In this paper I want to take seriously Rawls’s characterization of his *The Law of Peoples* as carrying forward the project of *Political Liberalism*. *Political Liberalism* articulates Rawls’s reworking of the stability argument from Part III of *A Theory of Justice* to better square it with the fact of reasonable pluralism. As presented in *Theory* the stability argument is an argument from moral psychology. Though the argument changes in *Political Liberalism*, the moral psychology does not. Accordingly, I draw on both the moral psychology Rawls articulates in *Theory* and its revised deployment in *Political Liberalism* to illuminate certain features of the account of international right and justice Rawls sets out in *The Law of Peoples*.

I begin with a review of the three stage account of moral development presented in *Theory*. I then show how Rawls’s characterization of the benevolent absolutism, the well-ordered decent people, and the well-ordered liberal democratic people maps on to this account. With this parallel in place, I then propose a reading of *The Law of Peoples* that has it carrying forward to external threats to stability, especially threats arising out of the fact of reasonable disagreement within the international context, Rawls’s account in *Political Liberalism* of how a liberal democratic people might remain stable in the face of internal threats to its stability, especially as they arise from the fact of reasonable disagreement within the domestic context. I conclude that in both *Political Liberalism* and *The Law of Peoples* Rawls endeavors to show those within the politically active segment of the relevant population – liberal democratic citizens in the domestic case, liberal democratic peoples in the international case – who have reached the third stage of moral development, the morality of principle, that social stability for the right reasons is compatible with the fact that even under favorable conditions all those with whom they are reasonably to cooperate will not, in the absence of illegitimate force or oppression, join them at stage three. Though the condition, embodiment and expression of the full development of moral personality to stage three, the morality of principle, liberal democracy depends for its stability, internally and externally, on the possibility of stable fair cooperation for the right reasons between persons, whether natural or artificial and corporate, at different stages of moral development. I conclude with a brief remark about global capitalism.

I. The Moral Psychology of *A Theory of Justice*.

Moral psychology aims at understanding the moral experience of persons – moral feelings, attitudes and sentiments; moral deliberation, judgment and motivation; and moral development. It aims at understanding this experience neither as general psychological experience nor as neural activity in the brain, but rather as distinctively moral experience. A person’s psychological experience is distinctively moral when it cannot be identified or explained without reference to moral concepts, principles or values. The psychological experience of guilt is thus distinctively moral, whereas the psychological
experience of fear is not. Importantly, there are no inner states or felt feelings necessary or sufficient to the psychological experience of guilt or that of other moral feelings, attitudes or sentiments. It is enough that a person sincerely report feeling guilty in an appropriate context (e.g., not on stage as an actor in a play), behave in a manner consistent with the report (e.g., make an apology), and provide the right sort of explanation (e.g., one that refers to wrongdoing another by violating a moral concept, principle or value).

Moral psychology is not, then, simply empirical psychology extended to moral phenomena. Nevertheless, it is, for Rawls, informed and constrained by empirical psychology. There ought to be no conflict between our best moral psychology and our best empirical psychology. Nor is moral psychology, since it does not depend on inner states or felt feelings, limited in its subject matter to the moral experience of natural human persons. It extends to any agent capable of appropriately expressing, regulating and explaining itself in moral terms. There is nothing peculiar about the moral psychology of peoples.

While there is a sense in which all of Rawls’s work is an exercise in moral psychology – an attempt to understand, in reflective equilibrium, the moral sentiment he refers to as our ‘sense of justice’ – within his work he draws most explicitly on specific claims in moral psychology in the stability argument from A Theory of Justice. There he deploys a theory of moral development to argue that human persons raised within a society the basic social structure of which embodies and expresses justice as fairness may be expected normally and naturally to acquire a sense of justice sufficiently well-rooted in their overall psychological make-up to ensure that in general they will reliably voluntarily do as justice requires without excessive policing, indoctrination, manipulation, coercion, etc. Rawls’s key thought here is that given just institutions it is perfectly normal and natural for persons to acquire a reliably regulative sense of justice of the sort necessary to the stability of such institutions. Of course, while necessary, the mere acquisition of a reliably regulative sense of justice is not sufficient to the stability of such institutions. It is also necessary that those who have acquired such a sense of justice understand and experience their having done so as congruent with their good or their success or self-realization as rational agents in the most basic sense and that they each and all know, and know that others know, that they are not alone in this, that others too similarly understand and experience their having acquired the same sense of justice.

The point here is not that persons must understand and experience their determinate conception of their own good – their actual life plan – as congruent with their sense of justice. As Rawls notes, it is trivially true that congruence at this level obtains for all persons possessed of a reliably regulative sense of justice. Rather, the point is that persons must understand and experience their having acquired a reliably regulative sense of justice as congruent with their good even when they bracket their determinate conception of the good or actual life plan and think of their good in the broadest or deepest or most basic sense, that is, in terms of their good or success or self-realization simply as rational agents. Indeed, not only must they so understand and experience their reliably regulative sense of justice, they must also know that others, and others must in turn know that they, do so as well. Congruence must be a public fact visible for all to see. If it is not, then the path to the reliable reciprocal trust necessary to escaping a prisoner’s dilemma and sustaining enduring voluntary
cooperation on fair terms will, even in the best of circumstances, likely, if not necessarily, pass through force, deception, coercion or manipulation.

In *Theory* Rawls made the case for this congruence as a public fact visible for all to see obtaining in a just society by drawing on a ‘thin theory of the good’ as well as the so-called Aristotelian principle to argue that all persons possessed of the reliably regulative sense of justice cultivated in a society governed by justice as fairness will publicly know of one another that they each understand and experience their possessing it to be congruent with their good as rational agents in the most basic or fundamental sense. To be clear, Rawls’s point was not that they could derive or justify their sense of justice solely in terms of their good as rational agents. It was rather that they would each understand, and understand of others, that their having acquired and being oriented by it was not an obstacle to their good or success or self-realization as rational agents.

As is now well-known, Rawls came to think this second step of his stability argument in *Theory*, the so-called congruence argument, inconsistent with the fact of reasonable disagreement or pluralism with respect to comprehensive moral, religious and philosophical doctrines. Reasonable comprehensive doctrinal disagreement or pluralism – disagreement or pluralism with respect to more or less complete world views and so fundamental understandings of the self and its realization – is a permanent fact within any free society and so within a society the basic structure of which is faithful to justice as fairness. Given this fact, it is unreasonable to think that the members of a free society would ever converge on one shared public demonstration or understanding of precisely how their reliably regulative sense of justice is congruent with their good simply as rational agents.

To fix this problem and secure the second step of his stability argument, Rawls introduced in *Political Liberalism* a number of new ideas and arguments intended, when taken together, to reach the same conclusion reached in *Theory*, albeit by a different route: in a society the basic structure of which is faithful to justice as fairness, reasonable persons ready to cooperate with one another politically on mutually acceptable terms will find, and will each publicly know that they each and all so find, albeit each for their own distinctive doctrinal reasons, their reliably regulative sense of justice to be congruent with their basic good simply as rational agents, or at least sufficiently congruent to support the public trust necessary to maintain their political cooperation. An overlapping consensus is sufficient evidence of this congruence as a visible public fact.

A. Moral Development.

The theory of moral development that Rawls invokes to explain why human beings living under just institutions may reasonably be expected normally and naturally to acquire the reliably regulative sense of justice those institutions presuppose assumes that human beings are born with two basic capacities, a capacity for rationality and for reasonableness. Of course, these capacities are not yet on-line, as it were, upon birth. They develop over time in and through social life. As they do, they underwrite claims to, and to the material and social conditions of, their active exercise. One might say (as Rawls sometimes did say to students) that what a person is is the activity of reason (rationality and reasonableness) animating an embodied being. This activity is irreducibly social. Human beings are not
born persons, but rather become persons through social interaction. Given the right conditions, they do so naturally and reliably. Justice is their reciprocal alignment or attunement one to another as self-authenticating sources of valid claims on one another within a social world adequate to the development and the exercise of their capacities for reason and so to their reciprocal self-realization as determinate embodied human persons.

This development begins with the newborn infant possessed of and actively animated by only natural desires and instinctive actions, what Rousseau called *amour de soi* in its most basic form. The hungry infant cries. The cold infant cries. It experiences and expresses its basic, initially animal, needs. Typically, the parent responds, unconditionally, by endeavoring to meet the newborn’s needs and by displaying pleasure at evidence (the crying stops) that those needs are being met. Over time, the infant comes to experience, if not understand, this as parental love. And over time this experience of parental love typically engenders in the infant child first a love for her parents and then in due course a primitive sense of herself as a source of self-authenticating valid claims on them and a need for their respect and recognition of her as such. The infant child’s love for her parents gives rise to new desires to please and not to disappoint them. Within this context of reciprocal affection and care, she is oriented and enabled to develop and exercise new capacities, for movement, interaction, and so on. She naturally delights from this development and exercise of her capacities. And so she comes to understand and experience fidelity to her parents’ commands or directives as something that she desires to do not only because she loves them but also because it is congruent with her good. She begins to hear her parents’ commands or directions not only as imperative but as genuinely normative. Apart from any prospect of reward or punishment, she comes to want to obey parental directives or commands, not only so as not to displease or disappoint but also to maintain the rewarding development and exercise of her capacities. This transition to the normative is not initially and never simply a matter of her own self-interest. She wants to advance the good of her parents, whom she trusts and loves. She wants and wants to preserve a relationship of reciprocal affection. When she fails to do as directed or commanded by her parents, she will feel badly. Though not yet capable of moral feelings of shame or guilt properly speaking, she will experience the sort of hurt typically associated with any rupture in reciprocal affection.

This first stage of moral development, which Rawls characterizes as a (proto-) morality of authority, is initially oriented around obedience and punishment. But as the child’s capacities—linguistic, cognitive, kinesthetic, and so forth—come on-line and develop, and as the child’s sense of herself as a self-authenticating source of valid claims on others takes firmer root, this first stage of moral development comes eventually to be oriented around instrumental exchange or bargaining. The child, increasingly possessed of a secure sense of her own worth and delighting in the development and exercise of her capacities comes to expect and wishes to confirm for herself, and have her parents acknowledge before her, some advantage gained from her compliance with parental directions or commands. That they are parental directives or commands, and that her compliance is congruent with the good of her developing and exercising her capacities, is increasingly by itself not enough, for her to experience them as genuinely normative and binding or reliably to move her to comply. She has outgrown and wants no longer to be simply the child subject to benevolent rule. What Rousseau refers to as *amour propre*, one’s sense of value in relation to others, begins to assert itself. Of course, she still loves and wants to
please her parents. But she wants this in a context that she can understand and accept, without any sacrifice in self-respect and while continuing to enjoy the development and exercise of her capacities, as manifestly in her interest without compromising her love for her parents.

The (proto-) morality of authority, which begins in a morality of obedience and punishment, develops soon enough, then, into a morality of self-interested bargaining and exchange. Because the feelings, attitudes and sentiments characteristic of this further development of the first stage of moral development can still be identified and explained without any reference to moral concepts, principles or values, this is not properly a moral stage (hence the parenthetical “proto-” above) of moral development. But in due course it ordinarily yields in childhood to a genuinely moral stage of moral development.

Though it ordinarily so yields, the (proto-) morality of authority is not eliminated or destroyed. If properly circumscribed and oriented by manifest benevolence, it remains a propos to those circumstances (e.g., sudden emergencies, radical asymmetries of ability and vulnerability) within which the prerogatives of leadership and command are essential. But these circumstances are typically rare within the family, especially once the child is beyond the toddler years.

Ordinarily, as the child’s capacities continue to come on-line, this first stage of (proto-) moral development, the morality of authority, which eventually manifests as a morality of self-interested bargaining, yields to a second stage, which Rawls dubs the morality of association. This begins as the child, increasingly seeking her own advantage from compliance with directions and commands in more and more complex contexts, is able to join in and experience with others various cooperative undertakings, first within and then beyond the family. These initial cooperative undertakings are often structured hierarchically. Within them the child comes to experience and understand that by fulfilling role-specific responsibilities others – parents, teachers, coaches, teammates, etc. – contribute to her own good by providing her with reliable access to goods she could not secure on her own, not only a so-called cooperative surplus, but also an opportunity to develop and exercise her capacities in a new cooperative social context. She thus comes to trust and feel affection, perhaps even love, for those with whom she cooperates and so to desire to advance their good. This she now understands that she can do by reciprocally fulfilling her role-specific responsibilities within the cooperative undertaking, even when so doing may at the moment seem to be in her interest. She thus comes within cooperative undertakings eventually to experience and understand social role(s), her own and and social roles generally, as genuinely normative. She experiences and understands her relations with others in these cooperative undertakings to be always structured and mediated by different social roles. But the fact that she and others are reciprocally responsible to those roles in service of their common good and in a way that she finds rewarding as she continues to develop and exercise her capacities, confirms, nurtures and sustains her self-respect. She comes naturally and normally to feel proper moral shame or guilt when she fails to live up to her responsibilities within cooperative arrangements, and she blames or resents others when they similarly fail. She finds herself able in this new context to reason with others not simply by way of rational self-interested bargaining but in shared moral terms. These new feelings and this new capacity for deliberation with others are properly moral because they cannot be identified
or explained without referring to such publicly shared moral notions as reciprocal role-mediated responsibilities functionally serving the common good.

Over time the child will typically participate in a wide variety of cooperative undertakings, with varying degrees of internal hierarchy, and will come to feel affection for all who she cooperates with and experience and understand the normative force of specific role-mediated responsibilities as but a partial or incomplete manifestation of the normative force of cooperation with others for the common good more generally. She will come to experience and understand the cooperative conventions structuring her social world as in themselves genuinely normative provided they manifestly serve the common good. Thus, while this second stage of the morality of association typically begins with affection for specific persons fulfilling specific roles in specific cooperative undertakings and with experiencing and understanding as normative the specific social roles constitutive of those specific undertakings, it typically develops into affection generally for persons ready and willing to do their part in a cooperative undertaking and into experiencing and understanding such undertakings as normative simply as cooperative undertakings. In this way, moral obligations and duties come in social life to be experienced and understood as arising from and regulated by public and shared sense of what persons owe one another in virtue of their cooperating for their common good. From this soil sprouts a shared and public common good conception of justice.

Throughout this second stage of moral development persons experience and understand themselves and one another as rational and responsible, as reliable participants in a given and decent cooperative undertaking, a shared form of life, conducive to their common good. So long as they are publicly so recognized and respected, and so long the connection between their shared form of life and their common good remains fairly immediately and powerfully felt, their *amour propre*, enlivened as they entered into the morality of association, may remain satisfied. Aligned and attuned to one another as rational and responsible cooperators for their common good by a shared public common good conception of justice, they may be able to face one another openly, without shame, pride or envy, as self-authenticating sources of valid claims on one another in social life.

In the fullness or completeness of this second stage of moral development, the now young adult will find her capacities increasingly developed and exercised. As they are she will come to be able to and so seek a social world within which she is able to judge for herself not only whether this or that relevant social convention, or whether her social world more generally, conduces to her and the common good, but also whether its system of roles and responsibilities embodies and expresses a common good conception of justice capable of aligning and attuning her to others as participants in a shared cooperative undertaking. Like the child who presses her parents to interact with her in ways she can judge for herself as congruent with her good as a rational agent, the young adult now presses her cooperative partners to interact with her in ways she can judge for herself as congruent with her good as a rational and responsible agent. In due course, and in response to an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the ways in which social conventions interact, she will eventually begin to think of social life generally as if a single convention the normative force of which depends on its embodying and expressing a conception of justice regulating the pursuit by her and others of a relatively abstract common good realized across the dynamic interaction of its many parts and their constitutive social
roles. Thus, as the morality of association develops it eventually extends to the subject of society as a whole and the system of role-mediated responsibilities of citizens generally within it. As this happens, and with the continued development of the young adult’s various capacities, intellectual and moral, this mature morality of association eventually begins to tend toward a social contract mode of thinking. Capable of experiencing and understanding her social world in terms of an unmediated common relationship shared with other citizens to it, the young adult begins to press for the social and material conditions necessary to the exercise of this capacity, the exercise of which she finds rewarding. As those conditions obtain, she travels the path to the third stage of moral development, the morality of principle.

Again, however, the second stage, the morality of association, is not eliminated or destroyed. And if properly circumscribed and manifestly oriented toward the common good, it may remain a propos to many circumstances (e.g., the internal organization of many voluntary associations such as churches and universities, voluntarily played games, and so on).

The morality of principle begins with the need to move beyond vindicating extant social conventions separately as each embodying and expressing a common good conception of justice that might draw the allegiance of participants their specific role-mediated responsibilities and to vindicating them as an integrated dynamic system, a more or less complete social world, embodying and expressing a conception of justice that might win the allegiance of all participants simply as participants, regardless of their role-mediated responsibilities. This need emerges as social conventions become more productive, complex and dynamic and as rational and responsible participants in them keen, perhaps simply as a matter of preserving their self-respect, to make judgments about their justice find themselves developing more fully their powers of moral deliberation, imagination and judgment and taking pleasure in their exercise. In a social world the conventions of which citizens cannot see as embodying and expressing a conception of justice they might affirm simply as citizens, regardless of their role-mediated responsibilities, amour propre will become insecure and persons will come to feel shame or pride or envy arising from the fact that though capable of thinking about social conventions and the common good from a general or abstract points of view, they live with social conventions publicly justifiable and congruent with their good only in terms of the role-mediated points of view given by their determinate social position.

With their amour propre thus unsettled, social conventions rooted in principles publicly justifiable from one and the same point of view may begin naturally to draw the allegiance of some participants, satisfying their amour propre and suggesting the possibility of a social world within which they are able to develop and exercise their capacities without any rupture in the affection they feel for one another as fellow cooperators. Drawing water from this well, citizens may begin to press one another in ways that generate institutional reform. Over time, they may come to have and to identify and explain their moral feelings, attitudes and sentiments in terms of principles publicly justifiable to all from a shared or common point of view. Their amour propre publicly secure, they may come to love, trust and care for, and so to want to advance the good of, others just insofar as they are ready to commit to the same principles and the normative priority of the same point of view. Here the moral feelings, attitudes and sentiments finally root themselves in soil that transcends actually existing social conventions serving the
common good and the associational feelings of love, trust and affection they generate between actual participants. They root themselves in a shared public reciprocal recognition of the normative authority of, and a love, trust and care for, the free, considered, conscientious judgment of the fully developed individual person. Within their shared reason, there is no further court of appeal beyond the considered conscientious judgments of such persons in reflective equilibrium. Their cooperative social world satisfies their *amour propre*, now as persons who see themselves each as self-authenticating sources of valid claims to a social and material world adequate to the development and exercise of their capacities not just for rationality and responsibility, but for rationality and reasonableness. This is the fullest and most complete development of stage three, the morality of principle.

In *Theory*, Rawls argues that it is reasonable, within the context of ideal theory, to suppose that in a society the basic structure of which is faithful to justice as fairness citizens will naturally and reliably acquire a reflectively stable stage three, morality of principle, sense of justice oriented by a commitment to justice as fairness. This constitutes one key leg of his overall stability argument there.

Before proceeding further, I want to note a few things about the foregoing account of moral development. First, moral development begins with, and depends throughout on an expanding circle of, natural feelings of love, trust and affection. Second, these natural feelings of love, trust and affection arise in accord with a principle of reciprocity according to which we love, trust and care for those who manifestly love, trust and care for us. Third, we come to experience others loving, trusting and caring for us only in and through determinate social interactions. To be sure, once we reach stage three, the morality of principle, our sense of moral obligation and duty reaches beyond those with whom we have realized determinate social interactions. But even at stage three it is still bound up with a now general or abstract love or affection for and a trust in human persons as beings with whom we might reciprocally enter, affirm and enjoy realized determinate social interactions that embody and express the moral principles to which our allegiance is drawn and thus whom we can imagine loving, caring for and trusting in us by virtue of our readiness to enter, affirm and enjoy such social interactions. (Our sense of moral obligation and duty does not thus extend to non-human animals in the same way.) And, further, even at stage three the particular or concrete love, trust and affection we feel for those with whom we already enjoy realized determinate social interactions continues to shape our sense of moral obligation and duty: As Rawls notes, speaking from the point of view of the morality of principle, while it is always wrong to lie merely for personal gain, it worse to do so to friends and compatriots. Fourth, there is no path to stage three save through, first, membership and, second, more active engagement in a constitutional republic as a more or less complete, and increasingly complex and dynamic, system of role-mediated social cooperation oriented toward the common good.

Fifth, it is not reason as such that drives transitions from stage to stage. The transition from the morality of authority to the morality of association presupposes as common ground between parent and child an understanding of and a desire for associational cooperation for the common good that is absent from, and so not rationally articulable to the child within, the morality of authority. As the child’s capacities develop, the morality of authority is experienced as an unwelcome limit. But the child’s path to the morality of association beyond that limit is lit by parents and others facilitating or at least not obstructing a particular sort of experience and shared understanding of cooperative role-mediated
responsibility relations others. This necessarily involves the parent giving up the authority of benevolent
absolute rule and, together with the child, risking entering a new cooperative relationship of reciprocal
affection and care within which reason between them might then take hold and complete and seal the
transition. Likewise, the transition from the morality of association to the morality of principle
presupposes as common ground between the various persons, whether ruled or rulers, responsible to
determinate social roles an understanding of and desire for fair or just cooperation between free equals
that is absent from, and so not rationally articulable to them within, the morality of association. As
citizens’ capacities develop, the morality of association is experienced as an unwelcome limit. But the
citizenry’s path to the morality of principle beyond that limit is lit by those among them, whether rulers
or ruled, facilitating or at least not obstructing a particular sort of experience and shared understanding
of complete and integrated political cooperation between free equals. This necessarily involves their
giving up their role-mediated authority as given by their common good conception of justice and
together risking entering a new cooperative relationship of reciprocal affection and care cut free of role-
mediated responsibilities and related social contingencies and within which a principled reason between
them, universal in reach, might take hold and complete and seal the transition.

B. Congruence.

As noted above, Rawls recognized in Theory that, for the purposes of ideal theory, it is not enough to
show that persons living in a society the basic social structure of which is faithful to justice as fairness
would reliably and naturally acquire an effectively regulative, stage three, morality of principle, sense of
justice oriented by justice as fairness. Their having so acquired such a sense of justice must also be
something that they could each publicly and reciprocally recognize as congruent with their good, not in
the sense of their determinate conception of the good or actual life plan, but in the sense of their
rational good in the most basic or fundamental sense. This public, reciprocal congruence is ess
ential if
persons, especially in complex and institutionally mediate
social relationships
with strangers, are to be
able to trust others, and others to trust them, not to take advantage of their having a sense of justice.
This trust is crucial if persons are to be confident that their having a sense of justice really is good for them.

Rawls’s congruence argument in Theory effectively came down to the claim that thinking from the point
of view given by only a ‘thin theory of the good,’ as informed by the presumptively non-controversial
Aristotelian principle, persons living in a society governed by justice as fairness would publicly recognize
and affirm their acquired a stage three, morality of principle, sense of justice as congruent with their
good or success or self-realization simply as rational agents. This, of course, presupposed of them a
shared public understanding of themselves and their world (and so a shared public more or less
comprehensive doctrine) according to which a stage three, morality of principle, sense of justice
involved, without offsetting loss, a rationally desirable more complex, complete and rewarding exercise
of fundamental capacities than, say, a stage two, morality of association, common good sense of justice.

Of course, Rawls knew, since Kohlberg and others from whom he drew knew as well, that in the real
world few persons, even in North America and Western Europe, actually reach stage three, the morality
of principle. But under conditions of ideal theory, he supposed, it was not unreasonable to expect that
all or nearly all persons would naturally and uniformly reach this stage and thus tend together over time to converge on a more or less comprehensive doctrinal understanding of self and the world, and so “thin” understanding of their good as rational agents, from which having and acting on a sense of justice informed by justice as fairness would appear publicly to all to be congruent with their good, success or self-realization simply as rational agents. This he came only a few years after publishing Theory to see as unreasonable, requiring the revised stability argument given in Political Liberalism. Before picking up the import of this revised stability argument, I want first to demonstrate the parallel between Rawls’s account of moral development and his characterization in The Law of Peoples of benevolent absolutisms, well-ordered decent hierarchical peoples and well-ordered liberal democratic peoples.

II. Benevolent Absolutisms, Decent Consultation Hierarchies and Liberal Democratic Peoples.

Though it seems to have gone largely unnoticed in the literature, Rawls account in The Law of Peoples of benevolent absolutisms, decent consultation hierarchies and liberal democratic peoples closely tracks his theory of moral development sketched above. Of course, in The Law of Peoples, Rawls is speaking within ideal theory from the point of view of a liberal democratic people addressing, in the first instance, external relations with other liberal democratic peoples. The basic social structure and public political morality and culture of a liberal democracy embodies and expresses a stage three, morality of principle, conception of justice, either justice as fairness or some other member of the family of generically liberal conceptions of justice.

As seen from the point of view of a liberal democratic people, the benevolent absolutism embodies and expresses the morality of authority. Subjects express their basic needs, which their ruler undertakes (in the ideal, unconditionally) to meet. Their ruler manifestly delights in seeing their needs met. This draws subjects to want to please their ruler in return. Given a ruler successful at coordinating the activity of his subjects to meet their basic needs, his subjects will develop and come to enjoy the exercise of their own capacities, for self-directed labor, planning, organization and so on. Wanting out of affection to please their ruler and finding their so doing congruent with their good, subjects come to receive his directives or commands as normative. Within any enduring benevolent absolutism, the family as an ongoing intergenerational undertaking will become a stable element of the social order and will cultivate the moral development of its members, often to fairly advanced stages of the morality of association. Family leaders will begin to press their ruler into bargaining over the directives and commands to which they and their family lines are subject, wishing to confirm that their compliance is in their family’s interest and consistent with its and its members expanding self-respect or amour propre. A benevolent ruler, like a good parent, accepts such challenges and answers them by risking and facilitating a transition to cooperative relationships, mediated through families as ongoing intergenerational undertakings, and new forms of love, care and trust. So bound together, reason between rulers and subjects then completes and seals the transition. Rulers and subjects, already morally oriented toward experiencing and understanding themselves as responsible members of familial associations, come to experience and understand one another in their political relations as, most basically, fellow citizens, albeit citizens who face each other from and with different role-mediated responsibilities, within one and the same cooperative scheme oriented to their common good.
Prior to this transformation, the “law” within a benevolent absolutism has no *prima facie* moral force as such. It embodies and expresses only the (proto-) morality of authority. Assuming a benevolent ruler, subjects may feel badly when they violate his directives or commands. They will likely experience and understand official directives and commands as normative. But (neither) they (nor we as observers) need make any reference to moral concepts or principles or values to do so.

One consequence of the fact that the “law” within a benevolent absolutism has no *prima facie* moral force is that only ties of particular affection and trust, generated in the first instance by the ruler’s benevolence, bind ruler and subjects together into anything like a whole. As with families the children of which are very young this may be sufficient to underwrite a duty on the part of others not to interfere. So long as the parent or ruler remains benevolent – meeting the children’s or subjects’ basic needs and posing no serious obstacle to the development of their capacities – insiders have a right to protect their valued relationship and outsiders have no reason to interfere. But also, as with families so too with benevolent absolutisms, outsiders have no duty to recognize or respect them as ongoing, intergenerational, undertakings binding members through genuine moral obligations to one another. The genuinely moral force of familial bonds – between adult children and their aged parents, between adult siblings, between all those participating in the family as an ongoing cooperative undertaking – depend on the family as a benevolent absolutism being but a temporary and episodic moment in the ongoing life of the family as an inclusive cooperative association. So too with the genuinely moral force of political bonds – within the polity as an ongoing, intergenerational undertaking the morality of authority must be at most a temporary episodic phenomenon confined to appropriate circumstances.

By itself and over time, the (proto-) morality of authority is structurally insufficient to establish and maintain community between persons. Since, for Rawls, moral persons and community are reciprocally interdependent and mutually self-constituting, the (proto-) morality of authority is, though necessary, insufficient to the realization of human beings as moral persons. Individual human beings emerge as moral persons first only as the family is transformed into a sustained cooperative undertaking over time. As families achieve an ongoing, intergenerational existence as cooperative undertakings between persons, family leaders, on behalf of their familial communities, may chafe against the limits of the morality of authority and press their benevolent rulers in a manner similar to the developing child pressing her parents. By so doing, they effectively secure for their families recognition as something like corporate moral persons, and they transform the political relationship between families and their members, on the one hand, with their benevolent absolutist ruler, on the other. The transformation of this political relationship is itself the flipside of the acquisition of new civic identity: citizenship. (It is no surprise that in the first edition of *Theory* Rawls presented agents in the original position as representatives of familial lines.) The result of this developmental process is an ongoing intergenerational inclusive cooperative political undertaking within which both family lines and their members, on the one hand, and political rulers, on the other, face one another as each and all responsible to their determinate roles functionally serving their common good. Having reoriented their political relationship within the morality of association, family lines and members and political rulers together constitute a polity the moral structure of which is sufficient to enduring political community between persons as rational and responsible.
It is noteworthy that in *The Law of Peoples* the benevolent absolutism occupies an ambiguous space between ideal and non-ideal theory. Strictly speaking it belongs to neither. While members may experience and understand themselves as moral persons within their families, they do not yet experience or understand themselves in their political relationships between families or with their political ruler as more than simply an interacting group of rational agents each capable also of affective ties and loyalties. Politically speaking, neither families, nor their members, experience or understand themselves as full and responsible participants in one and the same cooperative political undertaking oriented to their common good. And certainly they together constitute no self-legislating polity. So long as they remain oriented by a morality of authority within a benevolent absolutism, their political interaction does not yet give rise to the sort of moral experience identifiable and understandable only through moral concepts, principles and values. The benevolent absolutism thus falls, for political purposes, outside of ideal theory. But it falls also outside of non-ideal theory. It is not a society burdened by unfavorable conditions, lacking in either the material or human resources needed to develop itself into a well-ordered polity. Assuming familial lines develop as ongoing intergenerational undertakings, there is nothing further needed, certainly no external aid needed, to underwrite the benevolent absolutism’s moral transformation into a decent constitutional republic. Nor, assuming that it is not aggressive, is the benevolent absolutism an outlaw state. It secures its subjects’ basic needs and coordinates their activity in a way conducive to their natural moral development without posing any threat to outsiders. Of course, if it fails to answer calls for consultation, say from the leaders or representatives of family lines, in an appropriate fashion, to permit its gradual transformation into a constitutional republic, the benevolent absolutism may become an outlaw state and lose all claims to non-interference, just as parents do when they refuse, notwithstanding the development of their, say, teen-age children, to permit and facilitate the family’s transformation into a cooperative association and risk transforming themselves and their children by entering a new relationship with them.

But as with the family, so too with the political benevolent absolutism: Given favorable conditions, it naturally and reliably develops from a benevolent system of coordination into a cooperative association. Of course, as a cooperative association the constitutional republic emerges as a more complex, complete and enduring community between persons than any family line. The decent constitutional republic is the condition, necessary and sufficient, to human beings reciprocally realizing themselves across familial lines in an enduring way as rational and responsible persons.

The constitutional republic embodies and expresses the morality of association. Within such a polity, the law, which embodies and expresses a morality of association, has *prima facie* moral force; it underwrites a more or less complete social world within which members are bound to one to another in a shared political undertaking. While not self-legislating in the fashion of a liberal democracy, it is a self-legislating political community of persons. Citizens, rulers and ruled alike, come eventually to experience and understand their law in terms of a public common good conception of justice and they increasingly appeal to it to orient and guide their consultative public reasoning with one another in political life.

The fully inclusive constitutional republic oriented by a common good conception of justice must secure formal equality under the law for all participants and provide meaningful opportunities for input into
(including rights to dissent within) a consultative political procedure. But it need not be liberal or democratic. Civic standing and legal obligations, and the right to provide input into the political process, may be highly mediated by, even experienced and understood in terms of, responsibilities rooted in determinate social roles (or even identities associated with family lines or tribes), and these may stand as obstacles to the realization of the full range of liberal and democratic rights. (The same is true, of course, for families understood as ongoing intergenerational undertakings – these need not be organized as small scale liberal democracies in order to bind members to one another in morally significant ways.) Further, depending on background (historical, demographic, etc.) conditions, the common good served by their political cooperation and informing their public conception of justice may be widely if not universally experienced and understood in terms of a comprehensive moral, religious or philosophical doctrine – a shared conception of self and world underwriting a more or less complete (and decent) form of life.

Within the fully inclusive constitutional republic (or the family as an ongoing intergenerational undertaking), members will experience and understand one another as each rational and responsible participants in a decent shared cooperative undertaking. They will feel themselves bound to one another by affective ties of civic friendship and loyalty. They may not experience or understand one another as each the self-same rational and reasonable, free and equal, co-authors of their cooperative undertaking. They may not think of their cooperative undertaking as having no substantive end other than securing fairness or justice between them. But the fully inclusive constitutional republic is, like the family as an ongoing intergenerational cooperative association, consistent with, even supportive of, their further moral development and learning.

Whether that development and learning take place will depend, of course, on the social and political experience of persons within the polity. To be sure, there will be dissent and political reform and compromise within any constitutional republic. This is normal and to be expected in all societies. But dissent, reform and compromise are all consistent with enduring stability. Whether the sort of moral development and learning characteristic of a transition to a new form of political community takes place will turn on whether citizens face practical problems or challenges that they cannot successfully address without being drawn to activity within which they come to feel affection for and eventually to reason with one another in new ways.

These problems or challenges might arise from dramatic economic changes – for example, the introduction of factory production and a dramatic increase in the role and size of property-less citizens devoted to essentially fungible labor power. Or they might arise from dramatic changes in religious understandings and institutions, for example a Reformation followed by Wars of Religion and then a modus vivendi. Or they might arise through unsettling openness to new possibilities following a dramatic loss of cultural confidence suffered as a consequence of total defeat in an ill-advised military conflict. Or they might arise simply from the steady accumulation of cultural drift toward very different forms of life. Challenges such as these may make it very difficult for the inclusive and well-ordered but hierarchical or role-mediated constitutional republic to sustain itself through ordinary reform and compromise. As citizens, rulers and ruled alike, work together to sustain their constitutional republic in the face of such destabilizing forces, they may be drawn to new forms of interaction, to new sorts of
affections, to more complex forms of political dialogue, and so to new possibilities for shared public understandings. Over time they may be drawn to advancing their common good simply as fair or just cooperation between them as persons prior to or apart from their role-mediated responsibilities. And in this context they may come to feel some affection for and trust in one another apart from their functional role-mediated contributions to a substantive common good. They may be drawn toward social contract thinking and toward experiencing and understanding one another as the free and equal, rational and reasonable, co-authors of their society’s basic structure. If and as they are, they will move toward liberalization and democratization. Whether they will be successful – yielding a liberal democracy that itself might be stable in the long run – will depend on many things, not least the conception of justice they come to embrace and whether it underwrites a social world responsive to their rational self-interest (amour de soi) and their legitimate needs for recognition and respect from those upon whose cooperation they depend (amour propre).

A liberal democracy constitutes and sustains citizens, one and all, as, politically speaking, free and equal, rational and reasonable, co-authors of their shared social world. Citizens remain, of course, responsible to various social roles. But in their fundamental political relations one to another, and in their relationship to political power or rule, they stand all in one and the same relationship. Their public political reasoning is oriented by social contract thinking and eventually comes to recognize no further court of appeal in political matters beyond their free and considered conscientious judgment. Their law embodies and expresses a public conception of justice according to which the common good for the sake of which they cooperate is simply fairness or justice in their cooperative pursuit of their various rational self-interests. Their allegiance is increasingly drawn to principles or conceptions of justice as fairness, and while ties of civic friendship and affection with compatriots remain strong, they are increasingly experienced as the contingent and immediate instantiations of friendly feelings or benevolence generally felt toward any and all persons whose allegiance is similarly drawn to principles or conceptions of justice as fairness.

Within liberal democracies, citizens understand and experience their political relations to one another in terms of, and their law and public political morality and culture embodies and gives voice to, a morality of principle. Their political relationships are no longer oriented by any particular comprehensive doctrine or more or less complete and determinate form of life, save that of just or fair cooperation between them as free equals. If the benevolent absolutism is the manifestation of affection and rational self-interest in relations of authority, and the constitutional republic is the manifestation of responsibility and decency within relations of cooperative association, the liberal democracy is the manifestation of freedom and equality within relations of fully reasonable political community. The liberal democracy is fully developed self-legislating community between, at least in their political relations to one another, fully developed persons. It is community and personality reciprocally in full flower.

That Rawls’s account of the benevolent absolutism, decent consultation hierarchy and liberal democracy tracks his account of moral development ought now to be clear enough. Given this tripartite schema, it ought not to surprise that Rawls argues in *The Law of Peoples* that there is space, even within ideal theory, between the fully reasonable and the not at all reasonable. The liberal democracy is (ideally) the
fully reasonable political community of (politically) fully reasonable persons. The benevolent absolutism is not at all a reasonable political community and fails by itself to constitute members (politically) as reasonable persons. Between these lies the decent consultation hierarchy as a paradigmatic form of nonliberal and/or nondemocratic but well-ordered constitutional republic. It is, even if stable and enduring, neither a fully reasonable political community nor a political community of (politically) fully reasonable persons. Yet on both fronts it participates in and is approaching the reasonable. It is not a fully unreasonable political community and it constitutes its members, albeit incompletely, as persons.

III. Liberal Democratic Peoples, External Stability and *The Law of Peoples.*

Rawls aims to vindicate reasonable hope for liberal democracy as a form of life. Doing so requires not just articulating and grounding an attractive social and political ideal within the public reason of persons oriented toward and by that form of life, it requires vindicating the stability of this ideal. In *Theory* Rawls undertook to vindicate the stability of justice as fairness as a social and political ideal in the face of potentially destabilizing internal forces – new technologies, episodic criminality, shifting cultural patterns, the prisoner’s dilemma type risks assumed when one trusts others in political life, and so on. As noted above, he came to see that his argument there, in particular the congruence argument, presupposed unreasonably a citizenry more or less unified in their moral development and thus inclined to converge over time on a more or less comprehensive doctrinal understanding of self and world. Accordingly he revised the argument.

The result of this revision is *Political Liberalism.* However, even if successful, *Political Liberalism* vindicates the stability of liberal democracy only in reference to internal forces threatening instability. Since it is manifestly unrealistic to suppose the absence of any destabilizing external forces, for example, those arising out of relations with other polities, the argument for the stability of liberal democracy still remained incomplete even after *Political Liberalism.* *The Law of Peoples* completes Rawls’s argument for the stability of liberal democracy by making the case, within ideal theory, that a liberal democracy would remain stable for the right reasons and without compromising on its commitments even within a world that includes and within which it interacts with other polities, at the very least, other liberal democracies (which ideal theory clearly must allow for).

As with the stability argument advanced initially in *Theory* and revised in *Political Liberalism* and focused on the liberal democracy in isolation from external relations, the stability argument in *The Law of Peoples* draws on many of the same ideas to defend the stability of liberal democracy with respect to external relations. It provides an account of the moral development of peoples and grounds for thinking that liberal democratic peoples would naturally and reliably come to possess the sense of justice presupposed of them by a reasonable law of peoples in their external relations with other peoples. It provides reasons for thinking that just relations between liberal democratic peoples will satisfy their *amour propre.* It provides reasons for thinking that liberal democratic peoples will experience and understand their sense of justice and the satisfaction of their *amour propre* as congruent with their good or success or self-realization as rational. But the argument in *The Law of Peoples* is an extension of the argument from *Political Liberalism,* and so it takes as a framing assumption the fact of reasonable pluralism and draws also on the ideas of liberal legitimacy, public reason and overlapping consensus.
Now, note first that in *Political Liberalism*, the crucial pluralism to address in a liberal democracy is not that which obtains when it includes citizens drawn to comprehensive Kantian and Millian and Thomistic liberalisms. Citizens drawn to these doctrines will presumably all have reached stage three, a morality of principle, in their moral development. To be sure, there is important diversity here. Rawls clearly acknowledges in *Political Liberalism* that in a free society citizens are unlikely ever to share a general, wide and full reflective equilibrium ranging over both justice as fairness and a common comprehensive moral, religious or philosophical doctrine. And this by itself is perhaps enough to require some reworking of the stability argument given in *Theory*. But, the really important diversity in *Political Liberalism*, as Rawls makes clear, is that which obtains when a liberal democracy includes some, perhaps many, citizens who are drawn to comprehensive doctrines that embody and express only a stage two, morality of association, understanding of self and world but who remain politically reasonable, ready and willing to cooperate politically on fair terms with their fellow citizens as free equals, at least with respect to constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice. Unlike Kantians, Millians and liberal Thomists, their general and comprehensive doctrinal understandings will fail to embody and express a stage three, morality of principle. To put the point starkly, the challenge Rawls takes up in *Political Liberalism* is that it is unreasonable for Kantians, Millians or liberal Thomists to suppose that a free society will not include a permanent and potentially substantial segment of the population of the sort exemplified by many conservative and fundamentalist Christians in the United States. These are citizens who, though often open to reasonable strictly political cooperation with others as free equals, at least at the level of constitutional essentials and basic justice, believe that there is no salvation outside the Church and draw deep and sharp distinctions within their social life between fellow believers with whom they are ready to cooperate in voluntary associations and others with whom they must politically interact within the non-voluntary association of the basic social structure. These citizens’ comprehensive doctrinal moral, religious and philosophical commitments provide no framework for thinking of their basic or fundamental good or success or self-realization as rational agents except in and through cooperation with God aimed at a substantive common good, or perhaps in some cases solely through submission to God’s benevolent authority.

What Rawls aims to show in *Political Liberalism* is that the permanent presence of these citizens in a free society need not be a destabilizing internal force, since they may nevertheless still be sincerely disposed to be reasonable in their strictly political relations to fellow citizens within the core of the basic social structure provided their doing so requires of them a commitment to no more than a properly political conception of justice given a freestanding public justification, to liberal legitimacy and public reason with respect to constitutional essentials and basic justice, and to participation in no less than a constitutional consensus and no more than an overlapping consensus the focal center of which is the family of generically liberal political conceptions of justice. To put the matter simply, when it comes to reasonable political cooperation in a free society, the real challenge is not the permanent presence of Kantians, Millians, liberal Thomists and others (Deweyian perfectionists, etc.) securely settled in a stage three, morality of principle. The real challenge is reasonable political cooperation between them, on the one hand, and a permanent and perhaps substantial segment of the population adhering to more traditional, non-liberal and non-democratic, doctrines and securely settled in a stage two, morality of association, on the other. What Rawls aims to show in *Political Liberalism* is that it is not unreasonable
to think that political cooperation may range reliably across these segments of the population and yield law recognized by all as at least legitimate and possessed of *prima facie* moral force.

As Rawls notes in *Political Liberalism* as a determinate social world every polity, even if fully just, constrains possibilities. There is only so much social space, as it were, available for various doctrines, world views and forms of life to flourish. But as between polities, even as between just liberal democracies, there is more available social space. Thus, even if we limit ourselves to a world of all and only just liberal democracies, the range of reasonable pluralism will exceed that present in any particular liberal democracy.

But the range of reasonable pluralism is still fairly narrow. Different countries may display internally different patterns of doctrinal and cultural pluralism, but liberal democracies themselves all share certain common features. They all embody and express in their constitutional law and public political morality and culture a stage three, morality of principle. And in this context, they all affirm one and the same basic or fundamental orientation toward their own rational good: a liberal democratic people’s good in the most basic sense is simply the realization, first, internally of reasonable, just or fair relations between its citizens as, politically speaking, free equals whose conscientious considered judgment is the final court of appeal in matters politically moral and, second, externally of reasonable, just or fair relations with others peoples as free equals whose conscientious considered judgment, as given by their constitutional law and public morality and public political culture, is the final court of appeal in matters politically moral between them. In a world of all and only liberal democracies, the problem of just relations stable in the right way between them is no more substantial than is the problem in a single liberal democracy of just relations between citizens who are all either Kantians, Millians or liberal Thomists (or Deweyian perfectionists, etc.) securely oriented within a stage three morality of principle. As with *Political Liberalism*, so to with *The Law of Peoples*: the real stability problem lies elsewhere.

In the domestic case addressed in *Political Liberalism*, reasonable political cooperation (liberal democracy) with respect to the basic social structure cannot be relied upon to eliminate, without illegitimate force or oppression, otherwise politically reasonable citizens adhering to (once we consider more than one liberal democracy, a very wide range of) various traditional, non-democratic or non-liberal, doctrines and more or less securely settled in a stage two, morality of association, nearly comprehensive understanding of self and world. The challenge is to show those already at stage three, the morality of principle, that they need not regard this fact as destabilizing and so ought not to be tempted to coerce or force the moral development of their fellow citizens. Now, in the international case, Rawls thinks roughly the same thing happens. Reasonable political cooperation (a just international order) with respect to the basic structure cannot be relied upon to eliminate, without illegitimate force or oppression, peoples adhering to various traditional, non-democratic or non-liberal, doctrines and securely settled in a stage two, morality of association, nearly comprehensive understanding of self and world. The challenge, then, is to show those already at stage three, the morality of principle, namely liberal democratic peoples, that they need not regard this fact as destabilizing and so ought not to be tempted to coerce or force the moral development of other well-ordered peoples. As Rawls notes, the challenge is in a way greater, since when it looks to the world of external relations with other well-ordered polities, a reasonable liberal democratic people ought to
expect diversity greater than that found within to sum total of all liberal democracies. It ought to expect some polities disposed and able politically to cooperate reasonably in the international context but embodying and expressing in their domestic constitutional law and public political morality and culture a stage two, morality of association, understanding of self and world, and with it a substantive conception of the common good of their members as rational and responsible participants in a decent scheme of cooperation. The international context is a simply a larger social world than the domestic context of a liberal democracy. It contains space for more than one kind of well-ordered people constituted as a self-legislating whole, the members of which are bound together by legal obligations with genuine if prima facie moral force, ready and willing to cooperate internationally with others as free equals on reasonable terms. In this larger social world, and in the absence of illegitimate force or oppression, liberal democratic peoples, already oriented by the fact of reasonable pluralism within their own constitutional law and public political morality and culture, ought to expect the presence, perhaps the permanent presence, of peoples well-ordered as constitutional republics yet neither liberal nor democratic. And any ideal theory argument for the stability of a liberal democracy with respect to destabilizing forces arising out of its external relations with other polities must take this into account. This, I take it, is where the action in in The Law of Peoples.

The challenge of The Law of Peoples is to make the case for the stability of liberal democratic peoples notwithstanding potentially destabilizing forces arising from their external relations with not only other liberal democratic peoples, but also non-liberal and/or non-democratic peoples who are otherwise ready and willing to cooperate politically with them as free equals on the international stage. If liberal democratic peoples are to remain stable for the right reasons within a context of their relations with non-liberal and/or non-democratic peoples, they need first to assure themselves that these peoples could reasonably affirm the same basic principles constituting the framework for and orienting their public reason with respect to the basic structure of international law and relations, at least at its core. Of course, they need not tell these peoples how they ought to think about these principles. They need only assure themselves that these peoples could reasonably affirm them. The situation here is akin to the comprehensive Kantian, Millian or liberal Thomist inquiring whether the conservative, traditional, or fundamentalist Christian citizen who seems ready and willing to cooperate, at least politically, on fair or just terms could in fact reasonably affirm, if only for her own reasons, the same principles to which the Kantian, Millian or liberal Thomist’s allegiance is drawn. And as in the domestic case, so too in the international case: it is probably sufficient if decent peoples can join something akin to a constitutional consensus – affirming for their own reasons the law-making core of the basic structure of international law and relations. This is probably sufficient in that it draws them into (albeit thinly or shallowly) principled cooperation for the production of legitimate law out of which may grow a more robust and deeper overlapping consensus.

Of course, liberal democratic peoples will need also to assure themselves that these well-ordered but non-liberal and/or nondemocratic peoples in fact merit their recognition and respect as peoples, that is as self-legislating wholes or corporate persons the members of which are constituted in their relations one to another as persons and bound one to another by law with prima facie moral force. But given the theory of moral development embodied in and expressed by the constitutional law and public political
morality and culture of a liberal democratic people, it would be inconsistent to refuse any and all recognition and respect to peoples constituted as stage two, morality of association, constitutional republics. Internally liberal democracies already recognize that natural human persons at this stage may be capable of reasonable political cooperation with others as free equals (even if they do not experience or understand that cooperation in the same way as natural human persons secure in stage three, a morality of principle, say Kantians, Millians or liberal Thomists). And internally liberal democracies recognize that even when viewed from stage three, a morality of principle, associational cooperation for a substantive common good embodying and expressing a stage two, morality of association, remains morally significant both for insiders engaged in it and for outsiders contemplating how to interact with them. Finally, internally liberal democracies recognize that the transition from stage two, morality of association, to stage three, morality of principle, is neither launched nor completed by reason alone. Reason completes and seals it, but only after the cultivation through shared experience of sufficient common ground in terms of interests, desires and affections for discourse and reason to then do its work. They recognize also that the transition is not one that can be reliably facilitated by force and that the use of force to drive moral development is almost always a medicine worse and riskier than the disease it is meant to cure.

If liberal democracies can assure themselves that well-ordered decent peoples can join in at least a consensus over the core of a law of peoples akin to a constitutional consensus, and perhaps even a somewhat more robust overlapping consensus, and that well-ordered decent peoples need find no conflict between their so doing and their rational good as peoples, then a prima facie case for just and stable relations with them is made. This case is strengthened by noting the ways in which such relations satisfy the *amour propre* of decent peoples and perhaps may facilitate their further moral development, internally, with respect to the liberalization and democratization of their domestic orders. It might be further strengthened if the best explanation of the democratic peace thesis were to extend also to well-ordered decent peoples.

The upshot here is that in *Political Liberalism* Rawls aims to persuade Kantians, Millians, liberal Thomists and others comprehensively oriented by a stage three, morality of principle, understanding of self and world that their commitment to liberal democracy in fact embodies and expresses a reasonable hope for a just and stable political community only to the extent that they manage to include as full members within that community those of their fellow citizens who, though reasonable in at least the core of the strictly limited political domain, remain nearly comprehensively oriented by a stage two, morality of association, understanding of self and world. And in *The Law of Peoples* Rawls extends the argument to address potential external threats to stability. He does so by trying to persuade liberal democratic peoples (and the Kantians, Millians, liberal Thomists, etc., within them), again as oriented by a stage three, morality of principle understanding of self and world, that the reasonableness of their hope for a just and stable liberal democracy depends also on their including as full members within a society of peoples governed by a law of peoples not only other liberal democracies but also those among their fellow well-ordered peoples who, though reasonable in at least the core of the strictly limited political domain of international relations, remain nearly comprehensively oriented by a stage two, morality of association, understanding of self and world.
It is noteworthy that Rawls does not argue for the stability of well-ordered decent peoples. Whether they will remain stable within a society of peoples oriented by the law of peoples is an open question. But it is not a question that he, someone whose comprehensive doctrinal understanding of self and world is securely at stage three, the morality of principle, and who is deeply committed to liberal democracy, feels any practical need to address. The question he feels the need to address is whether liberal democracy itself embodies and expresses a realistically utopian ideal. Provided it properly understands its own commitments, internally and externally, to toleration it just might.

IV. Global Capitalism.

I want to end with just a brief note, prompted by remarks made throughout Rawls’s corpus and expressed again in letters, now published, written to Philippe van Parijs. Given the centrality, for Rawls, of a proper and satisfied *amour propre* to social stability, both domestically and internationally, it should come as no surprise that he found the triumph and spread of a materialistic, consumeristic capitalism, at home and increasingly around the world, and the welfarist and utilitarian as well as libertarian doctrinal understandings generated in its wake, to be among the greatest threats to the possibility of a peaceful world within which liberal democracies may endure and thrive.

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September, 2016