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Volume 8, numéro 2, automne 2013

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1021342ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1021342ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Centre de recherche en éthique de l'Université de Montréal

ISSN

1718-9977 (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Macleod, C. M. (2013). Gilabert on the Feasibility of Global Justice. *Les ateliers de l'éthique / The Ethics Forum*, 8(2), 97–109. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1021342ar>

Résumé de l'article

Dans cet article, je traite de l'analyse de la faisabilité de la justice mondiale élaborée par Pablo Gilabert dans son récent ouvrage, *From Global Poverty to Global Equality: A Philosophical Exploration*. Les contributions de Gilabert sur cette question sont nombreuses et précieuses, et je suis en grande partie d'accord avec son analyse. J'identifie cependant une distinction, que Gilabert néglige, entre la justification stratégique et la justification morale. Je montre en quoi cette distinction est utile dans le traitement des objections relatives à la faisabilité de la justice mondiale. Je soutiens également que certaines des hypothèses émises par Gilabert quant à l'exigence morale propre à la justice mondiale sont problématiques.



GILABERT ON THE FEASIBILITY OF GLOBAL JUSTICE

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I discuss the analysis of the feasibility of global justice developed by Pablo Gilabert in his recent book *From Global Poverty to Global Equality: A Philosophical Exploration*. Gilabert makes many valuable contributions to this topic and I agree with most of his analysis. However, I identify a distinction between strategic justification and moral justification that Gilabert neglects. I show how this distinction is useful in addressing objections to the feasibility of global justice. I also claim that Gilabert makes some problematic assumptions concerning the way in which global justice is morally demanding.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans cet article, je traite de l'analyse de la faisabilité de la justice mondiale élaborée par Pablo Gilabert dans son récent ouvrage, *From Global Poverty to Global Equality: A Philosophical Exploration*. Les contributions de Gilabert sur cette question sont nombreuses et précieuses, et je suis en grande partie d'accord avec son analyse. J'identifie cependant une distinction, que Gilabert néglige, entre la justification stratégique et la justification morale. Je montre en quoi cette distinction est utile dans le traitement des objections relatives à la faisabilité de la justice mondiale. Je soutiens également que certaines des hypothèses émises par Gilabert quant à l'exigence morale propre à la justice mondiale sont problématiques.

Pablo Gilabert's excellent new book *From Global Poverty to Global Equality: A Philosophical Exploration* (Gilabert 2012) articulates and defends a compelling account of global justice. Gilabert draws on the resources of Scanlonian contractualism to justify a humanist conception of global justice that requires not only the elimination of extreme poverty but also the establishment of a global egalitarian order in which "everyone has equal access to certain important advantages" (Gilabert 2012: 4). Although theorists of many different stripes have acknowledged the moral importance of dramatically reducing the worst forms of global poverty, ideals of global egalitarian justice have been met with greater resistance, even from liberal political philosophers who endorse egalitarian principles of distributive justice within states.¹ Gilabert's book is a welcome addition to the growing body of literature that challenges the normative coherency of confining egalitarian distributive ideals to states.² The fact that we live in a world marked by a great deal of extreme poverty, along with the unwillingness of powerful political elites to adopt and pursue policies that could rapidly reduce global poverty often gives rise to doubts about the practicality of Gilabert's brand of global egalitarianism.³ The seeming enormity of the task of significantly reducing poverty, let alone achieving anything approaching global equality seems, to many, to threaten the feasibility of wide ranging conceptions of global justice. Perhaps poverty elimination is an admirable goal but given the deep obstacles to its achievement, it should not be represented as a demand of justice. Similarly, the requirements of global distributive equality are thought to impose impossibly heavy demands on the global rich and outstrip the capacities of realistic institutions. In the face of this kind of skepticism, one of the especially attractive dimensions of Gilabert's discussion is that it addresses the feasibility of global justice in a systematic and sustained fashion. In this paper, I will consider some of Gilabert's contributions to illuminating what is involved in assessing the feasibility of global justice. I am broadly sympathetic to the position Gilabert develops so my remarks are mainly aimed at clarifying and probing some issues raised by his analysis.

Gilabert's analysis of the feasibility of global justice is presented in two chapters. Chapter four – 'The feasibility of global poverty eradication in nonideal circumstances' – focuses on feasibility issues associated with elimination of absolute poverty (basic global justice).⁴ Chapter seven – 'The feasibility of global equality' – takes up the feasibility of global egalitarianism (non basic justice).⁵ Gilabert does not analyze the feasibility of particular policy proposals about either the elimination of absolute poverty or the establishment of global egalitarianism. Rather his principal aim is to analyze the concept of feasibility with a view to understanding the precise character of reservations or objections to global justice that purport to be grounded in the idea that pursuing global justice is not feasible. On Gilabert's view, a proper appreciation of the nature of feasibility tends to blunt the force of many hasty dismissals of ideals of global justice – whether basic or non-basic – as infeasible. Along the way, Gilabert makes many valuable observations and distinctions that enrich our understanding of what is at stake in evaluating the feasibility of either a duty to eradicate poverty or a global conception of egalitarian distributive justice. I will not attempt to

reconstruct all facets of Gilabert's analysis but I want to highlight three valuable contributions to current debates about the feasibility of global justice that Gilabert makes.

First, Gilabert emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between different "domains" (Gilabert 2012: 120) in which feasibility issues can be raised. Gilabert points out that we must be careful not to conflate the question of whether an ideal of justice is *accessible* with the question of whether implementing the ideal would be *stable*. He plausibly contends that the issue of whether an ideal of global justice – either basic or non-basic – can be feasibly be accessed is more pressing than whether an ideal is stable. This is especially true of our assessment of the ideal of eliminating global poverty. Given that poverty elimination requires only modest resource redistribution, there seems little reason to doubt that a world without dire poverty can be stable. Moreover, the special moral urgency that attaches to poverty relief makes it likely that a decent institutional regime that eliminated poverty would enjoy widespread endorsement and thus would be stable. The more interesting and practically important matter concerns the feasibility of *accessing* or implementing the ideal from our present very unjust circumstances. Injustice can present various formidable obstacles to implementing ideals of justice that once implemented are very stable.⁶

Second, Gilabert argues that when we think about our duties to realize ideals of global justice we should adopt a *transitional standpoint* that is attentive to the ways in which the "institutional and cultural environment" (Gilabert 2012: 145) that agents inhabit is changing and changeable. From this standpoint we need not view the possibilities for achieving justice as defined by existing institutional arrangements and constraints. Yet we need not suppose that we possess a fully worked out "blue print for desirable and feasible institutional schemes" (Gilabert 2012: 145). Adopting the transitional standpoint allows us to recognize that there are not only duties to bring about justice directly but also "dynamic duties" (Gilabert 2012: 137) to adopt strategies that make the achievement of global justice more feasible. Acknowledging the relevance of dynamic duties allows us to appreciate different facets of political activity aimed at achieving global justice. We can act not only to implement an ideal – e.g., by enacting policies that realize basic human rights – but also in ways that make the achievement of ideals that are not currently fully realizable more realizable in the future – e.g., by pursuing strategies that improve the conditions for the adoption of policies that can realize human rights. This means that even if a demand of justice (e.g., universal access to good education and health care) is not currently accessible, we cannot conclude that it is infeasible *tout court* and that we can justifiably abandon its pursuit. Instead, we may have a duty to generate social and political conditions hospitable to the realization of human rights. Fulfillment of this kind of 'dynamic duty' can thereby render an ideal of global justice more feasible than it currently is.⁷

Third, Gilabert rightly conceives of poverty relief as "unambiguously a matter of distributive *justice*" (Gilabert 2012: 128). The global poor who lack access to

the material and social conditions of dignity are deprived of resources to which they have a justice-based entitlement. Discharging the duty to relieve global poverty should not be conceived as a matter of beneficence or as a laudable but *optional* “humanitarian goal” (Gilabert 2012: 128). Similarly, the ideal of global equality is an ideal of distributive justice. To the degree that the ideal is sound, those who are denied equal access to “important advantages” are denied resources to which they are entitled. Moreover, those who have more than equal access to important advantages (at the expense of those with less) enjoy resources to which they have no just entitlement.

Gilabert does not emphasize this latter point but as I will explain below, I think it has implications for how we interpret the idea that global egalitarianism might be infeasible on the grounds that it is an unduly demanding ideal. To the degree that we think that goals of poverty elimination or global egalitarianism are very burdensome (for those who are currently well-off) and yet are not stringent demands of justice, we may be inclined to think that pursuing them is not feasible because doing so would impose unreasonable costs on the well-off. Our moral calculus about what are feasible burdens to bear can be influenced by our sense of the moral gravity of the ideal that imposes burdens on us. Gilabert allows that feasibility considerations can have a bearing on whether a purported ideal of justice is justifiable. But as I show below his analysis neglects an important distinction between different kinds of justification. To set the stage for my critique, some general remarks about feasibility and practical deliberation may be helpful.

1. FEASIBILITY, JUSTIFICATION AND STRATEGY

In many contexts of practical deliberation we reject a course of action on the grounds that it is not feasible. Usually this means that the action in question violates some parameter that we take as a more or less fixed constraint on acceptable action. I may want to buy a new guitar and a new car this month but making both purchases is not financially feasible given my budget for discretionary spending. Sometimes the infeasibility in question is a matter of literal impossibility. Perhaps the combined cost of the guitar and car simply outstrips all the money I can lay my hands on this month, no matter what. Often, however, the infeasibility does not involve literal impossibility but rather is grounded in the fact that some possible options have been decisively ruled out on other grounds. For example, perhaps I could buy the guitar and the car if I sold my house or if I embezzled money from the university. I view these possible ways of facilitating the purchases as unacceptable (e.g., too costly or wrong) rather than actually impossible. In a related vein, I may rule out some possible strategies for achieving my end as unacceptable because, though possible, the probability that they will succeed is too remote. Spending my money on a lottery tickets could yield the money needed to buy both items but because it’s so unlikely to succeed, I regard it as an unacceptable strategy. There is an important difference between saying a proposed plan of action is infeasible because it is (virtually) impossible and saying it is infeasible because pursuing it would violate acceptable parameters on action (e.g., it would wrong or too risky). In the former case, we

cannot coherently adopt the plan. In the latter case, adoption of the plan can be coherent if we are prepared to revise our views about the acceptability parameters. This point about parameters is worth keeping in mind because in some contexts we may conflate different senses of feasibility.

Gilbert recognizes that a familiar challenge to ideals of global justice, whether basic or non-basic, is that they are not feasible. But what exactly is the challenge? We cannot say that there is a duty to relieve poverty if the socioeconomic human rights on which this purported duty depends cannot be fulfilled. Similarly, we cannot endorse global egalitarianism as an ideal of justice if the institutions requisite to securing equal access to important goods are unrealizable or unacceptably costly. It is extremely doubtful that meeting the human rights of the global poor with basic socioeconomic resources is impossible. The ideal of non-basic justice is clearly neither logically nor nomologically impossible and it's doubtful that global egalitarianism is impossible in either of these senses. So we cannot claim that either ideal is unjustified because its adoption is incoherent due to a violation of the principle 'ought implies can'. Successful feasibility objections to the claim that basic human rights have socioeconomic dimensions or that justice requires global equality must depend on a different construal of feasibility. Here it is important to distinguish between the question of whether feasibility considerations show an ideal to be *unjustified* as a claim about justice and the question of whether feasibility considerations affect the political goals and strategies we should adopt in pursuit of an ideal of justice.

Consider the following example. At the time of the American civil war, justice required both the abolition of slavery and the full extension of equal political rights to African Americans (and to women and other unjustly excluded groups). However, given prevailing racism of the time political advocacy of these ideals was likely to frustrate achievement of both of them. Whereas the abolition of slavery was politically feasible, the recognition of full political equality was not. Of course, the principal obstacle to political equality was the *unjustified and mutable* racist attitudes of the white majority. Whereas enough racists could accept the elimination of slavery to make its advocacy politically feasible, there was insufficient recognition of the real demands of justice to permit the political recognition of full political equality. Given this sad state of affairs, it arguably made sense from a strategic point of view for supporters of political equality only to press for the elimination of slavery. Note, however, that this strategic calculation had no bearing on whether political equality was a genuine demand of justice at the time. (There was no 'hard' parameter that rendered full political equality impossible.) I raise this point because I think some of Gilbert's discussion of feasibility objections to ideals of global justice equivocates between issues of *moral justification* and issues of *strategic justification*. Let me explain.

Gilbert introduces a distinction between the 'ought of actual obligation' and the 'ought of moral desirability'. "One can interpret the claim that 'everyone ought to have enough to eat' as linked to a set of duties on the part of a set of agents to see to it that everyone has enough to eat. Alternatively, one can inter-

pret it as simply saying that a world in which everyone had enough to eat would, in a certain respect, be a just world. We can call the first ought the ‘ought of actual obligation’ and the second the ‘ought of moral desirability’ ” (Gilabert 2012: 115). Gilabert says that feasibility considerations primarily apply to ‘the ought of actual obligation’. It is feasibility worries about ideals of global justice as ‘oughts of actual obligation’ that Gilabert mainly wants to address. In the civil war case, it is clear that both kinds of oughts are operative: it was both desirable that political equality be established and agents had an actual obligation to bring about political equality. The actual obligation to bring about political equality was genuine even if racist attitudes prevented its realization. Simplifying matters a bit, racists had an actual obligation to give up their racism and support political equality.

Yet Gilabert seems to allow that an unusual type of feasibility consideration could, in principle, affect our *actual* obligation to end poverty. Thus following Amartya Sen, Gilabert allows that the degree to which an ideal of justice has “social influenceability” affects whether it is *justified*. A human rights claim can be defeated on this view if the view lacks sufficient social influenceability. Here social influenceability is understood as a measure of the receptiveness of people to a putative ideal of justice. Applied to the American civil war case, full political equality had low social influenceability because the majority of Americans, especially a majority who wielded political power, were not receptive to political equality. Gilabert holds that social influenceability affects judgements concerning *actual obligations*. In this context, Gilabert approvingly cites James Nickel’s feasibility test that holds that “a necessary condition for the justification of a specific right is the possibility of successfully implementing in an ample majority of countries today” (Gilabert 2012: 135). Gilabert suggests some modest tweaks to Nickel’s proposal but he endorses its basic thrust.⁸ However in Gilabert’s discussion, there is an equivocation about whether social influenceability is relevant to the moral justification of ideals of global justice or only to strategic justification about how to pursue them. On the one hand, to the degree he is following Nickel’s lead, Gilabert seems to accept the claim that social influenceability can affect the moral justification of a human rights claim. On the other hand, he says that the criterion of social influenceability reflected in his revised feasibility test determines whether “a certain moral demand be at the foreground of global political agenda” (Gilabert 2012: 136). This sounds like a point about strategic justification rather than moral justification.

It’s doubtful that Gilabert’s revised feasibility test is actually relevant to the moral justification of ideals but it could be relevant to strategic justification. Consider the civil war case. Does the fact that the ideal of political equality had very low social influenceability in nineteenth century America have any bearing on whether it is an ideal of justice that yielded actual obligations to establish political equality? I don’t think so. But, in such a context, low social influenceability probably does affect strategic justification. Perhaps in the context of prevailing racism, the justified ideal of political equality was not best served by putting it in the foreground of a political agenda. But that does not mean that

there was not an *actual* obligation to establish political equality or that racists did not have an *actual* duty to support political equality. Similarly, in current political circumstances the (apparently) low social influenceability of socioeconomic human rights does not, in my view, tell us anything about whether they are justified and generate *actual* obligations for individuals and groups today. But consideration of low social influenceability may tell us something about what strategies for the realization of such human rights are appropriate today and in the foreseeable future. The general worry is that Gilabert's adoption of the social influenceability standard runs the risk of conflating moral and strategic justification.

2. MOTIVATION AND FEASIBILITY

A related ambiguity arises in Gilabert's discussion of what he calls the 'motivational argument' against global justice. Although he does not think it is ultimately successful, Gilabert thinks the following argument poses a serious challenge to his conception of global justice.

- (1) An institutional scheme instituting duties of distributive justice is feasible only if those to whom it applies share a sense of mutual commitment or solidarity with each other.
- (2) People do not share a sense of mutual commitment or solidarity with distant strangers.
- (3) Therefore, it is not reasonable to advocate schemes of global justice (Gilabert 2012: 141)⁹

Notice that the conclusion here is naturally read as a claim about *strategic* rather than *moral* justification. It does not say that schemes of global justice are actually *unjustified*. Instead the point is only that advocacy is problematic.¹⁰ As such, it's hard to see how the argument poses any challenge to a conception of global justice viewed as specifying actual obligations of agents. At best this argument raises strategic issues about how to discharge our duties of global justice. It gives us no reason to deny that we have such duties. Yet the point of raising motivational concerns in the first place is, it seems, to challenge global justice as an ideal with practical import.

Moreover, at least as it is presented, it is difficult to see how the argument provides a credible claim about strategic justification. Note that premise (2) does not say that people *cannot* share a sense of mutual commitment with distant others. It only says that they *do not*. So at the very least a premise is missing. In order for the argument to generate the conclusion, we would have to add something like:

- (2.1) Advocating schemes of global justice makes no contribution to (or perhaps undermines) the cultivation in people of a sense of mutual commitment or solidarity of people with distant strangers.

On the face of it premise (2.1) does not seem very plausible. So it's not clear why we should view the motivational argument as identifying a credible objection to

a conception of global justice of the sort favoured by Gilabert. More generally, I think feasibility considerations only really challenge Gilabert's ideals of global justice as yielding actual obligations if such considerations can be shown to render global justice impractical in a deep sense, namely as violating well-established and more or less immutable nomological constraints concerning human nature and associated limits on possible institutional design. The fact that a purported moral duty does not *currently* motivate people does not show that there is no such duty. So critics of global egalitarianism who appeal to motivational considerations need to present compelling evidence that (most) people *cannot* be motivated by ideals of egalitarian justice.

In my view, the greatest obstacles to global justice are rooted in facts about mutable moral and political attitudes of the global rich and powerful.¹¹ If more affluent people endorsed global justice politically then we would not think there are deep obstacles to its achievement. But we cannot use the fact that most affluent people do not endorse global justice as a reason for thinking that it is not feasible. I think that for the most part Gilabert would endorse this view. But there is some ambiguity as to whether he thinks that the *de facto* moral and political attitudes of people can challenge the justifiability of global justice and hence its feasibility.

3. FEASIBILITY AND DEMANDINGNESS

In my view, many so-called feasibility challenges to global egalitarian justice are not really concerns about whether it is *possible* to implement institutions requisite for global equality. Rather the focus of reservations is really on the very different idea that the implementation of global egalitarianism and the attendant transformation of institutional structures would be unduly demanding on some people. Global equality is represented as infeasible in the sense that it would impose costs on some people that they are both unwilling to bear and are also in a position to avoid bearing.¹² For instance, as Gilabert notes in a footnote, the global super-rich could provide sufficient funds to eliminate poverty by giving up 1% of their annual aggregate income for a few years (Gilabert 2012: 157, n. 60). One facet of the problem today is that the global super-rich do not want to do this and they cannot be compelled to do it. Similarly, the democratic populations of the affluent Western democracies do not collectively support the policies necessary to effect even modest transfers that would significantly reduce global poverty.¹³ Moreover, the global poor are not in a position to insist upon it. Of course, achieving global equality would require, at least in the medium term, a much greater redistribution of resources from the global rich to the global poor. Thus it seems natural to characterize the ideal of global equality as especially demanding. Throughout the book Gilabert frequently depicts global egalitarianism as extremely demanding but the theme of demandingness of global justice gets special emphasis in chapter 7.¹⁴ The demandingness of the ideal of global egalitarianism is then linked to issues of feasibility. Global equality seems infeasible because it places too many heavy demands on the global rich. Of course, in one sense it is true that the global rich frequently view the requirements of global equality as too demanding and this perception certainly

makes the realization of global justice very difficult. However, I believe that Gilabert makes a mistake in presenting global equality as demanding in a way that carries with it high moral costs to the global rich.

A lot turns here on how we conceive, from the point of view of justice, the existing distribution of advantages and the resulting entitlements that people rich and poor have to resources. We may think, for instance, that the global rich have a *prima facie* entitlement to most of the advantages to which they currently have access. Viewed from this perspective, achieving global equality requires that the rich relinquish a great deal of the advantages that they *appropriately* view as justly theirs. Transfers from rich to poor to achieve global equality thereby entail what we might call a *real moral sacrifice* for the rich. But we can also view the extra advantages that the rich currently enjoy as resources to which they have no justice-based entitlement. The advantages they enjoy beyond an equal share are arguably advantages to which the poor are entitled. Of course, if the rich transfer these advantages to the poor they will experience a loss but the loss will be what we might call a *mere sacrifice*.

Here's an analogy to flesh this out. Suppose I have in my possession a beautiful and expensive collection of guitars that I received from my father. I derive many significant advantages from owning and playing the guitars. You also greatly value beautiful guitars but have none. Unbeknownst to me, it turns out that my father did not actually own all of the guitars that he gave to me. Indeed half of them belonged to your family and you, being the sole surviving heir, have a legitimate entitlement to them. You have no way to compel me to transfer half of the guitars to you. I may recognize how much you would benefit from the guitars but I also realize that my level of advantage will be reduced if I effect a transfer. Since I believe that all the guitars are mine, I will view the transfer of half of them to you as a *real moral sacrifice* but it is, in fact, a *mere sacrifice*. Moreover, if I keep half the guitars, you suffer a real and not mere loss. You are, after all, wrongly deprived of a benefit that is rightly yours. Given this state of affairs, it is misleading to characterize a redistribution of guitars from me to you as unduly demanding on me. Indeed, we should view the existing unjust distribution as demanding too much from *you*.¹⁵ So we might say in this, admittedly contrived, case that it is the maintenance of distributive injustice that is unduly demanding from a moral point of view. It is harder to say that an equitable distribution can be reasonably resisted because it is too demanding for me.

How does this bear upon the feasibility of global equality? Let's suppose that Gilabert is right to insist that global equality is unambiguously a requirement of distributive justice. This can reasonably be interpreted as implying that the global poor have an entitlement to an equal access to important advantages and that the global rich do not have an entitlement to their current greater than equal access to important advantages. If this is the case, then it is questionable as to whether we should represent the ideal of global equality as especially demanding on the global rich. It is true that its realization would involve sacrifices on the part of the global rich but these sacrifices would be *mere sacrifices* rather than

real moral sacrifices. (In saying this I am assuming that the realization of global equality would not deny anyone – rich or poor – of the material and social conditions of basic human dignity.) By contrast, the maintenance of global inequality imposes real sacrifices on the global poor. So given the assumption that global equality is a genuine demand of distributive justice, it is a mistake to view global equality as an especially demanding ideal of justice. Rather it is actually the status quo of massive global inequality that generates problematic moral costs and imposes undue demands on some people. But this means that we cannot say that global equality is somehow infeasible because it imposes unacceptable burdens on the rich. Of course, since most of the global rich believe that they have justice-based entitlements to an unequal share of advantages, the achievement of global equality will appear to be demanding in a morally troubling way. But appearances can be deceptive. Perhaps the real moral costs of maintaining global inequality are much greater than the real moral costs of realizing it.

NOTES

- ¹ Prominent liberal egalitarians who reject the global application egalitarian principles of distributive justice include Rawls (1999), Nagel (2005), Blake (2001), Risse (2012).
- ² Recent defenses of global egalitarianism include Tan (2004), Brock (2009), and Moellendorf (2002).
- ³ To give just one illustration, Oxfam estimates that the “\$240 billion net income in 2012 of the richest 100 billionaires would be enough to make extreme poverty history four times over” (Annual Income 2013).
- ⁴ “*Basic Global Justice*: We should, to the extent that we reasonably can, pursue institutional schemes under which everyone has access to what they need for their basic human rights to be fulfilled” (Gilbert 2012: 127). Arguably basic global justice involves more than the elimination of extreme poverty but poverty relief is clearly an essential component of basic justice.
- ⁵ “*Global egalitarianism*: We should, to the extent we reasonably can, pursue institutional schemes under which everyone has equal access to important advantages” (Gilbert 2012: 127).
- ⁶ For example, the political battle to extend the franchise to women was very difficult. But in those societies in which voting rights have been achieved the ideal of equal voting rights is stable and secure. So accessing a facet of political equality for women was difficult but ideal once realized is stable.
- ⁷ To the best of my knowledge, Gilbert’s dynamic duties proposal is novel but it has some broad affinities with Henry Shue’s point that a fully adequate account of our duties should give recognition to ‘mediating duties’ (Shue 1988).
- ⁸ Gilbert’s partial revision of Nickel’s test has four elements. First, it relaxes the requirement that implementation be gauged only in relation to countries as a whole – implementation within a country would count towards satisfaction of the standard. Second, that standard should be sensitive to feasibility not only today but also in the future. Third, implementation must be assessed not only with respect to the availability of resources but also with respect to the presence or absence of institutions that can allocate resources. Fourth, feasibility must be oriented to determining whether or not a moral demand should “be at the foreground of our political agenda” (Gilbert 2012: 136).
- ⁹ Gilbert initially presents the motivational argument with a slightly different version of premise (1) – “Duties of distributive justice exist only among those who share a sense of mutual commitment or solidarity with each other” (Gilbert 2012: 141). But he thinks this premise is problematic and revises the argument with premise that I have identified as (1) in the text above.
- ¹⁰ Advocating political equality during American civil war might have been unwise given the urgency of ending slavery. But as I have already observed that fact did not undermine the justifiability of political equality.
- ¹¹ I have in mind here both the numerically small collection of super rich individuals as well as the affluent citizenry of developed democratic states. The collective wealth and power of the latter is considerable yet affluent democratic communities appear to have little political appetite to even address global poverty, let alone global inequality, in a serious and concerted fashion.
- ¹² I do not mean that the rich have sound moral excuses but rather that there are no social or political mechanisms that put pressure on them to comply with the relevant duties.
- ¹³ To give one familiar, and to my mind shameful, example: since endorsing the goal of contributing .7% of GNP to foreign development assistance in 1970, the vast majority of rich countries have not come close to meeting this modest goal. In Canada and elsewhere there appears to be insufficient democratic support for the requisite policies.

¹⁴ References to the demandingness or potential high moral costs of global equality are sprinkled through the book but in chapter 7 appear at 237, 241, 245, 250, 251, 254-258 (Gilbert 2012).

¹⁵ To be clear, the point I am making concerns moral not legal entitlement. Some jurisdictions may permit beneficiaries of wrongdoing to retain some benefits. But by the same token, the law of unjust enrichment can also require that restitution be paid to people who have been unjustly deprived of valuable resources.

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