RUSHING TO REVOLUTION? A SECOND LOOK AT GLOBALIZATION AND JUSTICE

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In Globalization and Justice,¹ Kai Nielsen brings his distinctive and passionate voice and considerable philosophical abilities to one of the pressing issues of our time: Is justice possible in our increasingly globalized world? Nielsen argues that it is, though the demands of justice are great, the challenges substantial, and the odds very long. Without a clear philosophical understanding of justice and a firm and focused political will, Nielsen maintains, we are likely to have globalization without justice. This is surely correct.

Nielsen advances three general theses in this book. The first is that economics and related social sciences need not shun critical theory generally or analytic Marxism in particular in order to remain social sciences. Economics is not, or need not be, compromised as a social science by virtue of grounding itself in a fundamental human interest in emancipation and thus drawing on the resources of critical theory or analytic Marxism. Setting aside the theoretical utility of critical theory or analytic Marxism, this is a version of the more general point championed most recently by Amartya Sen and others: Economies are conventional social practices and cannot be profitably studied, understood, or evaluated without reference to what they are for, and whatever else they are for, they’re for the service of

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¹ Nielsen (2003).
human interests, interests best understood in terms of human development and freedom.\textsuperscript{2} With this first thesis, I have no quarrel.

Nielsen’s second and third general theses are a bit more problematic, in my view. His second thesis affirms a complex but radically egalitarian conception of justice, one likely realizable (if at all) only through a socialist order. Nielsen argues that if we are committed to the moral equality of persons, as we should be, then we must commit ourselves to a basic social structure that treats persons as moral equals. This means committing ourselves to an egalitarian economy free of inequalities in access to productive resources, in the need to work, or in wealth and income (especially if they lead to political, economic, or social domination). With G. A. Cohen, Nielsen rejects inequalities of wealth and income consistent with Rawls’s difference principle, maintaining that there are no morally compelling reasons to depart from the egalitarian benchmark set by the moral equality of persons. In response to the “equality of what?” question, Nielsen argues for an “eclectic approach” that aspires to draw out and weave into a coherent view the diverse strands of truth running through nearly all previous answers to this question.\textsuperscript{3} He concludes that a proper answer to the “equality of what?” question must integrate coherently our sound moral concerns with equality in (at least) the acquisition of effective freedoms, the development of capabilities, the satisfaction of basic needs, access to primary goods, levels of well-being, and the overall preference satisfaction of persons.\textsuperscript{4}

No form of capitalism, not even the sort of “capitalism” permitted within a Rawlsian “property-owning democracy,” can make good on this egalitarian conception of justice.\textsuperscript{5} What is needed, then, on Nielsen’s view, is a socialist order within which all citizens are workers and no type or group of worker enjoys better life conditions than any other type or group

\textsuperscript{2} See, e.g., Sen (1999).
\textsuperscript{3} Nielsen (2003: 186).
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid. (183). One worry I shall not pursue here is whether Nielsen’s complex answer to the “equality of what?” question is (a) of the sort suitable for public political use in the general assessment of large-scale institutions, including national or global economies, and (b) much more than a laundry list of his own diverse and complex intuitions about morally offensive inequalities.
\textsuperscript{5} For a summary statement of Rawls’s “property-owning democracy,” see Rawls 2001: part IV. Rawls allows for private ownership of the means of production, for capital, in a property-owning democracy. But he requires that capital be constantly recirculated so as to prevent excessive inequalities. Rawls appears here to agree with Kymlicka that the problem with capitalism is not private ownership of the means of production, or the existence of capital as such, but rather the distribution of capital. Thus, a property-owning democracy will be “capitalist” in the sense that there will be capital, but it won’t be “capitalist” in the sense that capital is held by a single class or in the sense that the economy must be ever-expanding to satisfy the capitalist demand for profit; a property-owning democracy may aim at a steady-state economy.
of worker.\textsuperscript{6} Recognizing that no reform agenda is likely to bring about such a socialist order, Nielsen calls for a “new revolutionary militancy.”\textsuperscript{7}

Nielsen’s third general thesis extends to the global or international economic order his egalitarian conception of justice and socialist prescription. This extension is required, on his view, by the moral equality of persons and the absence of any morally relevant reason for morally equal persons to fare differently just because they live in different parts of the world or in different states. A just world, then, on Nielsen’s view, would be one within which democratic socialist states participated in a global economy that generally left individual persons around the world roughly equally well-off. This is not an impossible state of affairs, Nielsen maintains. And so we have an obligation to promote it. But this means promoting the elimination of global capitalism, since it makes the global rich richer and the global poor poorer, and in any case could never deliver to the world’s population what his cosmopolitan egalitarian conception of justice requires.\textsuperscript{8} We ought, therefore, Nielsen maintains, to promote an internationalist socialist revolution. Supporting current anti-globalization activism is a good first step, since it comes closest to putting international socialism on the political agenda. Contrary to Bhagwati and others, Nielsen finds in the anti-globalization movement a justified response to a most serious moral crisis, and a sign of hope.\textsuperscript{9}

Nielsen’s analysis throughout is rich and often illuminating. He offers a valuable taxonomy of socialist positions, deflects or refutes many common objections against some or all of them, and highlights effectively the moral imperative to bring an end to the morally unacceptable poverty and suffering, and political domination, currently the fate of a large percentage of the world’s population. But Nielsen ultimately prescribes very strong medicine, a radical reorientation of the global economy. It is medicine we ought to swallow only if we’re certain he has correctly diagnosed the ills of globalization. Of course, we cannot know that without knowing whether he has correctly set out the demands of justice and correctly described globalization and its effects. I don’t think Nielsen has done either. And so I’m not yet persuaded that the medicine he prescribes is medicine we should take. That I’m not exactly sure what the

\textsuperscript{6} Nielsen (2003: 197).
\textsuperscript{7} Nielsen (2003: 219).
\textsuperscript{8} To be sure, Nielsen concedes, “free market regulators, in the face of economic crises and militant and growing anti-globalization struggles, throw a few crumbs to the poor and the economically threatened to quiet things down” Nielsen (2003: 343-44, note 20). But these \textit{ad hoc} gestures in the direction of mutual advantage (rather than egalitarianism) are made only to secure the stability of the capitalist order itself by pacifying its most likely critics. They can hardly vindicate global capitalism as a moral matter, both because they are \textit{ad hoc} and because they are not meant to secure an egalitarian conception of justice.
\textsuperscript{9} For Bhagwati’s criticism of the anti-globalization activists, see Bhagwati (2004).
medicine he prescribes, his internationalist socialism, comes to as a matter of institutional design is a further reason to pause before swallowing his socialist pill.

Let me first indicate where Nielsen’s conception and my own less robustly cosmopolitan and generally Rawlsian conception of justice overlap. We both understand justice, domestic and global or international, to require the reduction and ultimately the elimination of that particular kind or degree of poverty incompatible with minimal decency and any possibility of a good life, a life the meaning and value of which arises out of something other than bare survival. Institutions, including economies, are made for human persons and must serve their interests. Further, we both understand justice, domestic and global, to place limits on acceptable inequalities, both political and economic. Inequalities properly characterized as relations of exploitation, domination, and oppression are always unjust, again whether domestic or global. Further still, we both affirm something like Rawls’s difference principle as expressing a necessary (though Nielsen would insist insufficient) limit on domestic inequalities. Here, however, I think Nielsen and I part ways.

In the domestic case, I accept as permissible economic inequalities that are consistent with the genuine political equality of citizens, and I think economic inequalities consistent with Rawls’s two principles are just such inequalities, at least in what Rawls calls “a property-owning democracy.” In the global or international case, I accept as permissible a range of inequalities, both within and between states, subject to a moral minimum below which no state or person ought to be allowed to fall. This is not because I regard inequalities in violation of the difference principle as just. It is rather because I regard the fundamental question when theorizing international relations to be one of setting out the legitimate uses of coercive state power within the international arena. And I do not think it a legitimate use of coercive (even if non-military) state power for one state to bring another state into compliance with the difference principle or any other egalitarian conception of domestic justice more demanding than the moral minimum that must be met by all states to constitute themselves within the international arena as bodies politic deserving recognition respect and hence a right to self-determination. Nor do I see how the difference principle or any other egalitarian conception of justice could be enforced as between states short of something functionally equivalent to a world state (with legislative, executive, and judicial powers). In the international context, then, I think the key requirement is the moral minimum that must be met by any state entitled to international recognition as a legitimate body politic entitled to self-determination and a right to resist and be free of coercive (even if non-military) intervention.

To meet this moral minimum, a state must secure for all its members basic human rights, including rights of political dissent, and constitute
itself as a well-ordered system of social cooperation mutually advantageous for them. This will involve securing the rule of law, a political system aimed at, and sincerely defended by officials in terms of, the common good, and much else. States unable to achieve this moral minimum are morally entitled to the necessary aid (or, if able but unwilling, are vulnerable to intervention) from those states already meeting it. While the point cannot be developed here, I assume that a state’s capacities for aid (or intervention) are among the criteria relevant to determining its obligations to aid (or intervene in) those societies not meeting the moral minimum.

Each state or people meeting this moral minimum and otherwise well-ordered will have its own understanding of the limits on permissible inequalities within it. Of course, many of these understandings will be wrong-headed and there is no reason to doubt that liberal democratic peoples, with their more egalitarian conceptions of justice, are more reasonable in their conceptions of domestic justice than less egalitarian peoples. But no people or state need constitute itself as a liberal democracy, or satisfy Rawls’s two principles or any other egalitarian distributive principles, to qualify as a corporate moral agent, a body politic, deserving recognition respect within international relations and thus a right to self-determination. There is nothing inconsistent about being committed to liberal democratic justice (including economic justice) at home, or even for all peoples, and insisting as a matter of legitimate international relations on the freedom of other peoples to determine their own internal distributions of goods, economic and otherwise, as they see fit (so long as they meet the moral minimum). If by international or global economic justice we mean to refer to that which may be legitimately and justly enforced against all states (even if only through non-military coercion, e.g., economic sanctions and so on), then international or global economic justice requires of all peoples no particular internal distribution of goods beyond the moral minimum set by basic human rights (which is, it must be emphasized, higher than basic subsistence and security) and well-orderedness (which includes the rule of law and much else).

Nor does it require any particular distributive pattern between peoples, so long as the general conditions of free and fair trade, and thus mutual advantage against morally acceptable background conditions, are secured. These conditions include, of course, reliable institutional constraints on monopolies, cartels, oligopolies and the like, as well as institutions of mutual assistance to insure that basic human rights and well-orderedness are secured always within and for all peoples. But with these conditions secured, peoples should be free to trade or undertake cooperative ventures as they see fit, pursuing different goods, including different levels of economic well-being, patterns of investment, and the like. That the per capita GDP of one well-ordered people is twice that of another is not by itself cause for moral alarm since it may simply reflect
different political decisions by different bodies politic regarding the order of values within the common good.\textsuperscript{10}

What economic justice demands at the global or international level, then, is, first, a massive transfer of aid, material, cultural, political and the like, to bring all societies to decency and well-orderedness, and then, second, cooperative international institutions reliably able to secure the conditions of free and fair trade in perpetuity. Nielsen is absolutely correct when he complains against the massive global poverty (and other failures of decency and well-orderedness) that still exists today in many countries, as well as against corruption and failures in the international institutions intended (often explicitly so by their Charters) to secure the conditions of free and fair trade. The trouble of course is that one need affirm no more than the generally Rawlsian views sketched above to arrive (as indeed I do) at these evaluative judgments. But the generally Rawlsian views sketched above are much too weak a brew for Nielsen. Nielsen and I both condemn the status quo as morally unacceptable. But the standards by which Nielsen grounds his condemnation are far more demanding than my own, and thus his prescriptions rather more radical.

Nielsen affirms a robustly and radically egalitarian individualist cosmopolitanism according to which all human beings, by virtue of their moral equality, are entitled to global institutions within and through which they each and all do roughly equally as well as one another. While he acknowledges the need for individual states and the value of national self-determination, states and collective self-determination are presumably to be subordinated to these demands of cosmopolitan egalitarian justice.

The structure of Nielsen’s argument here is familiar. All persons have, \textit{qua} persons, equal moral worth. Since the institutions comprising the global economy are conventional and morally fundamental, all persons must be taken, by virtue of their equal moral worth, to stand in the same relationship to those institutions and thus have the same basic claims on it. Absent compelling moral reasons for thinking otherwise consistent with their moral equality, all persons are, then, morally entitled to the same share of goods within the global economy. Since there are no such compelling reasons, the cosmopolitan egalitarian conclusion follows.

I do not find this argument at all convincing. I agree with Nielsen that all persons \textit{qua} persons have equal moral value or a basic moral standing. This is no doubt true.\textsuperscript{11} But Nielsen’s cosmopolitan egalitarianism does

\textsuperscript{10} For a fuller statement and defense of my generally Rawlsian views, see Reidy (2004; 2005), and Reidy (n.d.). For Rawls’s own statement on international or global justice, see his Rawls 1999.

\textsuperscript{11} Though it bears emphasizing that persons may have \textit{qua} persons equal moral value but have very unequal moral value in terms of their lives lived or their character traits and dispositions as developed.
not follow from this axiological premise alone. For his egalitarianism is a claim about the obligations persons owe one another and the structure of the institutions they must or may create for themselves. That all persons possess some basic equal moral worth \textit{qua} persons may surely figure into an adequate account of why we have the egalitarian obligations to one another he claims, but it cannot by itself constitute such an account. There is nothing inconsistent in my affirming that all persons possess an equal moral worth as persons and insisting that for a variety of non-arbitrary reasons I nevertheless have different obligations to different persons and no general obligation to treat all persons equally or to promote a global socialist order. Perhaps in the absence of any other reasons for treating persons differently (or affirming institutions that treat persons differently), I might have some sort of default obligation to treat all others equally or promote global socialist institutions. But I, like everyone else I suspect, already have other reasons for treating different people differently and refraining from spending my time and effort promoting the institutions of global socialism. At the very least, I (like everyone else) find myself already implicated in a range of relationships pregnant with obligations, from family to state. That I am a citizen of this state, subject to its coercive force and able to participate uniquely in its development and political determination, underwrites my treating my fellow compatriots differently than those persons with whom I share no such relationship. Indeed, that you are a citizen of your state subject to its coercive force underwrites my, or my state’s, respect for the self-determination of the body politic to which you belong, provided it meets the moral minimum outlined above.

The trouble with Nielsen’s argument is that he needs to invoke additional premises to connect the moral equality of persons with his cosmopolitan egalitarian conclusion. Consider the domestic case in a liberal democracy where Nielsen and I agree that some sort of egalitarianism is morally required (whether of the Rawlsian sort or the more demanding sort required by Nielsen and G. A. Cohen). In that case, the additional premises needed to arrive at the egalitarian conclusion are provided by a shared understanding of citizenship according to which the relationship between persons as moral equals and the body politic to which they belong is unmediated by any other antecedent memberships or obligations. Without the addition of this shared conception of citizenship (and the solidarity suggested by its being shared), it is not possible to argue from the moral equality of persons, which is, after all, just an axiological premise, to an egalitarian conception of domestic justice.

Nielsen might insist, of course, that this conception of citizenship uniquely follows from an axiological commitment to the moral equality of persons \textit{qua} persons. But this seems implausible. The liberal democratic conception of citizenship is, I think, a particular historical development, with its own preconditions and trajectory. It is a conception consistent with
the moral equality of persons and (let us suppose) more reasonable or just than alternative conceptions. But it is not a conception that can be deduced or otherwise uniquely determined by the axiological commitment to the moral equality of persons alone. And in the absence of this, it is hard to see how Nielsen thinks he can justify imposing it on those societies that claim to give a different and not thoroughly unreasonable political or institutional content to the moral equality of persons. In any case, if Nielsen thinks the liberal democratic conception of citizenship can be justified from an appeal to the moral equality of persons alone, he needs to set out the reasoning.

Now consider the global case. Even if we affirm correctly the equal moral value of all persons on Earth qua persons, the fact is that we do not find or understand ourselves as individuals confronting one another as morally free and equal individuals whose relationship to the global basic structure is unmediated by any other memberships or obligations with prior claims on us. We do not find or understand ourselves to be citizens of the world. If we belong to a decent and well-ordered people, certainly if we belong to a liberal democratic people, then we stand before the global basic structure already a part of institutional arrangements and with obligations that have a prior claim on us; we stand before the global basic structure already subject to our domestic political obligations. Appeals to the moral equality of all persons on Earth may set limits, especially minimal standards, we think essential to a just global basic structure. But they cannot by themselves justify the cosmopolitan egalitarian conclusion. Further, appeals to the effects of the global basic structure are beside the point here. If we belong to a decent and well-ordered people, and certainly if we belong to a liberal democratic people, these effects are mediated by domestic political institutions over which we have some significant control. So there is no reason to privilege the relationship between the individual and the global basic structure over the relationship between the individual and his or her domestic basic structure.

If there are “citizens of the world,” they would appear to be those bodies politic entitled, by virtue of their well-orderedness and commitment to basic human rights, to recognition respect and self-determination within a just and legitimate the international order. It is, after all, they that stand in an unmediated relationship with the global basic structure. If any “persons” have a claim, analogous to that of liberal democratic citizens in the domestic case, to equal treatment within the international order, it is well-ordered peoples. This suggests an alternative argument for a global egalitarianism now cast in terms of the relations between peoples or states rather than individual persons, a global egalitarianism within which the difference principle or some other egalitarian constraint limits the inequalities between peoples or states, rather than individual persons. But this path is clear only if well-ordered peoples or states stand in the
roughly the same relationship to the global basic structure as individual persons stand to their domestic basic structures. And here I have my doubts. To be sure, there is a global basic structure and its effects can be far-reaching. But peoples, as corporate moral agents, enjoy, I think, a degree of independence from one another that individual persons do not. For example, it is possible to imagine a people existing in perpetuity as a corporate moral agent apart from any relations with other peoples, since a people can in principle generate internally the material and moral conditions of its existence as a corporate moral agent. This is not true for individual human persons. Further, in the absence of a world state with a monopoly on legitimate coercive force, the global basic structure necessarily lacks the unity of its domestic analogue.

Mill, Kant, Rawls, and Nielsen all affirm the basic equal moral worth of all persons qua persons. I do too. Yet only Nielsen arrives at a radically egalitarian cosmopolitan conception of justice. This surely is not because only he understands the axiological commitment we all share. It’s rather because that commitment does not by itself entail any particular substantive conception of justice as uniquely reasonable. To be sure, it may by itself justify certain moral minimums. But if we’re to arrive at a conception of justice the content of which is to govern inequalities and to be legitimately enforceable against all peoples in the world, we will need to appeal to more than this axiological commitment. Nielsen thinks that we need appeal to no more than the moral equality of all persons and the conventional nature of global institutional arrangements to arrive at such a conception of justice. I have tried to set out the basis for some of my misgivings here.

One of the interesting features of Nielsen’s argument in *Globalization and Justice* is that if his description of globalization, or global capitalism, and its effects is correct, one need not endorse his radically egalitarian cosmopolitan conception of justice to be warranted in condemning it. If Nielsen’s descriptive and explanatory account is correct, even Rawlsians like myself have good reasons to condemn globalization or global capitalism, perhaps even to work toward an internationalist socialist revolutionary movement. But I don’t think Nielsen’s description or explanation is correct.

On Nielsen’s view, the globalization of capitalism has exacerbated indecent kinds and degrees of deprivation and poverty, and has made the rich richer and the poor poorer. It has not only exacerbated inequality, it has failed to deliver mutual advantage. There is no rising tide. The explanation for this, on Nielsen’s view, is to be found primarily in the nature of capitalism itself.

We need to be clear here about what we mean by capitalism. Nielsen seems to mean not just private ownership of the means of production and a market economy, but the systemic subordination of all political
judgments and initiatives to the logic of capitalist economic necessity. That is, Nielsen seems to take it for granted that where there is private ownership of the means of production and a market economy, political initiatives are inevitably constrained by economic considerations, specifically those tied to the interests of the owners of capital, rather than the other way around. It’s always and inevitably profits before people.

This is a familiar thesis about capitalism and domination. If it’s true, then Nielsen is correct that there is little or no hope for our collectively realizing even the modest demands of justice that he and I, and I suspect all reasonable people, share unless we fully free ourselves of capitalism. I take it as obvious that for economies organized around capital and labor markets with private ownership of the means of production there will be a need for political initiatives and regulation to deal with market failures, secure collective goods, provide an adequate social minimum, and guarantee simple mutual advantage (the rising tide) over time, and so on. Of course, if we also aim to secure something like Rawls’s difference principle over time, we’ll need yet more political initiative and regulation. But the point here is that even if we’re concerned only to sustain a free and fair market economy with a floor below which no one need fall, we’ll need to insist on the priority of the political over the economic in the domain of political economy. And if capitalism always yields the complete subordination of the political to the economic, then, it is hard to see how even minimal justice is to be reliably secured within a capitalist order.

Capitalist domination theses are interesting, of course, only if they are not merely definitional, only if they’re offered as empirical, descriptive and explanatory, claims about economic systems where the means of production are privately owned and capital and labor markets are generally robust and open. And surely Nielsen means to offer his capitalist domination thesis in this spirit. Indeed, this is one place where the work he does in the first part of the book bears directly on his arguments in the latter two thirds. But taken as an empirical, descriptive, and explanatory thesis, the capitalist domination thesis would surely require a great deal of argument and analysis to establish. Indeed, before we could even begin to assess the evidence for the thesis, we would need to get clear on the relevant concepts (power, economic causality, etc.) involved. The tallness of this order alone no doubt accounts for the general view that while in capitalist societies the interests of capital often influence political processes, from agenda setting to outcome determination, it remains unclear (i) the extent to which they do so; (ii) the extent to which they do so in a way that trumps other influences, (iii) the extent to which they do all this inevitably or reliably, and (iv) the extent to which the explanation for their primacy in political processes thus lies in structural features of capitalism itself. I don’t mean to deny critical theory or analytic Marxism its due here. I mean only to suggest that given the state of research in this area, I’m inclined to
think that the jury is still out on the capitalist domination thesis Nielsen relies upon. Nielsen offers no evidence or argument beyond the familiar and often legitimate complaints about the political power of capital to suggest that the capitalist domination is true. Of course, if the capitalist domination thesis is true, I am anti-capitalist, as I hope would be anyone who believed that economies are human artifacts that properly must serve the political ends of the persons participating in them.\footnote{For an overview of the literature on the capitalist domination thesis, see Dahl (1989: ch. 19).}

Nielsen is driven to the capitalist domination thesis, I suspect, because it seems the most plausible explanation for what he takes to be the relevant descriptive facts: increasing misery worldwide, with the rich getting richer and the poor poorer. But here Nielsen now faces an empirical difficulty. While on several measures global economic inequality has grown substantially in recent decades (though even here the matter turns in part on which frame and which metric one uses), matters are less obvious with respect to absolute poverty and mutual advantage. The percentage of the world’s population in deep poverty is declining, even if absolute numbers continue to rise with population growth. Moreover, globally many indicators are improving – health, longevity, education, infant mortality, and the like. To be sure, much of sub-Saharan Africa is an exception here. But it is unlikely that markets and private ownership of the means of production, whether domestically or globally, is primarily to blame for this. The relevant causes must surely include weak political and legal institutions, high degrees of scarcity and conflict (in part exacerbated by the morally unacceptable failure of wealthy, decent states to make good on their aid obligations), corrupt leadership and so on. Of course, one might argue that these are the inevitable fruits of markets and private ownership of the means of production. But how would one make good on that claim without simply assuming the capitalist domination thesis?

Nielsen’s empirical claims are less than certain even with respect to mere mutual advantage, the less egalitarian and less controversial measure of global justice. The Asian tiger economies were able over the last several decades to integrate themselves into the global economic order and secure mutual advantage, and the same would appear to be likely as time unfolds for India and China. The economies of China, India, Bangladesh, Chile, Pakistan, Botswana, Ireland and Egypt and many others have all grown more in the last twenty years than the economy of the United States.\footnote{See the table of GDP grown rates for the years 1980–2000 at http://www.nationmaster.com/graph-T/eco.gdp.gro.198. In general, the patterns of inequality between states over the last several decades are vastly more complex than either the “rich get richer while the poor get poorer” model or the “the rich get richer and richer faster and faster while the poor get ever so slightly richer at an incredibly slow pace” model suggest.}
are over time, of course, ups and downs, gains and setbacks, mistakes and lessons learned, but overall it is not obvious that in these cases integration into a global economy organized around commodity, capital and labor markets with private ownership of the means of production has been something other than mutually advantageous for all.¹⁴

Much needs to be done to reduce and ultimately eliminate the kinds and degrees of deprivation and poverty in the world inconsistent with moral status of persons and thus indecent. And much needs to be done to secure in a more regular and reliable way mutually advantageous economic relations both domestically within all states and internationally between all states. But the historical record provides little reason for thinking that we need global socialism, even less a revolutionary global socialism, to accomplish these goals. We surely need to hold the WTO, IMF, World Bank, and a host of other international agencies to their charters, and perhaps in some instances to revise charters. And we need to hold states to their treaty obligations, and in some cases perhaps revise those treaty obligations. And we in the developed world need to honor our duties of aid to impoverished societies and be more imaginative and careful in how we undertake to do so. And we must be prepared to act in the name of basic human rights where national leaders fail to do so. Finally, we need to develop a richer institutional framework for dealing with issues of corrective justice in the international setting, whether issues of reparations for historical injustices or of contemporary transactional injustice. All these things we need to do. And all of them we can do without global socialism.

REFERENCES


¹⁴ For two recent and readable discussions of the empirical evidence, see Singer (2002: ch. 3); and Fischer (2003: 1–30). Both Singer and Fischer, persons very different in their training and moral orientation, make clear the following: (a) While the number of persons living globally in absolute poverty continues to rise, the percentage of the world’s population living in absolute poverty continues to fall, having been roughly halved in the last 25 years; (b) While international economic inequalities have risen substantially in recent decades, it’s unclear what the results would have been under alternative conditions – for example, international economic inequalities might in fact have been yet larger still in the absence of robust global trade, opening markets, etc.; (c) While some portion of the world’s poor have literally been made worse off in recent decades, it is not clear that this is the result of global capitalism rather than non-economic causes (political instability, ethnic and nationalist fighting, AIDS, etc.).