

A List of Apologies World Wide

by Graham Dodds

According to some observers, we are living in "the age of apology." (For example, see Mark Gibney, Rhoda E. Howard-Hassmann, Jean-Marc Coicaud and Niklaus Steiner, eds., *The Age of Apology: Facing Up to the Past*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007). Apologies from individual politicians are nothing new, but official apologies from governments to other states or to aggrieved domestic groups are increasingly common. Often, these actions are part of transitional justice. In certain circumstances, political leaders

choose to issue an official apology in order to come to terms with a problematic past, to heal old wounds, to reunite estranged communities, and to facilitate a better future for political victims, perpetrators, and the whole polity. These apologies may offer an attractive middle path between the alternatives of mass amnesty and criminal prosecution, and they may be part of a broader process of political reconciliation. Some political apologies are famous (e.g., the U.S federal government's apology for interning Japanese Americans in World War II, Pope

John Paul II's many apologies for various historical wrongs committed by the Catholic Church, and Australia's apologies for mistreatment of aboriginal peoples), but other political apologies are less well known. And of course they vary greatly in their motivation and efficacy. Information about hundreds of political apologies can be found via an online database [<http://political-apologies.wlu.ca/>], which was established and is maintained by Rhoda E. Howard-Hassmann, Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada.

David Miller on Inherited National Responsibility

by Pranay Sanklecha

Abstract: This paper offers a critique of David Miller's recent account of inherited national responsibility. It is argued that the account leads to a dilemma: either it does not make sense to say that we can accept the national inheritance, or, on a different sense of acceptance, it does, but then we encounter a serious conflict with one of our important intuitions about responsibility.

Introduction

David Miller argues that it makes sense to claim that nations can inherit responsibility. Given certain circumstances, current members of nation X can be said to have obligations to pay compensation of the relevant kind to either the victims or the descendants of victims of a past injustice that was committed by previous members of nation X. In this paper, I argue that while this account works for two sets of circumstances as distinguished by Miller, it does not for a third – the situation where the current members of nation X have not benefited from the injustice in question. My focus in this paper is narrow, and consequently I take many things as given. I accept the idea that nations can be held collectively responsible, I grant that it can be empirically possible to identify the victims or descendants of victims of past injustice and the effects that this inju-

stice had on them. I try, in short, to agree with Miller as much as possible, in order to disagree with him more effectively. In the first section 'Miller's Taxonomy: Three Types of Claims' I describe the three types of claims; the second section 'The First Two Claims Considered' deals with Miller's argument for the possible validity (given the right empirical circumstances) of the first two types of claims; the third section 'A Critique of Miller's Account in the Third Type of Claim' discusses problems which arise for the third type of claim from the impossibility or excessive cost of rejecting one's national inheritance; the fourth section 'The Challenge of Cultural Cosmopolitanism?' considers the view of cultural cosmopolitanism and its relevance to the question of inherited responsibility, national or otherwise; and the final section 'Considering One Response to the Critique of Miller' outlines a problem which arises for one plausible response to the problems outlined in the third section.

Before beginning the critique of Miller's account, however, it is necessary to deal with a generic concern that always arises when discussing historical injustice: how far back should we go? Several thousand years ago, Aryan groups migrated to the Indian sub-continent. In the process of establishing their civilization they indulged in the standard practice

of 'oppressing the natives'. Can descendants of those natives (the Dravidians) demand compensation from descendants of those Aryans? Could descendants of Adam, say, demand compensation from the descendants of Eve for her part in getting him to eat the apple?¹ Or is there some sort of limiting factor, some point in time such that acts beyond this point cannot be subject to claims of compensation?

This concern is discussed, for example and amongst others, by Jeremy Waldron and George Sher². It will not, however, be discussed in this paper. This is not to deny its importance. Miller, for instance, clearly recognises that it is important, but avoids discussing it because it bears 'on the issue of whether the alleged victims of injustice have a claim to redress, not on the issue of whether another group has an obligation to meet the claim ... even if we are able to ... establish that claimant groups have a justified demand for compensation of some kind, it is still necessary to investigate whether other groups, or institutions, have a responsibility to meet such a demand'³. That is to say, we can leave this concern aside and still meaningfully examine what we may colloquially call the 'duties and responsibilities' side of the equation. A comprehensive system for dealing with historical injustice must deal with the concern mentioned, but Miller is concer-