 hardcover.

What is a community? How do we identify a moral community? What criteria do we use to determine deserving communi-