

The Duty of Orientation
Disposing Ourselves to Solidarity
in the Theory and Practice of Global Justice

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Benjamin McKean
Ph.D. Candidate, Politics
Princeton University

Abstract:

Liberals have largely approached the challenge of global justice by asking whether or not their relatively settled egalitarian convictions should be extended by analogy to the world as a whole or defended as normatively best in their current, bounded form. This paper unsettles some of those convictions by asking about what individuals rather than institutions must do in response to injustice. The concept of orientation is used to place the dispositions, habits, and perspectives of individuals at the heart of political duty rather than at its margins, where they are found in the many views that understand political obligation primarily as compliance with institutional rules. The paper then offers an account of solidarity as characterizing the orientation appropriate to international injustice by applying some lessons from understanding our obligations in relationship to domestic civil disobedience. The paper concludes by describing in more detail what actions we can take and which perspectives we can adopt to discharge our duty of solidarity; particular attention is paid to the role of social movements in facilitating this and overcoming some of the challenges posed by the international institutional context.

An Experience of Global Politics

Imagine sitting in front of the TV, watching news coverage of international politics. Could reflection on this commonplace experience orient our thinking about global justice? David Miller uses just such an imaginative scene-setting anecdote to launch some skeptical arguments about international political obligation. “I switch on the television to watch the evening news,” he writes. “The main stories today are all from what we used to call the Third World, and they all speak of human suffering.”¹ Miller goes on to describe the images he sees: the corpses left by Baghdad car bombs, the flies on the faces of the starving children of Niger, would-be immigrants injured while trying to sneak into the EU. Miller also describes his distinct emotional reactions to each of these situations of poor, wounded, dying people – sympathy and anger, but also confusion and incomprehension at what has caused these situations and even a touch of exasperation at those trying to enter the EU illegally. Miller invites the reader to identify with him; he is offering a theory for people who experience international politics as confusing and complex while nevertheless remaining sympathetic with the less fortunate – but curious to find out if they share some responsibility for that misfortunate before they work to alleviate it.

Miller paints a remarkable scene – a vivid and consequential starting point for considering the task of an international political theory. It is worth noting that the particular problem he sets before us – trying to discern if we are indirectly responsible for the events we have just watched – organizes itself around an apparent disparity in status between our role as spectators and the people on the TV screen, who appear as the protagonists and victims of international politics. In this sense, we are arguably oriented to regard international politics as something we experience as the audience of a spectacle happening elsewhere rather than as engaged political agents already participating in an on-going affair. Because our focus is directed to the events on screen, we are directed away from a concerted study of the ways in which we viewers are already in the midst of international politics – for example, the economic and political relations that resulted in the TV being manufactured and imported; those that led to the production of the news program itself; and, indeed, the entire set of relations that make it the case that Anglo-American political philosophers could be prompted to reflect on international politics in the first instance by this screen.

Does it matter that Miller’s argument begins this way? Why should we think that his implicit distinction in status between spectator and spectacle is theoretically consequential rather than perhaps unfortunate rhetorical scene-setting? The answer goes to the heart of what political theory is for and what it can do. John Rawls draws our attention to *orientation in thinking* as one of the primary aims of political philosophy. He writes, “the members of any civilized society need a conception that enables them to understand themselves as members having a certain political status – in a democracy, that of equal citizenship – and how this status affects their relation to their social world. This need political philosophy may try to answer, and this role I call that of orientation.”² Rawls argues that individuals face a particular challenge in trying to understand their political role in a social world characterized by complex systems of interdependence, since it is all but impossible for most people to understand fully how their

¹ See David Miller, *National Responsibility and Global Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pages 1-5.

² Pages 2-3, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* Ed. Erin Kelly (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). It is worth noting that Rawls says that this role for political philosophy was suggested to him by Immanuel Kant’s essay, “What is Orientation in Thinking?” collected in *Kant: Political Writings, Second Edition* Ed. Hans Reiss Trans. H. B. Nisbet (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pages 237-249.

actions contribute to their society and in turn rely on the contributions of others. Consequently, what individuals need to be appropriately responsive to others in such a context is to understand themselves as playing a particular role – ideally, a role with well-defined norms that can guide their actions. Political philosophy can and should try to meet this essentially practical need by offering a political conception of that role which can be widely embraced. In this sense, a political theory is not only a collection of arguments which can be judged true or false but also a kind of practice to be judged more pragmatically – one that facilitates particular forms of political action by describing a way of understanding our political status.

Such descriptions can transform our self-understanding in a way that disposes us to act in certain manners and to see and treat others in a particular fashion as a result. A political theory need not even consciously aim at orienting us in order to do so; it can provide material for our self-conceptions without itself offering a theory of self-conceptions.³ However, making such material explicit can be illuminating. Evidence that a theory has the resources to describe and promote a proper orientation to our social world should weigh in favor of adopting it; if an egalitarian political liberalism could be shown to do so, then that would be another source of support for it. Moreover, if being properly oriented is a necessary precondition to organizing and thus meeting our political obligations, as Rawls suggests, proper orientation itself effectively becomes a duty for us as individuals.

Accepting orientation as both one of the aims of political theory and as a duty for individuals makes it plain why Miller's scene-setting is worth reflecting upon in the context of the contemporary debate about global justice. Miller's book is complicated and it would be grossly unfair to critique the entire work on the basis of its opening pages. Rather, I have dwelled on these pages because they suggest something meaningful about international political obligation and why it can be so hard to discern in comparison to the traditional understanding of domestic obligations. As the Rawls quote above suggests, the political status of citizenship is familiar and important; seeing ourselves as having that status shapes our actions and our way of understanding others who share that status. Indeed, Rawls's official definition of orientation itself exclusively concerns domestic politics.

Yet, as the evening news makes clear, we are also confronted with the question of what kind of relation we should think of ourselves as having with many people who do not share our citizenship. As Miller's own self-reported affective reactions illustrate, our social world is regularly punctuated by images of war and famine that may not easily lend themselves to integration with settled self-conceptions developed in domestic politics. To ask how to manage our reactions to such images is in no small part to ask for the conception that can best orient us to a social world that is populated largely by fellow citizens but also partly penetrated by others standing in a variety of different relations to us. But what political status, if any, could we be said to have internationally? The fundamental asymmetry of Miller's scenario exhibits one way that we can be oriented: we might see the primary status of other agents in international politics as characters in a real-life drama we watch happening elsewhere; we see them in the first instance through a screen, lacking any vivid markers of a status shared with us. This is undoubtedly an important part of our experience, but is this the normatively best way for us to orient ourselves in thinking about our international political obligations?

³ There is also the further question of how conceptions circulate beyond the community of political theorists in which they are developed so that they may influence citizens more broadly. Unfortunately, this difficult topic lies outside the scope of this paper.

Global Justice and Individuals

This paper offers a sketch of what is required to orient thinking about our political status internationally and how this should affect the relationship that we have to our social world. Having framed this question in the previous section, the paper next elaborates further the role of orientation, individuals, and institutions in ideal domestic theory in order fill out these concepts. Significantly, the institutional functions which help orient individuals in ideal theory are absent in the non-ideal contexts investigated here and so the following section offers a theory of non-ideal orientation by drawing resources from Rawls's writings on civil disobedience, which attend to one such situation. These resources are then applied to the international realm in the following section, which proposes that we orient ourselves towards meeting a criterion of solidarity. To show that the requirements of solidarity are plausible and achievable without too much cost to individuals, the final section describes in more detail what actions we can take and which perspectives we can adopt to discharge our duty of solidarity; particular attention is paid to the role of social movements in facilitating this and overcoming some of the challenges posed by the international institutional context.

Recall that this is one piece of a larger project that seeks to answer the question, What does global justice require from me as an individual, if anything? To some ears, this question might sound odd. Justice, we have frequently been told in the years since the publication of Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*, is a matter for social institutions.⁴ This means that it is their job to create a just background against which we can act and the primary political job of individuals is to refrain from obstructing the functioning of just institutions. Compared to questions about the principles that should apply to institutions, normative requirements on individuals are said to be of distinctly derivative importance. Many egalitarian liberals explicitly endorse some version of this standard view, while others criticize egalitarian liberalism precisely on the grounds of its purported endorsement of the view.⁵ This standard view is both independently implausible as a normative view and a poor interpretation of Rawls, as I have argued elsewhere.

In the past several years, discussions of global justice have often assumed premises like those of the standard view, thereby bringing into relief the question of how much such a view can tell us about political obligation across borders, where a multiplicity of institutions is in play. One option in the face of this bewildering proliferation would be to abandon the standard institutional view entirely in favor of privileging personal ethics.⁶ However, most theorists have opted to retain the standard view while offering competing views about how to apply it internationally. For example, Thomas Nagel holds that the standard view entails that duties of justice are limited to the nation-state while Thomas Pogge argues that the standard view leads

⁴ The well-known and much-interpreted formulation from Rawls relevant here is that “[j]ustice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought.” While this slogan makes it clear that institutions should aim at justice, it is silent about whether or not individuals or other groups must as well. Some theorists have taken this to suggest that institutions bear sole responsibility for the achievement of justice, but as I argue below (and at greater length elsewhere), this is certainly not Rawls's view. For the slogan, see page 3, *A Theory of Justice, Revised Edition* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999). Hereafter cited as *TJ*.

⁵ G.A Cohen attributes such a view to Rawls and his critique of it makes up the first half of his *Rescuing Justice and Equality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008). Liam Murphy also notably attributes this view to Rawls as a basis for critiquing him in “Institutions and the Demands of Justice” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol. 27, No. 4, pages 251-291.

⁶ See, arguably, Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Vol 1 (1972), pages 229-43. Singer's essay, which analogizes distant oppressed others to drowning children, also offers a very distinctive implicit account of orientation.

straightforwardly to duties of justice that track the global scope of international political institutions.⁷ For his part, David Miller tries to steer a path between them and writes, “our thinking about global justice should primarily be focused on institutions: we should be looking at the institutions at global level that primarily determine people’s life chances, and asking which principles of justice apply to them” (17) while also arguing that individuals have distinct but attenuated duties of justice internationally that derive from the fact that existing international institutions are weaker than domestic ones.⁸ On this account, the strength of such duties proportionately tracks the strength of existing institutions.

Rather than pursue one of these three extensions of the standard view, I take a novel approach to the question of global justice and international political obligation by illuminating the relationship between social and political institutions and individual dispositions. Far from marginalizing the duties of individuals, the institutional nature of justice properly understood actually requires a distinctive focus on the way individuals can be obliged to dispose themselves. The social and political institutions relevant to justice require that the individuals subject to them not only comply with their rules but also hold certain attitudes towards them and towards others subject to them if they are to be stable and flourish; as a consequence, our dispositions – and the habits which cultivate them – require normative evaluation from the perspective of justice as much as our more obviously political actions do. By directing our focus to such individual duties of justice, some familiar-seeming home truths about egalitarian political liberalism may still hold surprises for us, as comparatively little attention has been paid to their function in orienting our thinking as political actors. By attending to this dimension, I am able to provide useful resources for understanding how we ought to act as individuals confronted with the realities of international politics and concerned with our duty of justice. Consider briefly how orientation works to dispose us to act in particular ways in domestic politics. Rawls and other egalitarian liberals understand the primary political relationship as one of co-citizenship to a single basic structure and derive strong normative conclusions about the kind of equality that such co-citizens owe each other. In particular, for Rawls, *the criterion of reciprocity* is the key concept that encapsulates what it is to meet the various political obligations individuals have to each other. In order to be the kinds of citizens that reciprocity requires us to be, Rawls describes the necessary accompanying dispositions, gives an account of the institutions that would help to generate such attitudes, and proposes a variety of habits and rituals that assist in their development and maintenance. In this, he consciously (and perhaps surprisingly) follows Hegel by taking the basic structure of society rather than the state alone as the institutional key to political obligation; an accompanying focus on dispositions follows from how the basic structure expands the scope of political obligation beyond compliance with the law into the family and civil society. But reciprocity as Rawls understands it is owed only under certain circumstances that do not today hold internationally – namely, among those who have equal political standing within a self-sufficient and closed political society. In the end, Rawls’s approach to political obligation leaves us with a challenge: if just institutions play a significant role in causing individuals to develop and hold the dispositions and attitudes appropriate to a well-ordered society, what dispositions

⁷ See Nagel, “The Problem of Global Justice,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs*. Vol. 33, No. 2, pages 113-147; and Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights: Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002).

⁸ Similar proportional views are also endorsed in Joshua Cohen and Charles Sabel, “Extra Rempublicam Nulla Justitia?” *Philosophy & Public Affairs*. Vol. 34, No. 2, pages 147-175, and in Anna Stilz, *Liberal Loyalty: Freedom, Obligation, and the State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), pages 101-109.

and attitudes ought a citizen hold in a non-ideal world, where institutions cannot play such a role?

Orientation and Political Action in Non-Ideal Circumstances

Rawls says that the natural duty of justice “requires us to support and to comply with just institutions that exist and apply to us. It also constrains us to further just arrangements not yet established, at least when this can be done without too much cost to ourselves” (TJ, 99; also 293-4). This paper and the project to which it belongs constitute an effort to fill out Rawls’s second sentence: to explain what can be done “to further just arrangements not yet established” when the obstacles to such arrangements are international in nature and to show how this can be done without too much cost to ourselves. Rawls himself said relatively little about this because he offered an almost entirely ideal theory in which just institutions themselves did most of the work of habituating individuals in the appropriate dispositions. However, holding this view about ideal theory makes it much more difficult to extend it into an account that can provide guidance for contexts in which institutions exert countervailing and often injurious pressures upon individuals. Even when such pressures are not independently damaging, coping with influences at cross-purposes offers a significant challenge to individual efforts to shape one’s dispositions; a social context in which some institutions push one way while others exert force in another is one in which no single existing perspective or disposition may be fully adequate to the multiple political roles in play. Yet it is precisely such a situation that arguably characterizes the world today, in which the institutions of the global economy and the nation-state can be described as being in tension by trying to dictate terms to each other. Moreover, there are myriad consequential intermediate organizations – international bodies like the UN and the WTO, transnational social movements such as those against landmines or in favor of human rights, transnational corporations with revenues in excess of the Gross National Products of some countries, and international and quasi-international military bodies like NATO and the occupation forces in Afghanistan. In a context that features overlapping institutions and consequential non-governmental actors, the political roles relevant to justice and appropriate orientation must be multiplied beyond the simple dichotomy between citizen and office-holder suggested by Rawls’s ideal theory of a closed society. In addition, given the nature of some consequential actors, we need to be able to speak not only of institutions, but of political forms of social organization more generally, including the social movements of domestic and transnational civil society.

While Rawls’s account of ideal domestic theory is not directly useful for understanding such an environment, he does offer an account of civil disobedience that makes available important resources for how to think about such situations. In the case of legitimate civil disobedience, institutions are *nearly* rather than fully just and so there will be a plurality of political statuses that result from the unequal treatment of citizens and their actions in response. For example, citizens who belong to groups that are systematically treated unjustly may have stronger obligations to those who share that status than to other citizens; citizens who benefit from unjust arrangements may be required to inflect the way they understand their status and contribution to social cooperation accordingly. In short, this plurality changes how one must be properly oriented and in this way, it may provide a model for thinking about individual duties and dispositions in a non-ideal international context.¹¹ These multiple statuses are generated

¹¹ Tommie Shelby interestingly elaborates on a related scenario in which institutions are near enough to justice that some citizens have political obligations to the state while others are so disadvantaged that they are not even bound to

because legitimate civil disobedience occurs when the two parts of the natural duty of justice are in tension – when the duty to erect more just institutions runs into our obligation to comply with existing, partly just institutions. Briefly, Rawls defines civil disobedience as “a public, nonviolent, conscientious yet political act contrary to law usually done with the aim of bringing about a change in the law or politics of the government” (TJ, 320). In further explaining what makes such acts political, he describes civil disobedience as “a political act not only in the sense that it is addressed to the majority that holds political power, but also because it is an act guided and justified by political principles, that is, by the principles of justice which regulate the constitution and social institutions generally” (TJ, 321). Let me begin by noting some salient *disanalogies* with the international context that should be readily apparent from this description. Civil disobedience relies on an appeal to principles contained in domestic institutions and is effective because a domestic audience can be presumed to endorse those principles. Internationally, both the principles and the audience will be different and so international political action will likely look quite different. Nevertheless, Rawls’s account of civil disobedience has value because of what it shows about the acquisition and fulfillment of individual political duties in non-ideal contexts. I propose three relevant lessons worth learning: the first about how otherwise disadvantaged individuals can acquire additional political obligations; the second about how the dispositions appropriate to those obligations affect our self-understanding; and the third about how a sense of justice shapes our perceptions.

First, even though the legitimacy of civil disobedience is derived from the natural duty of justice, which holds for all persons regardless of their acts, participation in the planning and execution of civil disobedience and other political actions can itself give rise to newly acquired political obligations. In ideal cases, such acquired political obligations are generally the province of the privileged, since they have acted in such a way as to benefit disproportionately from existing institutions and thereby become obligated through the principle of fairness to do more than institutions require of citizens generally. Participants in civil disobedience may not themselves be privileged in this way if they are taking action against an institution that does them some injustice. Rawls notes that their lack of privilege “does not mean, however, that the principle of fairness will not give rise to important obligations in their case...Just as we acquire obligations to others with whom we have joined in various private associations, those who engage in political action assume obligatory ties to one another” (TJ, 330). This is not a political obligation that accrues to all citizens simply because of their status as citizens, but it is a political obligation that any individual can acquire when they adopt the status that accompanies participating in social justice movements.

Members of such movements that undertake collective action are bound more tightly to one another because they share at least this political status, even if they otherwise do not hold equal institutional status. As a result, individuals may be very likely to acquire such obligations if their institutional context is so unjust that the natural duty of justice requires some political action. For example, both black and white individuals participated in the 1961 Freedom Rides aimed at desegregating interstate transportation and enjoyed quite different political statuses at the time. As a matter of law and social practice, black people were treated as second-class citizens and so black participants arguably owed much less to the US government and its white citizens, including their fellow white Freedom Riders, than did white participants. Nevertheless,

the institution by the natural duty of justice, though they retain other natural duties towards their fellow citizens, such as the duty of mutual aid. See “Justice, Deviance, and the Dark Ghetto” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Vol. 35 No. 2, pages 126–160.

because of their collaborative efforts, both black and white participants acquired distinct new political obligations to each other in virtue of their actions and these normative requirements importantly went beyond what was specified by existing institutional membership. This usefully illustrates how acting against injustice can introduce or reinforce obligations to others whose political statuses are quite different from our own, even those whom our own government does not count as citizens.

The second and third lessons from civil disobedience shift from how we might acquire such obligations to how we can and ought to discharge them by disposing ourselves in situations where injustice has given rise to multiple political statuses. Orienting ourselves would be easy in a world in which everyone was simply a citizen, full stop, but this is not the case even in an ideally well-ordered society, in which holding office and enjoying privilege both come with distinct political obligations and statuses. The presence of injustice gives rise to additional political statuses and dispositions and the second lesson concerns the individual as an actor in such a context. Specifically, civil disobedience offers a scenario in which individual dispositions play a role in compensating for institutional failure. Rawls notes, “By resisting injustice within the limits of fidelity to law, it serves to inhibit departures from justice and to correct them when they occur. A general disposition to engage in justified civil disobedience introduces stability into a well-ordered society, or one that is nearly just” (TJ, 336). In other words, individuals have a duty to regard themselves as potential political agents disposed to identify and act to correct injustice. While the act of engaging in civil disobedience may sometimes come with a personal cost too high to be required by the natural duty of justice alone, the work of disposing oneself to be prepared should the opportunity to act arise has a comparatively low cost and comes with important political consequences for one’s own self-understanding and for how one is regarded by others. Seeing oneself as being disposed to engage in justified political action to further just arrangements requires a host of preparatory acts and attitudes if one’s self-conception is to be consistent. One also has to be willing to take smaller actions, to defend one’s self-conception to others, and to encourage others to dispose themselves similarly. Thus, even when existing institutions operate justly, the disposition to engage when necessary gives rise to a certain public-spiritedness that may itself discourage the advent of future injustice.

Even if I do see myself as a potential political agent, I will not always be the one taking action directly; sometimes, I occupy the role of spectator. But this does not mean that I have no political duties here, as I must still face the practical question of how to respond to and conceive of those who do so act. This leads us to the third lesson of civil disobedience. Rawls writes:

A community’s sense of justice is more likely to be revealed in the fact that the majority cannot bring itself to take the steps necessary to suppress the minority and to punish acts of civil disobedience as the law allows. Ruthless tactics that might be contemplated in other societies are not entertained as real alternatives. Thus the sense of justice affects, in ways we are often unaware of, our interpretation of political life, our perception of the possible courses of action, our will to resist the justified protests of others, and so on. (TJ, 339)

In short, dispositions shape our sense of what actions we might possibly take – not only in politics but also simply when pursuing our private interests. When contemplating what new business to start, most businessmen today do not consider buying and selling slaves; the sense of justice we have developed in society rules some things out even before we make up our mental lists of possibilities. Here we can see clearly how egalitarian political liberalism is social in a deep sense, linking individuals and institutions in a mutually formative fashion. This helps to explain the importance of the institutions of the basic structure; because their influence is

pervasive, they are subject to especially stringent requirements of justice. However, when the influence of social institutions is wholly or partly malign from the perspective of justice, individuals have a consequent duty to look harder to see if the intuitive interpretation of political life that we read off of institutional status is the best available. To put it strongly, political liberalism requires that our perceptions of others be subject to normative evaluation, in part because of how those perceptions help constitute our understanding possible political actions. It may be that we are normatively required to orient ourselves towards groups in a way other than the existing institutional order suggests.

Rawls's defense of civil disobedience thus provides a useful model of what individuals are faced with when actual political status and official institutional status come apart. For example, civil disobedience is justified in at least some instances because existing government institutions fail to respect the actual political status of some individuals or groups as fully contributing members to a cooperative scheme; failing to perceive and treat blacks citizens as fully cooperating members of society was wrong, even when laws made them second-class citizens in many states and social practices effectively did the same in many others. When we fail to see the difference between institutional status and political status, we can improperly perceive an unjust scheme as though it were ideal – or at least nearer to ideal than it is. Because of the deep influence of social institutions on our self-conceptions and on our ways of seeing society, we should dispose ourselves to accept the ever-present possibility that we have failed to perceive some possible courses of political action – possibilities that may be more just than those we currently see and which may be opened for us by the actions of others. Because of the role individual dispositions play in the stable functioning and reproduction of social institutions, justice may require us to ensure that we are seeing others rightly – even as spectators, just watching the TV news – before we can best appreciate the possible actions available to us.

Disposing Ourselves Internationally

The TV-based experience of international politics illustrates the problem of orienting ourselves in a non-ideal world by dramatizing the influences that orient us improperly and make it possible for us to fail to realize our political obligations. In our world, while domestic norms like equality before the law and “one man, one vote” generate some imperfect force toward developing the disposition to acknowledge the equal political status of co-citizens, other domestic institutions – arguably including elements of the criminal justice system like the “war on drugs” and felony disenfranchisement as well as entrenched systems of discrimination in civil society, including the media – encourage the development of dispositions that fail to acknowledge equal political status. And in the international realm, though liberals hold all individuals to have the same moral status, we cannot simply begin with the assumption of equal political status since we are citizens of different states, subject to different laws and enjoying different rights. How then to conceptualize international political obligations and their associated dispositions when institutions are structured so that we are encouraged to think that the main relationship we have with distant others is through seeing them on TV, the same way we encounter fictional characters?

Even in the absence of a requirement of equality, we have no good reason to assume *a priori* the impossibility of international political obligation; insofar as our duties of justice apply to social relations that are thoroughly intertwined with power and which must be justified, we should expect that such relations may sometimes exceed the scope of existing government

institutions and cross state borders. In such international cases, reciprocity will not be the criterion which determines if we have fulfilled our duties, as the relations can be between people who do not share the equal status of co-citizens but may instead share some other political status – whether in virtue of being jointly subject to other, less consequential political institutions (like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank); because of shared participation in non-institutional social practices (like the transnational practice of structuring gender relations in accord with patriarchy); or because of a shared obstacle to the achievement of just political institutions (such as the actions of a private transnational actor like a corporation or terrorist network). In these cases where the shared status is not one of full cooperative equality, the maximum requirements of egalitarian justice may not apply, but we still require some criterion for judging how to dispose ourselves to others.

In an incompletely just domestic society, the case of civil disobedience shows that individuals should be disposed to act against injustice, attentive to the normative importance of seeing others rightly, and prepared to acquire additional obligations through involvement in political movements for justice. How can we apply these lessons to a non-ideal institutional context that is international? Recall that the way in which we orient ourselves ideally to the equal status of co-citizens is to take up a particular point of view, a way of seeing society in which we respect co-citizens as partners in a cooperative enterprise. Rawls describes both this perspective and the desire to inhabit it when he writes that “[r]easonable persons, we say, are not moved by the general good as such but desire for its own sake a social world in which they, as free and equal, can cooperate with others on terms all can accept. They insist that reciprocity should hold within that world so that each benefits along with others” (PL, 50). Reasonable persons do not desire that people everywhere come to inhabit their social world and share the status of cooperators; as Rawls has it, they are quite content to engage in “merely socially coordinated activity” with other people who reside in other social worlds whose members agree to their own fair terms of cooperation.¹⁷ But such a social world is quite unlike the one experienced by reasonable persons today.

In our world, reasonable individuals depend upon those with whom they cooperate domestically, but they also rely on people around the world with whom they relate quite differently.¹⁸ They get clothes from Bangladesh, produce from Honduras, and computer parts from China; their government collaborates with other governments possessing varying claims to legitimacy in order to address climate change; and some of their taxes go to support international institutions within which they have no direct voice. Yet existing international political and economic institutions permit such inequality and exploitation that it is not possible for individuals in the developed world to coordinate on fair terms with most people in the developing world, much less treat them as free and equal. Furthermore, such international institutions contribute to the maintenance of some domestic political and economic structures that fail to protect basic rights or meet a social minimum. Many actors in international politics, including other nations and corporations, seek to direct government policies in a manner that impairs the democratic rights of their citizens. The global economy may undermine the

¹⁷ See page 6, JAF, for the cooperation/coordination distinction.

¹⁸ This point is noted by many, among them A. J. Julius in “Nagel’s Atlas,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Vol. 34 No. 2 (2006), pages 176–192.

development of dispositions and habits that enable even domestic political cooperation and instead foster perspectives in which we regard each other as rivals rather than partners.¹⁹

It would seem that reasonable individuals who desire to interact only with others as free and equal are faced with a choice: either end my relations with most others in the world or bring them into a single basic structure. However, I can accomplish *neither* as an individual on my own. So long as I remain a member in good standing of my state, I will still be connected to international institutions that speak in my name, though in a derivative fashion. Nor is the renunciation of such international relations advantageous to justice: some potential obstacles to stable justice, such as a degrading global environment, clearly require coordinated international political action if they are to be overcome. Similarly, the global economy is too interdependent for us to tear ourselves away but not yet so integrated that it constitutes a single cooperative scheme; nor does it approximate Rawls's vision of ideally self-sufficient peoples voluntarily trading amongst each other. Consequently, as a privileged individual in the developed world (for example), I cannot practice reciprocity with all of those who currently belong to my social world yet neither can I shrink my social world so that it includes only those with whom I can cooperate. I have no choice but to coordinate my actions with distant others on terms that they reasonably reject. So what attitude ought to characterize my interactions? How should I orient myself to all these people who possess such varying political statuses? And how should they orient themselves to me?

There can be no one answer to this question. I may be actively contributing to the exploitation of some while I only passively benefit from the exploitation of others. Some people may be implicated in many of the same international political institutions as I am, but their disadvantage may come from an earthquake or it may be predominantly the responsibility of their own government.²⁰ Each of these situations may call for a quite different practical action in response. However, I do think there is something important to say about how we ought to be generally disposed to approach these questions. Where reciprocity is not possible, I suggest that, in order to meet the most basic requirement on individuals faced with a situation where they inhabit unjust or incompletely just international institutions, we should orient our perspective towards meeting a *criterion of solidarity*. Specifically, I should extend the presumption to others I depend upon in such a context, wherever they are, that they too have an interest in living in some social world where they can interact with others as free and equal. I need not presume that we have an interest in coming to share the *same* social world; instead, my dispositions and perspectives need only be characterized by the weaker presumption that the world as it is prevents each of us from interacting with others (including each other) against a just background and that we share an interest in its being otherwise.

Where reciprocity is meant to be a principle of mutual benefit for those who anticipate perpetual equal status, solidarity is a principle of mutual benefit for those who come to share an interest in justice that may be of some definite, if unknown, length and which need not conclude with equal status for those obliged.²² The mutual benefit relevant to solidarity is thus the

¹⁹ Defending these contentious and, to some extent, empirical claims unfortunately falls outside the scope of this paper, though not of the project to which it belongs.

²⁰ Both of these scenarios can of course be complicated by a variety of factors. The impact of natural disasters is hardly apolitical, as the perceived failures of the US government's preparation for and response to Hurricane Katrina reminds us. Similarly, the failures of a domestic government may be related to a history of colonialism or another unjust international dynamic.

²² In the way that it modifies reciprocity to reflect the unequal status of the parties involved, the criterion of solidarity is indebted to Iris Marion Young's account of what she terms asymmetrical reciprocity. My account

removal of some shared but international obstacle to domestic social justice, such as an exploitative economic system that crosses borders, transnational terrorism, or an international organization that imposes unfair duties on member states without a real possibility of exit. For example, if we are unable to achieve a normatively obligatory level of domestic equality in part because of the structure of an international economy which also sustains injustices in other countries, then we can be understood to share an interest with the very people we may otherwise be complacently observing on the TV; in such situations, both parties should be disposed to act in solidarity with the other. Such a disposition means that we should be alert to appeals to act, open to hearing out claims that we have perceived the political status of relevant groups, and ready to perceive the durability of our freedom as partly dependent upon theirs.

Specifying the Dimensions of Solidarity

I recognize that some may find this to be an unorthodox use of the term solidarity, which is sometimes associated with cultural or familial ties – in other words, precisely *not* with self-interest in any sense; in thinking about global justice, such usage is especially common in the literature dealing with liberal nationalism. However, there is another tradition that uses solidarity in my sense – one summarized by the slogan “An Injury to One is An Injury to All” which was popularized in the United States by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) union in the early 20th century.²³ Solidarity in this sense directs our attention to how injustice experienced directly by relevant others can impair our own exercise of freedom. If freedom requires the existence of just institutions in the sense that political liberalism affirms, then the unjust functioning of those institutions may threaten the durability of my own freedom even if it does not directly restrict any actions in the immediate sense. The slogan of solidarity is thus meant to orient us so that we can come to see ourselves as having an interest in the achievement of justice not only for its own sake but also for ours. As with reciprocity, the force of the normative requirements on individuals that arises in this institutional context is explained by the natural duty of justice. Recall that this duty “requires us to support and to comply with just institutions that exist and apply to us. It also constrains us to further just arrangements not yet established, at least when this can be done without too much cost to ourselves” (TJ, 99; also 293-4). Where Rawls proposes that we use the criterion of reciprocity to help determine whether or not we have fulfilled our duties to comply with just institutions, the criterion of solidarity helps to determine whether or not we have fulfilled our duties to further just arrangements in a non-ideal world.

As a stylized example, consider the situation of the workers at the Matamoros Garment factory in Puebla, Mexico. In early 2003, many workers producing garments for sale in the US market for Puma, a German company, determined that the nature of their employment made it effectively impossible to enjoy freedom and equality and consequently sought to improve the

differs from Young’s in that she includes recognition as a component of asymmetrical reciprocity, which I reject, and in that I assert that my criterion of solidarity is compatible with Rawlsian political liberalism and Young sets her account in opposition to it. See “Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder, and Enlarged Thought” in *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics: Themes from Kant and Arendt*. Eds. Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), pages 205-228.

²³ For a lively first-hand account of the origins of the motto, see page 186, Big Bill Haywood, *The Autobiography of William D. Haywood* (New York: International Publishers, 1929). For a general history of the IWW, see Patrick Renshaw, *The Wobblies: The Story of the IWW and Syndicalism in the United States* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999). For more recent use of the phrase, see Kim Moody, *An Injury to All: The Decline of American Unionism* (New York: Verso, 1988).

poor wages and working conditions at the factory by trying to organize an independent union; these workers were denied union certification on the basis of a highly suspect technicality and suffered mass firings, harassment, and intimidation by factory management. Workers' attempts to resolve the violations via the appropriate legal domestic channels were unsuccessful, and so they pressed their claims in international forums. They claimed that the Mexican government was failing to enforce its own laws, which would violate NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and the related NAALC (North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation). They filed a complaint under NAALC, which led to hearings in 2004 and subsequent panel recommendations for what's called "Ministerial Consultation" – that is, the US and Canadian government officials who heard the complaints asked that their respective cabinet members for Labor meet with their Mexican counterpart to press them to resolve the situation. Such recommendations are the strongest possible remedies available under NAALC, but they failed to change the workers' situation.²⁶

How then should a reasonable US apparel consumer understand this situation? Recall that, like reciprocity, solidarity is said to be a principle of mutual benefit and then consider two kinds of US consumers. One has been so disadvantaged by the international economic system that she has no choice but to seek out the cheapest possible goods in order to get by. She might understand herself to have an interest opposed to that of the Matamoros workers in that their sweatshop wages and working conditions make it possible for her buy cheaper goods. But she can also understand herself to share an interest with the Matamoros workers in that they both require that the global economy be reformed so that they can enjoy freedom and equality within their own social worlds. The dispositional account of obligations counsels individuals to habituate their attitudes so that they recognize the potential mutual benefit of reform and so come to identify with the second desire without denying the full force of the first. But the claim of mutual benefit might prompt skepticism upon considering another, more privileged consumer – one who benefits unambiguously from the global economy as currently constituted. What benefit would a comparatively privileged party receive from being disposed to solidarity if the relevant injustice has a disproportionate effect on the other party? It might seem more rational to suffer the minor inconvenience of the injustice than the potential costs of action to further a more just arrangement. This may be so, but recall that reasonable people are said to desire for its own sake a social world in which they, as free and equal, can cooperate with others on terms all can accept. If this is the case, then the presence in my social world of unfree others – for example, sweatshop workers who reasonably reject the terms of our interactions – compromises my own freedom of action since I cannot act cooperatively as I desire. Disposing ourselves to solidarity means training ourselves to identify with solidaristic desire even when its satisfaction seems impossible to achieve through our own actions alone.²⁸

²⁶ For information on this case, see NAO Public Submission 2003-01 (Puebla), available at <http://www.dol.gov/ilab/media/reports/nao/pubrep2003-1.htm>

²⁸ Note that the possibility of mutual benefit is invoked to characterize the motivation for and desires involved in the disposition of solidarity, but this potential benefit does not normatively ground solidarity; that work is done by the natural duty of justice.

The Role of Social Movements

Even if we take this as a satisfactory (if provisional) answer to the question of benefit and motivation, this account must meet a second skeptical challenge: do we have any reason to expect others to act in solidarity so that the pattern of our actions can bring about justice? There is a concern with actions oriented to meeting the criteria of both reciprocity and solidarity that they be returned in some way; if I am to extend the presumption to distant others that they have an interest in living in some social world where they can interact with others as free and equal, I am entitled to expect the same in return. Note that this is distinct from the assurance problem that besets the traditional social contract theory of Hobbes and Locke. Their assurance problem is that it is irrational to consent to a binding contract without some expectation that others will join you in doing so, yet it is only the enforcement of the very contract in question that can provide such assurance. Rawls proposes a natural duty of justice in part to avoid this difficulty, since it holds independently of our consent. The problem here is different: the criterion of reciprocity only creates obligations among people who are reasonably entitled to expect the same in return. In an ideal closed society, well-ordered institutions supported by widespread dispositions ideally serve as a warrant for this assumption since, by definition, they support comparatively well-defined social practices and expectations.

In an international realm rich in a bewildering variety of interdependent relations and seemingly countless injustices, movements for justice and other forms of social organization which fall short of institutionalization play this important role in facilitating our political duties by providing reasonable grounds for assurance that our solidarity will be returned.³⁰ This is one of three functions social movements play in making it possible to dispose ourselves to solidarity. Participants in social movements are entitled to expect solidarity from their co-participants because such movements specify an injustice to be targeted, reduce the cost of political action by providing accessible models to emulate, and create reliable norms that can be incorporated into planning one's own projects. First, individuals appropriately concerned with inhabiting unjust relations with others face a real indeterminacy problem: from the practical perspective, an individual must decide which among the many injustices constituting the background of their relations to act against. Social movements solve this problem by focusing the number of relevant issues; while one still faces the choice of whether to take action as, for example, a member of the environmental or international labor justice movements, those movements are themselves focused on a comparatively smaller number of issues (climate change, labor standards for supply chains) and targets (government officials, corporate executives). This represents a stark reduction in the number of options one must confront. Moreover, having joined, these movements make it possible to play a role in furthering just institutions without making it necessary to be a "role entrepreneur" who must invent or discern the particular requirements of her contributing status. Finally, the organized nature of such movements provide an entitlement to assume some others will be disposed to act in solidarity and can reasonably be held accountable for their failures to do so; if you join Greenpeace but don't even bother to recycle, I can tell you that you are failing to live up to your own commitments. Both empirically and normatively, it is reasonable for me to

³⁰ For a brisk conceptual and historical overview of the nature of social movements, see Charles Tilly and Lesley J. Wood, *Social Movements, 1768-2008, 2nd Edition* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2009). For an empirical overview that highlights the breadth of organizations and activities to be found among contemporary transnational social movements, see Paul Routledge and Andrew Cumbers, *Global Justice Networks: Geographies of Transnational Solidarity* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2009).

plan my projects in a way that relies upon the assumption that social movement participants will take some actions aimed at meeting their stated objective. Participation in transnational social movements thus plays an essential role in duties of solidarity. This is not to idealize such movements inappropriately; of course, many existing social movements work for unjust ends, are ineffective at attaining their stated aims, and lack internal accountability mechanisms. However, it is to suggest that these intermediate forms of political organization are not simply an incidental feature of transnational civil society, but rather a necessary vehicle for discharging duties of solidarity and a worthy object of theoretical inquiry.

The role of transnational social movements in solidarity can be further illuminated when we recall that consideration of civil disobedience showed that individuals should be prepared to acquire additional obligations through involvement in political movements for justice, disposed to act against injustice, and attentive to the importance for justice of seeing others rightly – all without too much cost to ourselves. Let's review these three elements in turn. First, given the above argument that joining and supporting transnational social movements is a practical necessity for discharging duties of solidarity, the acquisition of distinct political obligations to others transnationally becomes more plausible. Second and consequently, certain dispositions become appropriate to those to whom we are so bound. In the case of domestic civil disobedience, individuals must be disposed to act against injustice, but the duty does not specify *a priori* what particular actions are obligatory or permissible. Similarly, meeting the criterion of solidarity requires that we dispose ourselves to actions that further just international arrangements as befits our role as social movement supporters; it does not specify what actions we must take in every case. Such decisions require invariably contextual judgment that is empirically dependent. Instead, we have a duty to train our judgment so that we take action when appropriate. Sometimes solidarity will require that I take action directly regarding the person or community with whom I am in solidarity (as when I send resources directly to someone), but other times, international solidarity will require that I take action to ensure that my own government adopt a particular foreign policy.

Finally, there is the matter of seeing others rightly. For solidarity, what is most important is that we see others as political agents even though they are not co-citizens. In particular, we should orient ourselves to their status as political agents who are our partners, even if only temporarily. The norms of social movements can be particularly helpful in this respect, as they are reinforcing of each other prior even to their complete institutionalization. This orientation toward others as having the status of *partners*, even if not co-citizens, can itself transform our dispositions. We no longer experience international politics as another drama on the television screen, but think of ourselves as engaged in a shared political enterprise with fellow human beings. In this way, solidarity acquires its own kind of stability – and its own internal dynamic which can, in some cases, lead to the strengthening of ties to the point where equal status and co-citizenship become practical and desirable, replacing the spectator and the spectacle.