I. INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the problem of how to think about the fulfillment of an (ideal-theoretical) conception of basic global justice demanding the eradication of global poverty given the recognition of two facts (or nonideal circumstances): (a) the absence of robust international institutions and (b) the lack of a strong ethos of cosmopolitan solidarity.¹

The paper has three parts. Section II presents an account of central concepts involved in the discussion of global justice (such as basic and non-basic global justice, ideal and nonideal theory, and the different dimensions of a political conception and their justification). Section III clarifies the exact relevance of (a) and (b) for a theory of basic global justice. I argue that it is a mistake to think that a recognition of (a) and (b) justifies the claim that there are no stringent duties of justice regarding the eradication of global poverty. Institutional structures and motivational mechanisms should track basic normative principles, not the other way around. What a recognition of (a) and (b) provides is, instead, grounds for demanding serious consideration of nonideal issues of practical feasibility affecting the precise articulation and practical implementation of such principles.

The final section of the paper advances some positive suggestions as to how to move the theoretical and practical agenda of global justice and poverty relief forward with respect to the problems of feasibility identified in section III. I argue, first, that discussion in political philosophy regarding issues of global justice should take what I will call a *transitional standpoint*. This is the standpoint of political agents that are in the process of changing central features of the institutional and cultural environment in which they act. A transitional standpoint focuses on the identification of dynamic trajectories of political action, which set into motion a
sequence of political reforms that passes through successive thresholds of feasibility. This approach is sensitive to both ideal-theoretical and nonideal-theoretical considerations. Second, I provide an illustration of this approach regarding poverty relief in the face of (a) and (b) by discussing the central importance of agents’ political empowerment through dynamic practices of public deliberation, protest and institutional experimentation.

II. BASIC GLOBAL JUSTICE AND NONIDEAL THEORY

To be fully defensible, a political conception must propose principles, institutions and strategies of reform that are both morally desirable and practically feasible. It is, however, not always clear how considerations of moral desirability and practical feasibility operate in the development and evaluation of the different dimensions of a political conception. I present, in II.1, a general account of the role of these notions, and apply it, in II.2, to the domain of discussions on global justice.

II.1. Moral desirability and practical feasibility in the development and assessment of political conceptions

(i) Dimensions of a political conception and their justification. Considerations of moral desirability and practical feasibility apply to three central dimensions of a political conception.

The following chart may be useful for the discussion that follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kinds of justification</th>
<th>Dimensions of a political conception</th>
<th>Kinds of theory</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full political</td>
<td>Abstract moral</td>
<td>Ideal theory</td>
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<td></td>
<td>D.I. Fundamental principles</td>
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<td></td>
<td>D.II. Institutional schemes</td>
<td>Nonideal theory</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>implementing principles from D.I</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D.III. Processes of reform</td>
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<td></td>
<td>leading to realization of schemes from D.II</td>
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Dimension D.I includes a set of fundamental principles. These principles identify the most general kinds of rights and duties that individuals in a just society have. Their defense involves
appeal to fundamental moral ideas and the identification of general facts that make their application practically necessary and possible. Take, for example, the two principles of Rawls’s theory of “justice as fairness,” the first demanding a set of equal civil and political liberties and the second demanding economic schemes that work to the greatest benefit of the worst-off on the basis of fair equality of opportunity. These principles are defended as morally desirable by appeal to fundamental normative views of persons as free and equal, rational and reasonable cooperators, and are seen as practically feasible by noting that people have the moral powers and general capacities, and the need, to effectively address unavoidable facts of moderate material scarcity and conflict of interests arising in their social life (what Rawls calls the “circumstances of justice”).

Dimension DII involves the identification and defense of certain institutional schemes implementing the principles provided in DI. While a fundamental principle is defended by showing that it is better than the alternatives in catering to fundamental moral ideas when dealing with the most general facts of human social existence, an institutional scheme is defended by showing that it is better than the alternatives in implementing the fundamental principles selected in DI. Considerations of practical feasibility and moral desirability operate here through the operation of two filters. The first (regarding feasibility) distinguishes between sustainable or stable and unsustainable or unstable institutional schemes. An institutional scheme is sustainable or stable when its continued presence is not incompatible with general empirical truths about how people are or can be in their social life. The second filter identifies morally optimal institutional schemes. An institutional scheme is morally optimal when it is better than the alternatives at implementing the principles from DI. What I will call the initial political justification of a political conception consists in showing, for a certain context, that the schemes
it proposes pass the two filters (i.e. that they are the morally optimal ones among those sustainable). Thus, in the case of his principles of justice, Rawls thinks that their best institutional implementation in a contemporary society would be through the institutions of either a “property-owning democracy” or a “liberal democratic socialism,” not through the institutions of a “welfare state capitalism” or a “laissez-faire capitalism.” Even though the latter might be sustainable, they would not, as the former, provide the best feasible instantiation of the demands of political freedom and economic equality.⁶

A third dimension of a political conception, DIII, is focused on identifying and defending strategies of political reform leading to the realization of the institutional schemes from DII when these are not in place. Again two filters concerning feasibility and desirability operate here. The first distinguishes between accessible and inaccessible institutional schemes. Following Buchanan, we can see an ideal conception of justice as accessible to certain agents when “there is a practicable route from where [they] are now to at least a reasonable approximation of the state of affairs that satisfies its principles”.⁷ This means that institutional schemes satisfying the fundamental principles of justice can realistically be reached by agents in a certain context. Accessibility can thus be seen as a more context-specific form of feasibility. The second filter identifies morally optimal reforms. These are the ones which, when compared to the alternatives, are the best at approximating the realization of the just schemes while imposing acceptable moral costs to those affected. The second filter demands, in fact, a double moral test. It tests reforms for the moral value of both their results and the process leading to those results. To use the helpful terminology proposed by Amartya Sen, we are here dealing with the assessment of “comprehensive outcomes”.⁸ Political judgment is always needed to determine the optimal balance between process-related and result-related considerations. The ideals and principles from
DI normally provide guidelines with which this can be done. Returning to the example of Rawls’s conception of social justice, reforms introducing egalitarian economic schemes might not be appropriate if they involve tampering with people’s civil and political rights (which have, according to Rawls, priority over economic ones). The *full political justification* of a political conception would then involve not only the proposal and defense of certain fundamental principles and institutional schemes, but also the exploration and defense of political strategies through which the latter can realistically be accessed.⁹

Three comments about this account are necessary. First, it sees both considerations of practical feasibility and of moral desirability as crucial. Demanding considerations of moral desirability are necessary if a political conception is to avoid a cynical realism that fails to criticize existing or possible social injustice. Considerations of feasibility are also necessary if a political conception is to avoid the impotent idealism of merely extending injunctions that are likely not going to be fulfilled. Second, the account presented here does not conflate feasibility and desirability. The following two claims are perfectly consistent:

1. The institutional scheme S₁ is just.

2. S₁ is infeasible.

The truth of (2) does not entail the falsity of (1). S₁ may not be accessible or sustainable in a certain context. This does not make S₁ unjust. We can still see S₁ as just while noticing, with regret, that we cannot realistically expect to have it. Another scheme S₂ may be, on the other hand, feasible but not just. Normative political argument looks for the *intersection* between moral desirability and feasibility, without conflating the two. These considerations certainly apply to DIII: a reform may successfully lead to a just scheme (and thus render the latter accessible) and yet be morally unacceptable (due to high moral costs involved in the process).¹⁰
Notice, finally, that as we move from DI to DII to DIII considerations of practical feasibility become more context-specific and involve a greater deal of contingency and uncertainty. The relevant empirical considerations involved in the defense of a strategy of reform are more specific than the ones involved in the defense of institutional schemes, and the latter are more specific than the very general empirical assumptions backing the proposal of fundamental principles of justice. Accurate claims about what people can realistically be expected to do depend not only on general facts about human psychology and social organization, but on the specific ways in which these operate in different cultural and institutional settings. This makes the notion of practical feasibility imprecise and malleable.

This imprecision is frustrating, and the philosopher has the natural tendency to seek to eliminate it by stipulating a more precise definition. But it is important to recognize that there are strong intuitions pulling in different directions here. Both have significant bearing on the idea of responsible moral and political judgment, but they construe the obviously correct dictum “Ought implies can” in different ways. The first intuition leads to a very minimal definition of practical feasibility in terms of logical and physical possibility. This view clears the path for morally desirable action in the face of seemingly fixed social obstacles. Political history shows that indeed there are moments in which political agents (including, in particular, inspired leaders) reshape and correct perceptions of what is politically possible by pursuing ambitious projects which turn out to be realizable despite initial general dismissal. The second intuition leads to an expansive definition in terms of historical possibility rooted in contextually specific psychological and social mechanisms. This view is supported by sobering experiences of voluntaristic plans of action that fail in the face of strong psychological and social tendencies. Now, while an expansive definition of feasibility may lead to conservative narrowness, a
minimal one may lead to voluntarism and wishful thinking. Responsible moral and political judgment needs to steer clear of both. But there is no obvious way to do it. And this, I think, is what makes the clarification and use of the notion of practical feasibility murky and malleable. It is important, however, to notice that attention to specific social and psychological mechanisms need not be paired with conservative narrowness. Identifying mechanisms that stand in the way of the realization of normative demands, and mechanisms that foster their realization, may be seen as equally relevant for critically lucid moral and political judgment. This point will be important for the argument that follows, and I will explore it in more detail as we proceed.

(ii) Temporal variation and transitional standpoint. Contextual considerations of feasibility loom particularly large in DIII. It is important to notice that these considerations may involve temporal variation and be significantly agent-dependent. Imagine the following scenario: (a) a certain scheme S2 is considerably more morally desirable than another S1; (b) S2 is accessible in a context C2 but not in C1; (c) we are, here and now, in C1, not C2; (d) S1 is accessible in C1; and (e) S1 is very likely to generate C2. If (a)-(e) are true, and the moves to S1 and from S1 to S2 do not involve unacceptable moral costs, then it makes sense to say that we have a duty of justice to pursue the trajectory of reform leading to S1 in C1 and from S1 to S2 in C2. Notice that the second segment in the trajectory contributes to the justification of the first, and that the trajectory involves making feasible (accessible), at a later time, what may not be feasible (accessible) here and now. What I will call a transitional standpoint focuses on precisely this kind of scenario where we can envisage temporal variation of conditions of feasibility through our political action. An important feature of political action and thought is that some conditions of feasibility can be not only found, but also made by us. The domains of practical feasibility can be shaped historically, and moral reasons may spur action to move social history beyond the
bounds of current injustices. The intersection between moral desirability and practical feasibility is thus best seen as a moving target.\textsuperscript{11}

II.2. Basic global justice and nonideal theory

Dimensions DI and DII make up the domain of ideal theory, including both moral desirability and feasibility considerations. DIII belongs to nonideal theory. Nonideal theory tells us how to respond to injustice, how to reframe our political world in order to approximate the realization of the conditions identified by ideal theory. In what follows I consider the application of these notions to current debates on global justice. I will do this through a partially critical discussion of the deployment of the notions of ideal and nonideal theory as introduced by Rawls.

(i) Ideal and nonideal theory. Rawls has coined the distinction between ideal and nonideal theory. He refers to two features of an ideal theory: (a) it assumes strict or general compliance with its demands, under favorable circumstances; and (b) it presents a picture of “what a perfectly just society would look like”.\textsuperscript{12} I think that (a) and (b) need not, however, go together. General compliance under favorable circumstances can be seen as relative to the norms of a perfectly just society or as relative to the norms of a less than perfectly just society.

I suggest that we distinguish between two senses of ideal theory. Though both involve condition (a), they differ with respect to (b). The first, maximalist sense, tracks the distinction between perfectly and non-perfectly just social worlds. The second, non-maximalist sense tracks social worlds which involve improvements in terms of justice but does not assume that they exhaust the range of desirable moral achievements. According this second view, (b) is not a necessary condition for something to be an ideal theory. What makes a theory ideal is that it points beyond actual social settings, toward morally more desirable ones. Whether the latter are ones with respect to which no moral improvements are possible is a separate (though not
unimportant) matter. This distinction has important consequences for moral and political judgment, as we may have sufficient certainty that an ideal theory T1 involves morally important and practically feasible improvements with respect to our current social world even if we are uncertain as to whether another ideal theory T2, which presents morally more demanding (and perhaps perfectly just) social arrangements is really sustainable or accessible.

Keeping the two senses of ideal theory separate is important when we move to considerations of global justice. In The Law of Peoples, Rawls presents, as an ideal theory of international justice, a set of principles and institutional schemes that fall significantly short of what a global liberal egalitarianism would demand. Rawls does not think his two principles of social justice should apply globally. He thinks, for example, that the only principle of international redistribution would be a “duty of assistance” on the part of well-ordered liberal and “nonliberal decent societies” to help burdened societies to achieve conditions making it possible for them to become well-ordered. An important reason why Rawls’s picture of international justice is weaker than his picture of domestic justice is that he thinks that an ideal theory must be a “realistic utopia.” A realistic utopia advances a conception of justice which “extends what are ordinarily thought to be the limits of practicable possibility” (it is utopian), while also making sure that the institutional schemes proposed are likely to be “stable” and “workable” (it is realistic). A global extension of the principles of domestic liberal justice would, according to Rawls, be utopian without also being realistic.

A realistic utopia tracks considerations of practical feasibility no less than considerations of moral desirability. Rawls recognizes, however, that identifying realistic utopian principles and schemes is not simple:

I recognize that there are questions about how the limits of the practically possible are discerned and what the conditions of our social world in fact are. The problem here is that the limits of the possible
are not given by the actual, for we can to a greater or lesser extent change political and social institutions and much else. Hence we have to rely on conjecture and speculation, arguing as best we can that the social world we envision is feasible and might actually arise, if not now then at some future time under happier circumstances.\textsuperscript{15}

A natural question then is whether Rawls’s conception of international justice really presents a maximalist ideal theory. Perhaps the “conjectures” and “speculations” he relies on are not sufficient for dismissing a more demanding cosmopolitan egalitarian account of distributive justice. For all we know (which is very little), the social world envisaged by the latter “might actually arise, if not now then at some future time under happier circumstances.”\textsuperscript{16}

Rawls says that “the specific conditions of our world at any time—the status quo—do not determine the ideal conception” of international justice we must endorse but do, instead, “affect the specific answers to the questions of nonideal theory”.\textsuperscript{17} This seems correct. But it is not clear that aspects of the status quo do not creep into Rawls’s ideal theory of international justice, with its flat rejection of global egalitarianism. One could also see aspects of the program of \textit{The Law of Peoples} as an initial move in the development of a more radical ideal theory of global justice. The latter would be cosmopolitan, and would include something like Rawls’s Law of Peoples (\textit{pace} Rawls) as an initial step in a longer, ultimately more demanding, trajectory of reforms.

(ii) \textbf{Basic and non-basic global justice.} I suggest that we distinguish between basic and non-basic global justice. Even though theories proposing both would be ideal theories, the ones focused on basic justice would not need to make any claim as to whether the social world they demand would amount to a “perfectly just” one (i.e. they need not present an ideal theory in the maximalist sense). An example of this distinction is the following. Consider the contrast between a theory that demands a global institutional order under which every individual’s fundamental human rights are fulfilled and a theory demanding the global application of Rawls’s two
principles of justice as fairness. The former can be seen as a theory of basic global justice, while the latter can be seen as a theory of non-basic global justice. We can then identify a contrast between the following two egalitarian principles with global scope:

(A) General Global Egalitarianism: We should, to the extent that we reasonably can, pursue institutional schemes under which everyone has access to important advantages.\(^{18}\)

(B) Basic Global Egalitarianism: We should, to the extent that we reasonably can, pursue institutional schemes under which everyone has access to what they need for their fundamental human rights to be fulfilled.

Both principles are egalitarian in the sense that they are concerned with countering people’s unequal access to important goods (at least when it results from morally arbitrary factors beyond their control, such as their initial natural and social endowments, and also their national membership). (A) is a principle of non-basic global justice. It is wider than (B), which is a principle of basic global justice. (B) focuses on a set of fundamental and indeed urgent claims (human rights) to goods without access to which people cannot live a minimally decent life. It does not, like (A), range over advantages going beyond such claims. (B) can, of course, be seen as a part of (A). But this need not be so. Someone might have no doubts about (B) but have serious concerns regarding (A). This may be because they think that the fulfillment of (A) is not morally desirable or because they think that institutional schemes implementing (A) are in some respect infeasible (unlikely to be stable or to be accessible) or involve unacceptable moral costs of transition. In this paper I will focus on developing and defending (B). I do not thereby reject (A). I simply put (A) aside. As we will see, articulating (B) already proves quite taxing.

I will focus on two specific principles flowing from (B):
(C) **Global Poverty Relief**: We should, to the extent that we reasonably can, pursue institutional schemes under which everyone has access to what they need to avoid severe poverty.

(D) **Political Articulation of (C)**: We should support institutional schemes implementing (C) when they exist, and help create them when they do not.

I assume that avoiding severe poverty involves access to certain goods such as food, housing, education, and health care. In section IV, I will also emphasize the importance of political empowerment. A theory of basic global justice focused on poverty relief must develop and defend (C) by showing that the duty to eradicate global poverty is a duty of justice rather than a merely humanitarian goal, and by exploring its political articulation (D) through institutional schemes and political reforms that are morally defensible and practically feasible. Though I will not provide a full blueprint, I will address these tasks, beginning with a critical discussion of two challenges to the very idea of seeing (C) as a principle of justice. But before identifying the relevant questions and challenges, let me briefly explain how the approach to basic global justice based on (C) (and (B)) that I present may differ from Rawls’s “duty of assistance,” or at any rate from some interpretations of it.

The first difference is that I conceive duties to secure the fulfillment of (C) in a cosmopolitan way. The fundamental ground of duties of poverty relief (and of other duties regarding human rights), is that they meet claims that persons have on other persons and on institutions (national or international). Rawls takes peoples rather than persons as the primary units of normative analysis regarding international justice, seeing the latter as only indirectly relevant.19

The second reason is that I see assistance to the global poor as unambiguously a matter of distributive justice. Rawls is not fully clear in this respect. He seems reluctant to call the duty of
assistance a duty of justice because it, unlike duties focused on the fulfillment of something like a global version of the difference principle, has a specific “target” and a “cutoff” point. I think, however, that since the beneficiaries of (C) can be said to be entitled to what it demands, and such demands can be legitimately imposed on agents with resources, through legal coercion, then it makes sense for the duties involved to be considered duties of justice. Duties of poverty relief have a target and a cutoff point, and are in this sense different from duties associated with a more demanding distributive principle, but they are still duties of basic global distributive justice.

A third difference is that I do not assume that considerations of international distributive justice must stop once the conditions necessary for fulfilling their members’ human rights have been secured for all peoples. As I said above, endorsement of (B) can be disentangled from endorsement or rejection of (A).

Finally, I do not assume that duties grounded in human rights must presuppose preexisting facts of cooperation among those to whom they apply. It is not clear whether Rawls thinks that the duty of assistance, and other demands regarding human rights, apply only to those who engage in social cooperation (or that, when they do, they do it because this would be a precondition for such a cooperation). In a recent article, Samuel Freeman argues that Rawls sees social cooperation as the justificatory basis of human rights. Rawls does say that human rights “are recognized as necessary conditions of any system of cooperation,” that when they are “regularly violated,” there is “no cooperation of any kind”. But this does not entail, as Freeman seems to assume, that Rawls must also see social cooperation as the only, or the crucial, justificatory basis of human rights. In any case, the latter claim seems implausible. It would be morally awkward to say that the crucial reason why I should not torture you is that doing such a thing would make it impossible for us to cooperate. Your claim against torture seems more
fundamental than this. It would be gravely wrong for me to torture you even if we do not engage in a mutual scheme of social cooperation or even care about doing so in the future.

(iii) Nonideal theory of basic global justice. A general defense of (C) can be given by appealing to different moral considerations. I have argued elsewhere that a contractualist framework of moral reasoning of the kind developed by Scanlon can yield a compelling account of (C) and (D). I will not rehearse the argument here. The core of it is quite simple. Principles of justice, and institutions implementing them, are morally obligatory when nobody affected by them could reasonably reject them. Reasonable rejection draws on generic reasons that can be shared by those engaging in contractualist argument. Claims regarding human rights focus on fundamental interests shared by all human beings. Since principles and institutions securing basic human rights, including basic socioeconomic rights, would serve these fundamental interests in appropriate ways, it is warranted to claim that they extend obligatory demands worthy of institutional enforcement. When an institutional scheme fulfilling the human rights of all is in place, everyone should support it. When that scheme is absent, everyone has a natural duty to help create it. The duties involved in the support and creation of institutional schemes of poverty relief are, I claim, both negative and positive: their structure is such that they do not only demand refraining from deprivation, but also providing protection and assistance, in relation to others’ access to the objects fulfilling their human right to escape avoidable severe poverty.\footnote{23}

My focus in this paper is not to give a general moral defense of (C) and (D), but a consideration of their status and role when nonideal circumstances are directly addressed. This is indeed necessary, as the world as we know it is clearly deficient in at least two respects. First, robust international institutions that can secure the fulfillment of socioeconomic human rights are largely absent; and second, it is not clear that global duties of poverty relief have sufficient
motivational traction on those who are called to discharge them. In section III, I will address these two unfavorable circumstances, arguing that they may affect the practical feasibility (in particular the accessibility) of (C), but not its status as a principle of global justice. In the last section, I will make some suggestions as to how these unfavorable circumstances can be addressed in theory and practice. This amounts, of course, to an exploration in the nonideal theory of basic global justice regarding poverty relief.

III. TWO NONIDEAL CIRCUMSTANCES

III.1. Institutional concerns

An obvious problem for any conception of global justice is that there seem to be no robust international institutions capable of implementing its demands. There is nothing analogous to the state at the global level. And international institutions such as the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the United Nations depend, for their functioning, on the authorization and enforcement provided by nation-states. What is the exact significance of this fact for thinking about global justice? Does it affect basic justice claims as much as it does principles of non-basic justice?

A common argument (which I will call the “Institutional Argument”) against the very idea of global justice has the following structure:

(E) Duties of justice can exist only among those who already share a political community.

(F) There is no global political community.

(G) Therefore, There are no duties of global justice

A version of this argument is presented by Thomas Nagel in a recent essay. Nagel endorses a version of (E), claiming that “justice…requires a collectively imposed social framework, enacted in the name of all those governed by it, and aspiring to command their acceptance of its authority
even when they disagree with the substance of its decisions’. Nagel also endorses something like (F) when he claims that existing international institutions (such as the WTO or the UN) do not amount to a political community because “for the moment they lack something […that is] crucial for the application and implementation of standards of justice: They are not collectively enacted and coercively imposed in the name of all the individuals whose lives they affect; and they do not ask for the kind of authorization by individuals that carries with it a responsibility to treat all those individuals in some respect equally’.

This argument, if sound, is quite damaging for conceptions of global justice focused on strong distributive demands of the kind flowing from (A). It is possible, however, to challenge both premises of this argument. The second premise can be rejected by showing that international institutions such as the WTO do not only have a pervasive impact on peoples’ life-prospects around the world, but the international situation is also such that there is little reasonable room for national governments to withdraw from them. Given this, it is plausible to say that such institutions are illegitimate if they are not reformed in such a way that their procedures involve more democratic accountability and their outcomes become more equitable. The first premise can, on the other hand, be challenged by a cosmopolitan conception for which the presence of international political institutions must be seen in a partially instrumental way, as implementers of independent norms of global distributive justice (so that if these institutions do not exist, then there is an obligation of justice to create them). Either response would preempt the conclusion (G), demanding instead that new institutions be created, or that existing ones (such as the WTO) be reformed to satisfy procedural and distributive concerns.

I will not focus my discussion on whether the Institutional Argument defeats claims of non-basic global justice. I ask instead what its impact might be on basic global justice. Nagel
recognizes that there are some duties grounded in human rights that are not conditional upon membership in a shared political community. Among them, he includes duties of poverty relief. He catalogues them, however, as weak “humanitarian duties.” This falls short of the view emerging from (B), which demands that we see duties focused on the fulfillment of human rights (including poverty relief) as enforceable duties of justice. Nagel recognizes that the realization of human rights would be more secure if international treaties and institutions with some power to limit national sovereignty were created. But he mentions the worry that these institutions would become the focus of demands for legitimacy and distributive justice. This may be the reason why the U.S. has, for example, refused to join the International Criminal Court.27 We can add that this may also be why the U.S. has failed to ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.28

How should a defender of (C) react to the Institutional Argument? We should, first, identify a possible ambiguity of (E) when applied to claims of basic global justice. There may be two possible senses in which the fact of shared political community might be said to be essential for the existence of duties of justice of poverty relief. The first is the following

(H) $X$ has a duty of justice to help relieve $Y$’s poverty only if $Y$’s poverty is (at least in part)
the result of shared institutions that are coercively imposed on $Y$ which $X$ has helped create or sustain.

The important intuition behind (H) is that contributing to the causation of someone else’s human rights deficit is a serious wrong that merits immediate redress.29 But there is no need to see causal responsibility for deprivation as a necessary condition for normative responsibility for alleviation. Human rights norms demand not only that our existing institutions do not violate anyone’s rights, but also that we create institutions fulfilling them.30 Human rights have
universal scope and are partially pre-legal demands (as Nagel recognizes). The natural conclusion of this is that something like (D) is correct. Where international institutions fulfilling the human rights of all do not exist, they should be created. (H) then fails to state a necessary condition for the existence of duties of justice of poverty relief.

Another possibility is that (E) involves the following claim:

(I) X has a duty of justice to help relieve Y’s poverty only if there is a set of shared institutions that can efficiently and legitimately allocate claims (of people like Y) and responsibilities (of people like X) regarding poverty relief.

This claim is more plausible than (H). The most charitable interpretation of it is to say that it does not (like (H)) focus on the moral justification of global principles of justice regarding poverty relief, but on whether they can be properly implemented. The important intuition behind (I) is that norms of justice cannot be properly implemented without institutions identifying, in legitimate and efficient ways, duty-bearers and right-holders instantiating their demands. A defender of (C) would recognize the power of this point. Their response would be to say that indeed institutions are necessary to implement (C), and this is why (D) is also proposed. The problem with (I), however, is that it assumes that the relevant institutions must already be present for duties of justice to be triggered. But actually the duties antecedent the institutions. The latter should be created precisely in order to articulate the specific implementation of the former.

The dialectic continues, however, because a challenger of (C) may not only say (along the lines of (F)), that robust international political institutions are absent, but that it is not realistic to expect that they will exist, at least in the foreseeable future. This would move the discussion to the feasibility aspects involved in a political conception (at DII and DIII). One possibility is that international institutions implementing (C) are not practically feasible in the sense that they
would not be stable in an international environment where powerful nations and corporations would worry about institutional mechanisms limiting their power or imposing significant burdens on them. Since most defenders of (C) are not committed to the pursuit of a world state (at any rate not in the foreseeable future), it is not clear what ongoing international scheme of global poverty relief able to curb the “claims” of the powerful and the wealthy they could propose that is feasible in this sense. Another possibility is that international institutions implementing (C) are not practically feasible in the sense that they are not accessible. Even if they could be stable once created, it may be unrealistic to expect that political agents pursuing their creation will succeed at doing so.

These two concerns about feasibility are important and need to be answered. The most challenging one is the concern regarding accessibility. The concern about stability is not very compelling for two reasons. First, the resources needed to eradicate global poverty, if all developed nations do their fair share, are relatively limited. Second, the rationale for poverty relief, grounded in basic human rights claims, is one whose moral point is very powerful and quite easy to recognize, and it is not unrealistic to expect that individuals educated under basically just national and international institutions will come to accept and honor it. The core focus of my discussion will then be on the nonideal theory considerations of accessibility pertaining to DIII.

To repeat: It is important to notice that these feasibility concerns do not affect the moral justification of the fundamental principle of global poverty relief. Representatives of wealthy countries and corporations cannot reasonably say to the global poor “Sorry, but a principle of global poverty relief is wrong because the international institutions implementing it would make a dent in my economic and political power.” The interest of the global rich to retain or increase
their economic and political power cannot be morally weightier than the interest of the global poor to avoid severe poverty. Catering to the former cannot justify that we continue to allow 18 million people to die each year due to poverty related causes.

III.2. Motivational concerns

(i) The Problem. Another common concern about global distributive justice focuses on motivational deficits. A possible version of what we can call the “Motivational Argument” is the following:

(J) Duties of distributive justice exist only among those who share a sense of mutual commitment or solidarity with each other.

(K) People normally do not share a sense of mutual commitment or solidarity with distant strangers.

(L) Therefore, It is not reasonable to claim that there are duties of global distributive justice. This argument claims that responsibilities of distributive justice do not hold among distant strangers. Unlike, perhaps, negative duties not to harm others, positive duties to provide them with resources they lack only makes sense when there is a common bond uniting agents and recipients. In the words of Michael Walzer, “the idea of distributive justice presupposes a bounded world, a community, within which distribution takes place, a group of people committed to dividing, exchanging and sharing first of all among themselves.”

(J) is usually supported by noting that people who do not share strong bonds of solidarity will not be motivated to make the sacrifices normally required by distributive justice. This is an important point. But its precise significance needs to be clarified. It certainly cannot be used to justify claims about the existence of duties of distributive justice. This would be to conflate normative reasons with motivating reasons. X may not feel motivated to assist Y but still have
normative reason to do so. Our duties to others do not depend on our feeling motivated to do what they demand. Motivation should track justification, not the other way around. This applies to distributive justice no less than to any other area of moral reasoning.\textsuperscript{33}

As a claim about what duties there are, (J) therefore fails. But the point about motivation still has significance, and can perhaps be put as follows:

(M) An institutional scheme implementing duties of distributive justice is feasible only if those to whom it applies share a sense of mutual commitment or solidarity with each other.

The focus of (M) is not on whether duties of global distributive justice exist, but on whether their implementation is feasible given motivational deficits. The (reasonable) worry here is, to put it in David Miller’s words, that “it has yet to be demonstrated that a purely cosmopolitan ethics is viable—that people will be sufficiently motivated to act on duties that are likely to be very demanding in the absence of the ties of identity and solidarity that nationality provides.”\textsuperscript{34} The Motivational Argument can then be reformulated as a concern about feasibility. We can retain (K), substitute (M) for (J), and reformulate the conclusion as follows:

(N) \textit{Therefore}, It is not reasonable to advocate schemes of global distributive justice.

This conclusion does not say that global distributive justice is not morally justifiable, but that a political conception focused on it would not be feasible and should then not be the focus of our political advocacy.

Put this way, the Motivational Argument poses a serious challenge to a conception of global justice. This is especially so for demanding non-basic conceptions of the kind flowing from (A). Even though I am not convinced by any such argument against non-basic global justice, my
focus here is on basic global justice targeting poverty relief. What is the force of the (reformulated) Motivational Argument in this case?

(ii) Motivational mechanisms leading to mutual aid. To ponder the force of the Motivational Argument, it is helpful to consider three possible sources leading people to engage in mutual aid, and to see their bearing on considerations of stability and accessibility (two domains of practical feasibility identified in section II). Even if in actual practical situations more than one of these is present, they can be distinguished analytically. \(^{35}\)

The three mechanisms I have in mind are the following. (a) In the case of *instrumental prudence*, I am actively concerned for the wellbeing of someone else when (and because) I believe that doing so will have salutary effects on my ability to achieve my own wellbeing. The typical example here is when I am disposed to contribute to your wellbeing because if I do so you would contribute to mine. (b) In the case of *sympathy*, I am concerned for the wellbeing of someone else because I see the wellbeing of that person as partly constitutive of my own. I suffer when they suffer, and rejoice when they do well. Sympathy is different from instrumental prudence because in the former the description of my own wellbeing does, and in the latter it does not, essentially include reference to the wellbeing of the other. The typical example here is the kind of concern one has for friends and family members. (c) Finally, in the case of the *sense of justice*, I am concerned for the wellbeing of others simply because I acknowledge the impartial principle that in some respects everyone’s wellbeing matters, and matters equally. The difference with prudence and sympathy is that I may be concerned for the wellbeing of someone even if its presence or absence has no significant effects on my own wellbeing or is not partially constitutive of it. A typical example is cases of rescue of strangers facing serious threats. I see that I have a duty to act to help a stranger even if I will never see them again and even if I do not
feel any warm feelings toward them. Here consideration of the wellbeing of others constrains or weighs against consideration of my own.\textsuperscript{36}

It seems that (a) is not, in general, a reliable mechanism: it is not always clear that helping others will improve my wellbeing. (c) is, on the other hand, the best mechanism if it could only be expected to work strongly and frequently enough. In diverse societies and in international relations, when most of the others whose wellbeing we must attend to are strangers, something like (c) would provide the most robust approach. But it is obvious that our sense of justice does not operate strongly and frequently enough. This is why schemes of justice are normally supplemented by incentives mobilizing (a) and (b). At the domestic level this is feasibly done, for example, through legal sanctions triggering (a), and through the generation of a sense of patriotism and national identity triggering (b).\textsuperscript{37} Are there analogues at the global level?

Is serious engagement of (a), (b) and (c) at the global level practically feasible? It is clear that schemes of non-basic justice will prove harder to pursue than schemes of basic justice, as the level of sacrifice of one’s wellbeing associated with the former is higher than the one associated with the latter. It would then be wise if strategies of reform start with basic global justice. A feasible conception of basic global justice should, then, identify ways in which the three grounds of mutual aid can be mobilized in the generation and maintenance of institutions and practices protecting the basic socioeconomic rights of everyone in the world. Some speculative remarks in this respect follow.

Though prudential considerations cannot on their own secure the feasibility of a global scheme implementing (C), they can be quite crucial in the early moves towards its creation (making it accessible). Citizens in wealthy societies have much to fear from poverty in distant countries, as the latter contribute to the generation of massive illegal immigration, the spread of
lethal diseases, and international terrorism. Furthermore, most consumers and producers of goods in developing countries would gain from reducing global poverty, as this would make new markets possible. Prudential considerations may even be significant in securing the stability of institutional schemes implementing (C) once these have been introduced. A world which is safer and wealthier is one which is not prudent to undermine. Furthermore, if international institutions implementing (C) are in place, then there will be penalties that generate disincentives for “defectors” (thus deflecting collective action problems).

Regarding sympathies, we should not overestimate the prospects of a thick sense of common identity in securing the stability of social arrangements. Contemporary multicultural and multinational societies increasingly lack thick cultural cohesion, and people’s sympathies are often centered on identity groups crossing state boundaries (such as women, workers, language, and other identity groups). On the other hand, just as thinner forms of national identity (evoking a common political history) supporting traditional territorial states can and have been created, so thinner forms of supranational identity supporting institutional structures overlaying territorial states can be generated. Witness the ongoing construction of the European Union and the Mercosur in Latin America. These processes of creation of supranational political identities may also contribute to the accessibility of the implementation of (C) in interesting and complex ways. For example, the strengthening of regional blocks in the developing world limit the power of developed countries to shape international institutions in ways that harm poorer nations.

Finally, it is clear that a universal human solidarity based on people’s sense of justice would be the strongest cement of a just world order. There is nothing inherently problematic with the idea of universal human solidarity. The common complaint that it would make no sense because there is nothing common to all human beings on which to base it can be countered by noting that
human rights provide a ground for universal solidarity, as their fulfillment addresses certain interests and vulnerabilities common to all humans.\textsuperscript{39} There is, for example, nothing absurd in the initiative recently introduced by the UN General Assembly of declaring December 20 “International Human Solidarity Day”.\textsuperscript{40} Universal human solidarity is also not unrealistically utopian. Empirical studies seem to show that new generations increasingly endorse cosmopolitan ideas and support a stronger role for supranational institutions.\textsuperscript{41} The growing global consensus on the discourse and practice of human rights protection is evidence of this. A robust, transnational culture of human rights associated with international institutions geared to poverty relief is not inaccessible. As mentioned above, the sacrifices that developed nations would have to make, collectively, to enact that culture and honor such institutions would be relatively small, and the normative reasons backing them are extremely strong. For the same reasons, the tension between domestic duties of distributive justice and global responsibilities of poverty relief would not be very dramatic. Seeing the fulfillment of the latter as limiting the fulfillment of the former is not only right, but eminently so.\textsuperscript{42}

\textbf{IV. POVERTY RELIEF AND THE TRANSITIONAL STANDPOINT}

In the framework of the UN Millennium Development Goals, the governments of developed countries pledged 0.7 percent of their GDP to halve global poverty by 2015. With some exceptions, the richest countries have failed to honor their pledge by a significant margin. But the very fact that the pledge was made is a symptom of the changing contemporary political environment. We are neither in the Westphalian world in which national states and their members did not recognize robust obligations of justice toward foreigners nor in a fully globally just world in which such obligations can be systematically and fairly enforced. We are situated in a period of transition. The current trends of economic globalization seem both unstoppable and
in need of moral constraints. Paramount among them is the demand to eradicate global poverty flowing from (C). In this final section I explore the question of how to pursue political reforms rendering the implementation of (C) accessible. My purpose is not to provide any blueprint, but to reflect on the kind of approach that we need to take toward such political reforms in order to address, in a productive way, the concerns about practical feasibility identified in section III.

**IV.1. Transitional standpoint and basic political empowerment**

There are two points that I want to emphasize regarding how to approach processes of political reform making the implementation of (C) accessible. The first is the need to take a *transitional standpoint*. This is the standpoint taken by political agents that are in the process of changing central features of the institutional and cultural environment in which they act. It differs from a conservative standpoint fixated on institutional and cultural frameworks that are both unjust and becoming increasingly ineffective. It is also different from an approach that assumes that we already have a full blueprint for institutional schemes that are both morally desirable and practically feasible. The transitional standpoint is evidently appropriate in the context of global issues.

Agents taking the transitional standpoint see that they inhabit a “political limbo” in which fundamental aspects of their social life are undergoing change. They acknowledge that the political future is uncertain and that many practical possibilities are open to them. They also see that they cannot simply rely on institutional and cultural mechanisms of previous times. In this context, what political agents ought to do is to envisage trajectories of reform that help them approximate as much as it is reasonably possible the implementation of the principles of justice that they have reason to honor. In the case of (C), the task is to introduce a political articulation of poverty relief (D). A crucial aspect of the transitional standpoint is that agents envisage
trajectories of reform passing through successive thresholds of feasibility. Certain political practices and institutional frameworks that are inaccessible now may turn out to be accessible in the near future as a result of the introduction of other political practices and institutional frameworks that are accessible now. This kind of consideration might also apply, in a speculative way, in a cosmopolitan outlook pursuing the implementation of (A) after the implementation of (B). It certainly applies to the implementation of (B) itself. At any rate my focus here is on (B), and even more specifically, on (C).

The transitional standpoint helps recognize the *partially agent-dependent nature of considerations of feasibility*. Whether a certain institutional scheme turns out to be accessible partly depends on how we choose to think and act with respect to the issues it would address. For example, a reduction of our epistemic uncertainty as to which reforms would be effective and morally defensible partly depends on whether we choose to engage in empirical research and moral reflection on past and ongoing political experiments. The same goes for concerns about institutional and motivational deficits. Premises describing such deficits can lend support to skeptical conclusions about the prospects for global justice. But whether these premises turn out to be true partly depends on us, as we can choose to reshape our institutions and political culture.

A second (and related) point that I want to emphasize is the importance of political empowerment for the pursuit of basic global justice:

**(O) Basic political empowerment:** Everyone should have the political capabilities necessary to participate effectively in the identification, justification and implementation of institutional schemes affecting the fulfillment of their human rights.

This principle says that individuals around the world should have the power to shape political processes that affect the extent to which their human rights are fulfilled. As we will see below,
this principle can be applied in different ways. But two general points about it should be mentioned first. One is that (O) has an important role in the evaluation of “comprehensive outcomes” related to strategies of global political reform. Such an evaluation must, as we saw, track both the value of results and the value of the processes leading to them. The significance of (O) is here threefold. First, (O) supplements (C) by saying that it is not only important that we have international institutions introducing poverty relief, but also that such institutions engage the autonomous agency of those they affect. The moral costs of transition involved in reforms implementing (C), other things being equal, increase when these reforms bypass the will of those to whom they apply. (O) is significant not only in the direct way just mentioned. Empowerment is also significant in indirect ways. When a decision-making body is accountable to those it affects, its decisions are more likely to cater to their fundamental interests. Furthermore, political empowerment as construed here also provides opportunity for those affected to identify and justify their claims through public reasoning. These three features of basic political empowerment are very important for the practice of poverty relief, as conditions of disempowerment can plausibly be seen as part of the explanation of poverty and their removal as part of its end.

A second general point about (O) is that it helps give a first practical approximation to the difficult issue of identifying the proper “constitution of the demos” when it comes to decision-making processes with international effects. At least in one respect the demos must be truly global because human rights are universal claims made by everyone on everyone else. The commonly invoked “all affected principle” (according to which all those affected by a decision should have a say, or a vote, on it, either directly or through their freely chosen representatives) may seem too expansive, as one can imagine ways to show that any possible decision may affect
everyone else in some respect. (O), which focuses on fundamental interests underlying human
rights, is more circumscribed. Whatever our view about other cases, it is clear that no decision-
making structure that can, but fails to, include those the fulfillment of whose human rights it
affects can be accepted as legitimate.45

IV.2. Institutional experimentation, protest, and public deliberation

We can, as an illustration, identify at least three ways in which trajectories of political
empowerment may render the implementation of (C) accessible by means of addressing the
institutional and motivational deficits mentioned in III above. To do this, we need to take a
perspective on global politics that is wider than the focus on states’ foreign policy. We need to
focus also on how citizens of various states, NGOs, corporations and other actors contribute to
shaping the global political environment.

Consider, first, institutional experimentation. Certainly there is no world state, and such a
thing may even be morally undesirable.46 But we can imagine multiple paths of reform
developing new national and international institutions addressing the implementation of (C). Let
me just mention some examples from the current literature, emphasizing a transitional reading of
their significance. Two of the most demanding proposals include the creation of a Global
Parliament and (within the UN) of an Economic and Social Security Council coordinating and
enforcing international policies of poverty reduction and development.47 These may be
inaccessible now. But they may become accessible as a result of other reforms that can be
pursued now. Examples are the creation (already under way) of regional institutions (such as the
EU and the Mercosur). Other, less ambitious reforms are immediately available. One example
concerns changes within wealthy nations, as with Jeffrey Sachs’s proposal for introducing
taxation of the richest in the U.S. to secure the funds necessary for this country to honor its
pledge within the Millennium Development Goals. Another example concerns the reform of international institutions such as the WTO. A number of short-term and long-term proposals in this direction have been recently introduced by Joseph Stiglitz. Changes in the WTO to secure fair trade benefiting rather than exploiting developing nations are particularly crucial, as “rich countries have cost poor countries three times more in trade restrictions than they give in total development aid”.

These examples of institutional experimentation suggest that trajectories of institutional reform that gradually move the international order toward the eradication of global poverty are practicable. Their pursuit and public assessment can be greatly advanced by two other mechanisms of political empowerment: protest and public deliberation. The first hardly needs emphasis. One of the obvious reasons why institutional reforms of the kinds mentioned are becoming salient in the political agenda of wealthy societies is that many of their own citizens have been engaging in noisy protests against several features of the current global economic order. Consider, for example, the mobilizations from Seattle to Cancún and beyond targeting the meetings of the WTO, and the “Make Poverty History” mobilizations and live-concerts around the world making demands on the G8 meeting in Gleneagles in 2005. These protests are significant in at least two ways. First, they show that a sense of justice focused on global issues is not merely a philosophical idea, but a politically efficacious disposition. Second, protests trigger further mechanisms of political empowerment. (O) has its own trajectories of implementation. One way of securing greater political empowerment for oneself or for others when it is denied by the status quo is by engaging in protests against the shape of that status quo.

This is of great significance in developing countries as well. Consider the example of Argentina. Largely as a result of implementing the neoliberal policies pushed by international
organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank (and more or less directly by governments of wealthy countries), Argentina faced, toward the end of the last century, one of the worst economic crises in its history. This produced massive destitution, unemployment, and the partial dissolution of its populous middle class. Beginning in December of 2001, large protests and mobilizations forced a change of course. The Argentine government is now negotiating in much more aggressive terms with the WTO, transnational corporations, and the governments of developed countries, has greatly reduced its dealings with the IMF, and is beginning to cater once again to the demands of its poor citizens. This change cannot be understood independently of the massive protests of 2001 and 2002. The renewed efforts by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela to deepen and expand the Mercosur (including proposals for a common currency and a regional bank—“el Banco del Sur”) are also partly explainable by the impact of the ongoing political mobilization of their citizens.

The generation of arenas of public deliberation in which affected agents argue with each other, with an impartial attitude, about what global frameworks would be equally good for all can also play a role in making new just institutional schemes accessible. These arenas may be formal or informal. They may emerge in governmental and intergovernmental organizations or in the more diffuse “global public sphere” as it arises in some media outlets, the internet, academic and scientific fora, and diverse meetings and campaigns of nongovernmental organizations and social movements. Public deliberation across borders can be connected with universal solidarity. I think that this may happen in three ways. First, practices of public reasoning about global injustices may already mobilize, or express, a solidaristic concern among strangers. Being willing to engage in serious argumentation (as opposed to strategic bargaining or manipulation)
with others usually involves recognizing them as agents whose needs and opinions deserve our active and non-instrumental concern.

Second, practices of public deliberation can also help elaborate existing solidaristic practices in reasonable ways. These practices often have epistemic and political defects. Epistemic defects arise when some agents lack reliable information about the specific circumstances of other agents. Since human rights can be secured in different ways in different contexts, this problem is important. Political defects arise when some agents seek to impose their own parochial views on other agents without proper recognition of their own perspectives. These defects can be corrected, at least to some extent, through practices of public deliberation. These practices give mutually concerned agents an opportunity to check their views about each other’s needs and values in actual dialogical encounters. It is important that the consciousness raising involved in these encounters can lead to critical challenges of the views of every agent involved. The point of public reasoning is not just to discover, in an empathic way, existing preferences and value-orientations and their current points of intersection, but also to generate new ones. The objective is to identify, through shared critical reflection, what we have reason to prefer and value.

Finally, public deliberation can sometimes help in the creation of new solidaristic bonds. Agents who engage in mutually helpful activities sometimes do so, initially, for merely prudential reasons. If such activities come to include deliberative problem-solving the initial dispositions may gradually be changed or supplemented by more solidaristic ones. Given the inherent impartiality and constraints of mutual respect and inclusion, deliberative practices can produce mutual trust among those engaged in them, and thus generate new forms of mutual allegiance. This is particularly important in international contexts, where it is common for members of certain nations or regions (usually the poorest ones) to feel resentment as a result of
perceiving, often accurately, international negotiations as contexts in which they are bullied, treated in patronizing ways, and manipulated.

Institutional experimentation, protests and public deliberation can then foster the accessibility of schemes of basic global justice by developing the political capabilities of agents. They also can, and often do, affect each other in interesting ways. New institutional frameworks can enable protests and deliberation by creating occasions for them and a focus of demands regarding their form and policies. Protests can precipitate the introduction of institutional experiments blocked by minoritarian yet powerful interest groups, and force deliberative practices to be more inclusive with respect to their agenda and participants. Public deliberation, finally, provides fora for the impartial assessment of institutional experiments and demands made by protests.

Of course, these mechanisms of political empowerment provide no guarantees. Trajectories of reform can always fail. A typical objection in this respect is to say that since we cannot be certain or know that reforms making a scheme S1 accessible will then make another, more demanding scheme S2, accessible, we should not engage in sequential planning or exploration. But this objection cannot be right. Certainly political experimentation must be cautious, and public deliberation is in this respect crucial as a continuous form of collective self-criticism and evaluation. But full certainty is not something that we need, or can, secure in political practice. Reasonable, defeasible forms of certainty are all we can, and must, look for. Let me make two concluding points in this respect. The first is that considerations of reasonable certainty have to be coupled with appraisal of the moral costs of the status quo. We may not be very certain that trajectories of reform will make robust schemes of global poverty relief accessible; but we can be quite sure that the status quo is morally catastrophic. In this context, to engage in reasonable
exploration of alternatives, including “not too certain” sequences of reforms, is something that we have good reason to do. Even if the departures from the status quo in the direction of basic global justice do not eliminate global poverty, any decisive approximation to that goal (without imposing unreasonable moral burdens in the transition) is morally desirable, and indeed obligatory. Second, to reiterate a point I made before, whether new institutional schemes are accessible partly depends on what we choose to do now. The extent of our empirical knowledge, the depth of our moral judgments, and the shape of our institutions and cultural mechanisms are all, to some extent, subject to change. In this sense, something like the slogan used by the World Social Forum that “another world is possible” might be interestingly self-fulfilling. If we act on the idea that another, more just, world is practically feasible, then it might actually turn out to be so.

1 More than a billion people face severe poverty worldwide. This means, at least, that they lack proper access to basic health care, education, food, or housing. This fact is not under debate. There are, however, a number of interesting debates about how to properly describe and measure poverty. See Ingrid Robeyns, “Assessing Global Poverty and Inequality: Income, Resources, and Capabilities,” Metaphilosophy 36 (2005), 30-49.


3 This is the full statement of the two principles: “(a) Each person has the same indefeasible claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme of liberties for all; and (b) Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: first, they are to be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and second, they are to be to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society (the difference principle).” Rawls, Justice as Fairness. A Restatement (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 42-3.

4 In his later work, Rawls emphasizes that the “circumstances of justice” of a modern democratic society also include what he calls “the fact of reasonable pluralism” (i.e. the fact that its members are not likely to share a comprehensive religious or philosophical moral doctrine, but can nonetheless share political ideas and conceptions and thus engage in fruitful public reasoning about problems of social justice). See Justice as Fairness, 84-5.

5 The demand of optimality may be too strong, as we may sometimes be unable to identify complete orderings of alternatives. When this is so, perhaps a more relaxed demand of maximality (calling for a selection of schemes which are at least as good as any of the alternatives) would be more appropriate. This cautionary remark applies also to the discussion of moral desirability for DJIII below.

6 Justice as Fairness, 135-40.

7 Allen Buchanan, Justice, Legitimacy, and Self-Determination (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 61. Buchanan helpfully distinguishes between feasibility, accessibility, and moral accessibility. The latter two cover the same ground I cover in my discussion of DJIII. There are, however, two differences. I present accessibility as a more context-specific form of feasibility. (For a scheme to be really feasible, it must be accessible by political agents, either now or at some time in the future.) And I see moral accessibility in terms of evaluation of “comprehensive outcomes.”
We owe to each other paper I draw on, and partially expand, the account of contractualist justification presented by T. M. Scanlon in *Philosophy & Policy* 22 (2006), 623-58, Sen discusses the appropriateness of tradeoffs between “result” and “process” considerations, and recommends a flexible approach to them that is sensitive to contextual specificities.

“Full justification” does not mean here that the results of justification are not fallible or revisable in ongoing inquiry. It is “full” in the sense that it covers all the relevant items in the list given here. I also do not deny that the list itself might be expanded. One could, for example, add a dimension of inquiry focused on morally desirable principles that is not at all concerned with feasibility constraints. See on this Gerald Cohen, “Facts and Principles,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 31 (2003), 211-45; and Andrew Mason, “Just Constraints,” *British Journal of Political Science* 34 (2004), 251-68.

Thus, though I agree with his demand that moral costs of transition be taken into account in the evaluation of political theories, I disagree with Juha Räikkä’s recommendation that we “reinterpret the notion of feasibility so that judging whether a social ideal is feasible would involve judging the necessary moral cost of changeover to the ideal,” that “it becomes partly a normative matter to decide which institutional arrangements are feasible and which are not” (“The Feasibility Condition in Political Theory,” *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 6, 1998, 27-40, pp. 38-9 and 37). The moral costs of transition may render a process of reform unacceptable without making its results infeasible. Of course, if a significant number of the agents needed to introduce the reform hold such reform morally unacceptable, then it is possible that they will choose not to pursue it. But this need not make the reform infeasible. Agents may fail to recognize the moral cost of transition involved in the reform; or they may recognize them and fail to act on this recognition; or a powerful handful of agents might successfully impose such a reform on the rest.


Ibid., 11, 12-3.

Ibid., 12, see also 128.

In “Distributive Justice and *The Law of Peoples*” (in R. Martin and D. Reidy eds., *Rawls’s Law of Peoples. A Realistic Utopia?* Oxford: Blackwell, 2006, 243-60), Samuel Freeman claims that a global version of the difference principle cannot be acceptable, because the difference principle presupposes democratic social and political cooperation, which “does not exist at the global level, and never will” (p. 255). This categorical statement seems to me to be an exaggeration. Can we really claim to know that global democratic cooperation will “never” exist?

*The Law of Peoples*, 90.

Following Cohen, I assume that “a person enjoys access to something which he does not have only if he has both the opportunity and the capacity to obtain it, in the ordinary senses of these words.” Gerald Cohen, “On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice,” *Ethics* 99 (1989), 906-44, p. 941. I use “important advantages” as a placeholder for whatever items are significant for a non-basic egalitarian conception of social justice (there are of course several options here, but it is beyond the scope of this paper to decide which one is the most appropriate).

On the contrast between “liberal cosmopolitan” approaches taking individuals as basic and “social liberal” approaches taking peoples as basic, see Charles Beitz, *Rawls’s Law of Peoples,* *Ethics* 110 (2000), 669-96. I agree with Beitz that Rawls’s endorsement of a social liberal approach is a mistake.

See Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, 106. Rawls’s text is not fully clear. He says that “most” principles of distributive justice “do not have a defined goal, aim, or cut-off point, beyond which aid may cease.” But this is consistent with seeing some principles with a defined goal (e.g. (C)) as principles of distributive justice.


*The Law of Peoples*, 68.

See Pablo Gilabert, “Contractualism and Poverty Relief,” *Social Theory and Practice* 33 (2007), 277-310. In this paper I draw on, and partially expand, the account of contractualist justification presented by T. M. Scanlon in *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998). For a defense of the claim that human rights involve basic positive (besides negative) duties of justice, see Gilabert, “The Duty to Eradicate to Eradicate


25 Ibid., 138.

26 For a forceful challenge to the second premise, see Joshua Cohen and Charles Sabel, “Extra Republicam Nulla Justitia?” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 34 (2006), 147-75. Nagel recognizes that the thought expressed in the first premise would not be acceptable to cosmopolitans, but he does not attempt to refute cosmopolitanism in his paper.


29 It can thus be argued that the global rich have been involved in creating and supporting international institutions that contribute to the causation of severe poverty around the world, and thus that they have, under (H), a duty of justice to support efforts to eradicate global poverty. This approach is forcefully developed by Thomas Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002).

30 This seems to be the idea expressed in the Article 28 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration [which, in Articles 22-6, include socioeconomic rights] can be fully realized.” Brownlie and Goodwin-Gill eds., *Basic Documents on Human Rights*, 28. For detailed discussion on the implementation of socioeconomic human rights, see Polly Vizard, *Poverty and Human Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

31 According to Pogge’s calculation, by giving up 1.2 per cent of their annual aggregate income for some years, the global rich can provide sufficient funds for eliminating global poverty. See *World Poverty and Human Rights*, 7.

32 Walzer, *Spheres of Justice* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 31. The boundaries of domains of distributive justice are shaped by “communities of character, historically stable, ongoing associations of men and women with some special commitment to one another and some special sense of their common life” (p.62).

33 For a general discussion of the relation between motivation and justification, see Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, ch. 4. Similarly, popular opinions about justice must track independent normative reasons, not the other way around. (See in this respect ch. 1 of Scanlon’s book, which distinguishes between the reasons we happen to acknowledge—reasons in the operative sense—and the reasons we should acknowledge—reasons in the normative sense.) For a powerful critical discussion of the claim that popular opinion must ground principles of justice, see Adam Swift, “Public Opinion and Political Philosophy: The Relation between Social-scientific and Philosophical Analyses of Distributive Justice,” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 2 (1999), 337-63.


35 The distinction between instrumental prudence, sympathy, and justice is not uncommon. For similar ways of drawing it see Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 270-2; and Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, 112-3. Rawls helpfully identifies a possible progression from a prudentially shaped “modus vivendi” to expanding domains of “affinity” to political associations based on “ideals and principles” of justice.

36 The difference between (b) and (c) shows itself in their different emotional correlates. The suffering of others may produce the moral emotion of compassion. When one has harmed or could have, but failed to, help them one may feel guilt. When one witnesses others failing their negative or positive duties one may feel outrage. The achievements of those toward whom one feels sympathy may produce pride, and their failures may produce shame.

37 For an exploration of “nation-building” within the boundaries of liberal political theory see Will Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Part III. For an argument that liberal nationalism is compatible with cosmopolitan justice, see Kok-Chor Tan, *Justice without Borders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), Part III.


39 Another common complaint is that the idea of universal solidarity is incoherent because it is focused on a “human identity” which has no “other” to be demarcated from. For an effective response see Arash Abizadeh, “Does Collective Identity presuppose an Other? On the Alleged Incoherence of Global Solidarity,” *American Political Science Review* 99 (2005), 45-60.

For further discussion on this point, see Arash Abizadeh and Pablo Gilabert, “Is there a Genuine Tension between Cosmopolitan Egalitarianism and Special Responsibilities?” *Philosophical Studies* (forthcoming).


Most cosmopolitans do not propose the creation of a world state, but a “multilevel” account of sovereignty and citizenship in which the national state may be in some cases strengthened and in others debilitated (through local decentralization or through supranational regional or global centralization). These approaches allow for more local forms of governance to the extent that these are more efficient and cater to concerns about democratic legitimacy, and to the extent that they do not pose obstacles for securing the implementation of urgent demands of global justice. See Held, *Global Covenant*, ch. 6; and Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, ch. 7. For a recent comprehensive discussion of institutional reforms oriented by a cosmopolitan perspective, see Simon Caney, “Cosmopolitan Justice and Institutional Design: An Egalitarian Liberal Conception of Global Governance,” *Social Theory and Practice* 32 (2006), 725-56.


Stiglitz, *Making Globalization Work* (New York: Norton, 2006), 78. For Stiglitz’s proposals regarding the democratization of the WTO and securing that its rules do not disadvantage unfairly the poor nations see chs. 3 and 10 of his book. Two short-term proposals are “strong freedom of information acts” making the proceedings of the WTO open to public scrutiny and a bolstering of “the ability of developing countries to participate meaningfully in decision making, by providing them with assistance in assessing the impact on them of proposed changes” (p. 253).
