Global Poverty, Structural Change, and Role-Ideals

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Abstract: It has often been argued that charitable donations are not a sufficient response to global poverty; individuals need to address structural injustice. Proponents of the Effective Altruism (EA) movement have raised two main problems with this focus on structural injustice. In this paper, we respond to these concerns. The first problem raised by EA proponents is that focusing on structural injustice absolves individuals of any responsibility other than political ones. In response, we argue that discharging this duty requires more commitment than EA defenders think, and we do so by framing individual responsibility in global structural injustice through the lens of Robin Zheng's Role-Ideal Model (RIM). The second response given by EA proponents is that a focus on structural injustice does not provide concrete ways for any given individual to discharge such duties. To address this worry, we argue that RIM can be complemented with the Rawlsian account of moral maturation. This new framework makes it clear how individuals can form the right concept of justice and become responsible citizens who act in accordance with RIM.

Keywords: philanthropy, global poverty, negative duties, effective altruism, structural injustice, structural change, Role Ideal Model

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Introduction

In recent years, the issue of global poverty has come under increasing scrutiny. The world's affluent populations, who enjoy a significantly higher standard of living, have been criticized for their inability or unwillingness to make a meaningful impact on the lives of the world's poor. Effective Altruism, a movement motivated by Peter Singer's (2009) positive duty account, aims to rectify this situation and has been one of the most prominent movements in the space of global justice. However, it has failed to consider affluent persons' negative duties towards the world's poor, namely the fact that we contribute to an unjust distributive structure that benefits us but does not provide the poor with basic necessities.

This paper contributes to the existing literature on this topic in the following ways. To begin with, we argue that common-sense philanthropy championed by Effective Altruism (EA) is not a sufficient response to global poverty. Affluent individuals should also understand and discharge their negative duty not to perpetuate structural injustice towards the world's poor (Pogge 2002). For the purpose of our paper, we define structural change broadly as any attempt that enduringly changes the distributional profile among a set of actors and can be large or small in scale, major or minor in impact. By understanding unjust structures as transcending formal organizations and as encompassing also the informal yet patterned sociocultural landscape, a more comprehensive assessment of distributive justice is possible.

Next, we address two responses given by defenders of the EA movement. The first is that focusing on structural injustice reduces individual responsibility to solely political actions. In contrast, we argue that fulfilling this duty involves a far greater commitment than EA defenders typically acknowledge. We frame this individual responsibility for addressing

global structural injustice through Robin Zheng's Role-Ideal Model (RIM) (2018), which proposes that well-off individuals can work toward the ideal version of their social roles to effect structural change. With certain modifications, RIM highlights promising opportunities for motivated individuals to initiate structural change, even if they are the sole actors pushing for the change.

The second response given by EA defenders is that a focus on structural injustice does not provide concrete ways for any given individual to discharge such. To address this worry, we leverage Rawls' (1999a) account of moral maturation in order to suggest specific practical ways in which these duties can be discharged. Drawing on Rawls also allows us to suggest that well-off individuals should not only recognize their negative duties towards the world's poor, but also be motivated to discharge such duties. This motivation may come from appropriately oriented social and educational institutions which provide the citizens with the right path of moral maturation that would involve the recognition of, and motivation to act on, their negative duties towards the world's poor. This new framework makes it clear how individuals can form the right concept of justice and become responsible citizens who develop into their role ideals and act in accordance with RIM. It also addresses a core limitation of RIM that the model "does not itself adjudicate between competing role-ideals" and thus does not explain how individuals can form the right concept of justice (Zheng 2018, 883). Supplementing RIM with an account of moral maturation helps us see how individuals can decide what to do: which roles to take up and how to fulfill this role.

1 Rethinking Responses to Global Poverty: Beyond Charitable Donations

Typically, philanthropic activities by well-off individuals are met with appreciation rather than doubt or criticism from society. Additionally, such activities are accompanied by tax benefits (Madoff 2016, 179-81). But when we examine the total distribution of charitable dollars, a pattern emerges that is hard to reconcile with redistributive outcomes (Reich 2018, 85). A recent study shows that at most one-third of charity is directed to providing for the needs of the poor. Among all the charitable giving, moreover, only 5% goes to the global poor (ibid., 88-9).

One of the most influential philosophical arguments for the affluent to donate to the poor globally comes from Peter Singer. Singer anchors our responsibility to the poor in a positive duty, namely that we should prevent the vast majority of people from living in such life-threatening poverty without incurring significant costs to ourselves. (1972). Singer's EA movement has successfully leveraged the growing momentum of individual contribution to address global poverty. Between 2015 and 2021, around $420 million is donated each year, growing at 21% per year (Todd 2021). More strikingly, an estimated $30 billion of future donation was committed to EA causes, with a growth rate of about 20% each year (id. 2022).

Despite its success, EA has encountered a multitude of criticisms, particularly following November 2022 when a major donor to EA misused billions of client funds (Mack 2022). The effective altruists' emphasis on 'earn-to-give' accepts capital accumulation as ethically unproblematic if donated, absent forceful critique of the legitimacy of particular industries or money-making means (Conroy 2022).[2] More precisely, those who earn to give

[2] Singer has cautioned against longtermist views (2021).

rely for their ability to give significant amounts of money to effective aid organizations on their privileged position within an unjust global economic order (Mills 2012, 5).

This phenomenon can be examined through Thomas Pogge's framework, which argues that affluent individuals contribute to an unjust distributive structure that privileges them at the expense of the global poor (2002).[3] Pogge outlines two duties for affluent individuals within his normative framework: (1) the duty to avoid further contributing to unjust structures, which he presents as achievable by promoting structural change, and (2) the duty to compensate for harms caused by redistributing unjustly gained benefits. Affluent individuals should not think that by making charitable donations they are practicing praiseworthy beneficence when their wealth is a result of global distributional injustice. The appropriate understanding of philanthropy under these circumstances is that it should serve the reparative aims of redressing the background wrongs of the unjust structures that produced the unfair distribution of resources in the first place. If a just global structure were in order, the well-off donors would have less income and wealth, and the intended beneficiaries would have more.

While Pogge (2017) sometimes frames promoting structural change as an optional strategy to fulfill the first duty, our approach views promoting structural change as an essential component of this duty. Specifically, we argue that the duty to stop the perpetuation of injustice is inseparable from the active commitment to structural reform, as passive non-

[3] For our purposes, the unjust distributive structure refers not only to a kind of organizational structure like codified institutions, but also to norms and common practices. Pogge, in one of his latest publications, concurs with this understanding of such an expansive delimitation (2023, 7). As an example of unjust distributive structure, the imposition of trade protectionism is estimated to inflict an approximate annual detriment of $100 billion upon people from the poorest countries. Additionally, the outflow of illicit financial resources exacts an added annual toll of $25 billion (Pogge 2010, Kar 2011).

participation is insufficient to meaningfully address the depth of existing injustices. In this paper, we therefore focus exclusively on the first duty but interpret it in a stronger, forward-looking sense, emphasizing an obligation to disrupt structural injustices rather than merely avoiding their reinforcement.[4] Our position goes beyond Pogge's by asserting that fulfilling one's moral obligations in the face of global injustice requires a proactive stance on systemic reform rather than simply avoiding contributions to harm. This interpretation is more comprehensive because it expands moral responsibility to encompass not just avoiding harm but actively pursuing structural justice as a fundamental aspect of fulfilling the first duty. It emphasizes the importance of both individual actions and their cumulative collective impact, demonstrating that meaningful change requires ongoing structural engagement rather than isolated or one-time acts of avoidance of harm. Additionally, it is dynamic in its approach, advocating for sustained efforts to address structural injustices. This includes being adaptable and responsive to the evolving nature of these structures, rather than treating non-participation as a sufficient or final solution.

By clarifying our stance in this way, we also aim to distinguish our argument from prior literature, which has extensively examined the backward-looking duty of compensation, and instead center our analysis on the necessity of pursuing a forward-looking approach to justice.[5] While the second duty of compensation is significant, it is more achievable within existing frameworks and, in practice, aligns with many effective altruist efforts that focus on alleviating symptoms of injustice rather than its structural sources.

[4] Young argues that forward-looking political responsibility matters because it focuses on proactive change rather than assigning blame. Traditional, backward-looking models of responsibility (liability models) often emphasize fault and punishment, looking at past actions to determine who should compensate or be sanctioned (2004, 378-80).

[5] See Corvino and Pirni (2021) and Yuan (forthcoming) for discussion on the second duty.

In contrast with the negative duty account, Singer's positive duty-based arguments are problematic in two interlinked ways. First, they contribute to the common-sense sentiment that donors can decide where their money goes, since 'it is their money, after all.' GiveWell, part of the EA movement that ranks charities' cost-effectiveness, recommends for donors to "choose the top charity (or charities) you prefer" (Givewell n.d.).[6] But Pogge's negative duty account suggests that what individual donors prefer should not matter. The wealth possessed by affluent individuals cannot be considered truly theirs since the current distribution of property across the world is widely regarded as unjust.[7] If I violate your property rights and have a debt to you that you rightfully deserve, I have a reparative duty to return what I owe you (Cordelli 2016: 244-6). In such cases, the person who owes the debt has limited or no discretion in determining how to fulfill their obligation or who should be the recipient of the payment. As Gabriel puts it, "The idea of 'doing good' is itself problematic because it encourages people to believe that assistance is a matter of personal discretion rather than a moral responsibility, making collective action less likely" (Gabriel 2017, 468).[8]

Second, EA has unjustifiably neglected issues related to structural change that could address the root causes of poverty.[9] People engaged in the EA movement have been said to

[6] Effective Altruism does not afford donors absolute autonomy regarding the allocation of their contributions; nonetheless, it enforces fewer constraints compared to Pogge's negative duty.
[7] Various social distribution theories, including libertarianism, liberal-egalitarians, Kantian conceptions of property rights, suggest the existing pattern of property distribution is significantly unjust (Cordelli 2016, 242-4).
[8] The language of charity problematically perpetuates moral hierarchy between benefactors and beneficiaries, masking how the affluent gain from the unjust distributive structure that is harming the global poor while diminishing their agency (Darnton and Kirk 201, 90, Hattori 2003, 229-47). Psychological research even indicates monetary giving can increase individualism while weakening communal motivations, thus dampening altruistic dispositions (Vohs, Mead and Goode 2006, 1154-6).
[9] For an extensive discussion of this objection, see Berkely 2018, Broi 2019, Clough 2015, Dietz 2019, Gabriel 2017, Herzog 2016.

"leave untouched the power structures that create and maintain systems of poverty" (Clough 2015). Instead, EA has focused its attention on encouraging individuals to direct resources to organizations that directly aid people living in poverty. But by "focusing only on how they can do the most good within existing political and economic institutions," effective altruists have thereby "neglect[ed] the good that could be done by reforming these institutions" (Dietz 2019, 106) and, as a result, are unlikely to "develop an accurate understanding of systemic sources of poverty or to put pressure on their governments to reform political institutions that exacerbate it" (Gabriel 2017, 468). Being concerned with shaping individual actions for the sake of maximizing 'the lives one can save' prevents effective altruists from seeing the bigger picture. While rescuing individuals may seem like the most effective solution, it can also lead to a short-sighted, piecemeal approach that jumps from one crisis to the next without addressing the root causes of the problems we face. To bring about significant and lasting progress, we need to look beyond individual actions and work towards institutional and structural change.

2 Effective Altruism's objections to the structural change approach

Structural change is a promising approach for promoting justice and equality, as it can generate long-lasting benefits and open up opportunities for further structural change.[10] But EA defenders' have two main objections against the structural change approach: the first is the *undercommitment objection*, which suggests that concentrating on structural injustice

[10] Many discuss the importance of structural change. See Beck 2020, Berkey 2021, Corvino & Pirni 2021, Eckersley 2016, French and Wettstein 2014, Hayward 2017, Goodin & Barry 2021, Gould 2009, Jenkins 2021, Lu 2011, 2017, 2018, McKeown 2021, Neuhäuser 2014, Nussbaum 2009, 2011, Powers & Faden 2019, Reiman 2012, Sangiovanni 2018, Sankaran 2021, Schwenkenbecher 2021, Young 2009, 2011, Ypi 2017, and Zheng 2018, 2019.

releases individuals from non-political duties; the second is the *intangibility objection*, which posits that such a focus lacks tangible avenues for any given individual to fulfil these duties.

In this section, we expand Zheng's Role-Ideal Model (RIM) to clarify and reinforce the idea that individuals bear responsibility for promoting structural change through their social roles, which requires significant commitment. While Zheng's model emphasizes the need for collective action to address systemic injustice, we argue that RIM also underscores the role of individual responsibility, even when one's actions may seem isolated or small-scale. Our interpretation of RIM emphasizes that each person holds a duty to strive toward the ideal version of their social roles in ways that resist perpetuating injustice and promote structural reform. This expanded view not only broadens the scope of RIM but also counters Effective Altruism's (EA) objections to structural approaches, by showing that individuals can meaningfully contribute to structural change, motivate others, and fulfill their responsibilities, even when large-scale reform seems intangible. By linking individual and collective responsibilities within RIM, we demonstrate that both modest and widespread efforts are essential for advancing justice.

2.1 The Undercommitment Objection

Effective altruists argue that directing attention to institutional and structural injustice is a way "not to worry too much that we might be acting wrongly when we spend significant amounts of money pursuing projects and interests that we care about, at least so long as we engage in enough political activity in support of the necessary institutional change (e.g. voting for the right candidates, attending rallies, organizing, and perhaps even contributing some money to relevant political efforts)" (Berkey 2018, 168-9). This objection from

effective altruists, however, significantly underestimates the level of commitment needed for individuals to pursue all the political activities. In fact, promoting structural change requires even more commitment than discharging political responsibilities alone.

To address this, Zheng's Role Ideal Model (RIM), unlike Iris Marion Young's (2011) well-known Social Connection Model (SCM), claims that individuals should also be held responsible for the actions they carry out in performing their social roles, in addition to their political responsibilities that contribute to unjust global institutions (Corvino and Pirni 2021, 140). RIM postulates that, since any well-off individual is complicit in and benefits from structural injustice, individuals are responsible for structural injustice. In particular, they can alleviate structural injustice through their social roles. They have a responsibility to perform their social roles in a way that does not contribute to the creation or maintenance of unjust structures, since "social structures are built up from micro-level interpersonal interactions which are continually negotiated, enacted, and reenacted" (Zheng 2018, 874). This means that individuals must be aware of the expectations associated with their roles and actively seek to fulfill them in a way that promotes justice. In Zheng's words, "we are, each of us, individually responsible for structural injustice through and in virtue of our social roles…it is everyone's job to fight injustice because it is already their job to perform their roles well. In other words, it is one's job not just to be a teacher, but to be a good teacher" (ibid., 873-8).

In this sense, RIM requires significantly stronger commitments on individuals than effective altruists suggest, namely, that directing attention to structural injustice is an excuse not to divert resources from their personal projects but only to engage in enough political activity. Instead, RIM suggests that focusing on structural injustice requires a more

formidable and all-encompassing commitment of one's life than the one posited by effective altruists.

2.2 The Intangibility Objection

EA defenders rightly observe that many moral and political philosophers emphasize the importance of addressing structural injustice but often present "moderate accounts of what individuals are obligated to do in response to the overwhelming injustice and suffering that continues to plague our world" (Berkey 2018, 171). A key difficulty in defining individual obligations in this context lies in the belief that it is nearly impossible to determine how a person's actions directly contribute to systemic harms. The main contention is that tracing how limited actions interact with entrenched structural injustices is epistemically challenging, making it difficult to ground specific moral responsibilities and leaving ambiguity about what any individual should do. However, we argue that such epistemic uncertainty does not relieve affluent individuals of their duty to oppose structural injustice.

RIM) offers an alternative by framing individual responsibility not in terms of specific causality or blame but rather as a commitment to fulfilling one's social roles in alignment with justice, even when direct causal links are unclear. RIM suggests that individuals, despite the constraints of their roles, still bear a responsibility to act in ways that promote justice. This model allows multiple individuals to share responsibility for a given instance of structural injustice, even if no single individual can be solely attributed as its cause. To fulfill these duties, individuals can strive to embody the ideal version of their social roles, such as acting as conscious consumers, informed voters, and responsible employers. As McKeown (2021) notes, "[e]ach role has a set of expectations about what the person will

do in that role and normative beliefs about how they should act and be" (9). Thus, RIM responds to the intangibility objection by addressing a core limitation of Young's SCM, which has been criticized for failing to guide individuals on how to address structural injustice (Barry & Macdonald 2016; Hahn 2009; McKeown 2021).

However, Zheng emphasizes that "structural transformation is made possible when *all* individuals throughout the entire system push the boundaries of their social roles" and that "pressure must be applied throughout the *entire* system" (2018, 877; emphasis added). This raises a crucial question: What happens if no one but me engages in pushing these boundaries? Would my individual efforts be rendered futile in such a scenario? While it could be argued that everyone has a responsibility to challenge their role-boundaries through their role-ideal, the practical reality suggests that a significant portion, if not the majority, are unlikely to take up this challenge. As such, the prospect of any single individual effecting meaningful change remains intangible.

In light of this, we propose a refinement: even if only a few individuals (or even only one individual) were to exert such pressure, this still warrants a claim of structural change, albeit on a very modest scale.[11] Building on this modification, our interpretation of RIM now emphasizes three interlinked claims. First, the fact that others may not fulfill their duties does not lessen my own responsibility to act against structural injustice; each person bears an individual duty to avoid perpetuating injustice to the extent they can. Second, this duty to promote structural change includes joining with and motivating others, as individual actions

[11] For a related argument that people should take a stand against structural injustice even if it is likely to prove futile, see Goodin & Barry 2021.

are where collective effort starts.[12] As such, my responsibility to push the boundaries of my role-ideals might also include motivating and inspiring others to do so as well. This is the kind of responsibility that I am able to discharge on my own, and my effort can have a small but incremental effect on structural change. This collective dimension acknowledges that while isolated actions may not create large-scale reform, individuals can inspire broader participation.

Third, even if one's efforts result in only modest or small-scale changes, this still fulfills an essential moral duty, as any movement toward justice—even incremental—is meaningful. The overwhelming difficulty to initiate any structural change by any individual could also come from the narrow conception which considers structural change as referring to significant changes to long-standing global policies, systems, and institutions that are deeply codified and entrenched in our various societies. But broadly defined, structural change refers to modifications made to the environment of a set of actors, which leads to a lasting impact on the distribution of power and opportunities among them. The nature of structural change can vary greatly, ranging from small-scale changes in a village to large-scale changes across the world, from social and cultural norms to legal regulations and institutional arrangements.[13] People mistakenly believe that only large and powerful groups, such as government officials, policymakers, and civil society leaders, can affect global structural changes. In light of our interdependence within the extensive global economic

[12] Following Young, Zheng takes it to be a responsibility to join others in the collective effort of bringing about change. Zheng expressed this belief in personal correspondence with the authors.

[13] Given their respective definitions of structural injustice, Pogge (2023, 7) and Zheng (2018, 869-70) would agree structural change can be as small as parents choosing where to enroll their children. Zheng provides an example where one parent decides to enroll their child into a segregated school to combat racism and segregation because "even a handful of middle-class families made it less likely that a school would be neglected" (2018, 881).

frameworks and the rapid progress of technological innovations that connect all of us, there are smaller-scale efforts any individual can do on their own to bring about structural change with global impact.

To illustrate, consider a responsible employer who promotes structural change by trying her best to treat her employees fairly and transparently. While her actions may not overturn the inherent structural power asymmetries between employers and employees, she sets a role ideal and influence others in her sphere, contributing to gradual shifts in practices and norms. Such examples demonstrate that individuals can be held accountable for promoting structural change through their social roles, even if the direct impact is limited. This expanded conception of RIM thus allows for both collective and individual accountability, emphasizing that individuals have a responsibility to engage in structural reform at any scale, thereby countering EA's intangibility objection. In the following section, we will present practical examples of how individuals can engage in structural change efforts within their everyday roles.

3 Moral Maturation and the Role-Ideal: Integrating Rawls

3.1 The Rawlsian Framework to Develop into Role-Ideals

Once we recognize RIM to be a useful way to think about individual responsibility for structural injustice, we need a framework for understanding how we can become the kind of citizens who act in accordance with our role-ideals. We all occupy different social roles in our family, community, and society, and we are participants of various institutions, practices, and social orders. These roles have far-reaching global impacts—especially given our

interconnectedness through large economic systems and fast-moving technological advances. How can people become individuals who feel responsible to strive for role ideals in order to promote structural justice on a global level and are motivated to act in ways that promote it?

To provide a framework that addresses this question, we turn to John Rawls's theory of moral development.[14] Our reasons for appealing to Rawls' theory in particular are twofold. First, he draws heavily on the scientific-psychological work of Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. Piaget and Kohlberg are credited with introducing the topic of moral development into psychology and their account of moral development remains the dominant paradigm in the field[15]—even though, of course, it has been challenged and complemented by various other models. Second, Rawls' three stages of moral development (as we will shortly see) center on one's relations to the progressively larger, or more encompassing, community that one shares and creates with others. It therefore suits RIM's focus on acting jointly with others and on the roles we play in our communal life—*social* roles. Rawls shows how one can become the sort of person who sees and treats others a moral equals. It is this egalitarian nature of his account that appeals to us. What Rawls claims in *A Theory of Justice*, Part III can help us see how the right kind of moral psychology can lead people to be motivated to promote structural change through their social roles.[16]

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[14] Rawls's political philosophy largely influenced Pogge's own work (Pogge studied under Rawls and has dedicated some of this work to Rawls's theory).

[15] As Blum (1994, 185) writes, "[One type of moral development theories] is concerned with the adult capacities in which morality can be grounded, their development, and the specific childhood capacities that are their developmental precursors. Some of the most prominent of these theories are of a neo-Kantian nature, such as those of Rawls (1971) and Kohlberg (1981, 1984)."

[16] No global-level duties to help with the distribution of wealth in Rawls's major work in international justice, *The Law of Peoples*. According to *The Law of Peoples*, we have many similar, but not exactly the same, principles of duties towards citizens of other countries vs. our own country. There, Rawls does not argue for a

Rawls's conception of justice presented in *Theory* assumes a conception of the person as someone possessing two "moral powers": (1) the capacity to develop and pursue a conception of the good or happiness, and (2) the capacity to acquire a sense of justice. In Part I, Rawls proceeds on the assumption that adult citizens in a well-ordered society[17] (WOS) already possess these two moral powers. But how do we come to have these powers? Are they something we are born with or something that we have to learn? Rawls claims that these two fundamental characteristics of persons begin as mere capacities which have to be developed or realized throughout one's early life.

According to what Rawls writes in Part III of *Theory*, one must go through certain stages of moral development if one is to become a good member of a WOS and contribute to the inherent stability of the conception of justice that governs the WOS.[18] In what follows, we elaborate on these stages and explain how they can contribute to acting in accordance with RIM.

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substantive principle of economic distribution, such as the Difference Principle known from his work on domestic justice (Wenar 2004). We address this issue in section 3.2.

[17] Rawls defines a well-ordered society as "a society in which (1) everyone accepts and knows that the others accept the same principles of justice [as fairness], and (2) the basic social institutions generally satisfy and are generally known to satisfy these principles." (Rawls 1971/1999a, 4) Not all liberal democratic states qualify as well-ordered, but they can be considered "decent societies," which come close to WOS but do not satisfy all standards of Rawls' theory of justice as fairness. (Rawls 1999b)

[18] Rawls's theory of moral development is part of a larger project Rawls pursues in Part III of Theory—this project is to show that a society regulated by his conception of justice, justice as fairness, is inherently stable. For a society to be stable means for it to be in a condition of equilibrium and able to return to such an equilibrium if some disruption takes place. According to Weithman (2010, 55, 102), unlike the kind of (imposed) stability that Plato or Hobbes were concerned with, which relies on heteronomous incentives and a sovereign who enforces obedience, Rawls is interested in stability that arises inherently from the desires and motivations of the citizens—desires and motivations shaped by the institutional setting of a WOS. This stability is the kind of stability in which—in Rawls's own description of a WOS—"inevitable deviations from justice are effectively corrected or held within tolerable bounds by forces within the system" (that is, within the citizens themselves) (Rawls 1971/1999a, 401). Among these forces, Rawls adds, "the sense of justice shared by the members of the community has a fundamental role" (Rawls 1971/1999a, 401; see also Forrester's (2019, 1-39) discussion on Rawls's analogy of society's stabilizing abilities to a game).

For Rawls, the morality of authority is the first and most primitive phase of moral development, which a child born into a society should undergo. This stage is primarily characterized by the child's following concrete rules or commands issued by another person —an older child or an adult—which from the child's perspective are arbitrary and not connected with her own desires. In addition, Rawls explains the obedience of the child in the first stage by appealing to the emotional and affective bond between the child and the adult issuing rules or commands.[19] This authoritative person is someone whom the child trusts because of this person's affective and caring attitude toward the child (Rawls 1999a, 408). Thus we receive two explanations of obedience in this stage: the desire for avoiding punishment and receiving rewards and the willingness to follow those whom one trusts and from whom one receives affection. Importantly, a young child in this stage of moral development does not possess the notion of justice. Rawls characterizes the child in this phase as someone who "cannot comprehend the larger scheme of right and justice within which the rules addressed to him are justified." (Rawls 1999a, 408) Consequently, the child in this phase only possesses the moral characteristics of obedience, humility, and fidelity to authority. (Rawls 1999a, 405-8).

Assuming we want to act in accordance with our role-ideals, what can we do during the Rawlsian first stage of ideal moral development in order to foster responsibility for promoting structural justice on a global level? Those of us whose social roles include 'parent' or 'guardian' of young children may strive to become ideal versions of this social role and

[19] Blum (1994, 196) characterizes the mechanism of this emotional and affective bond as "responsiveness" and emphasizes its importance for the subsequent developmental stages: "responsiveness in children is one developmental forerunner of the adult moral virtues of compassion, kindness, helpfulness, sympathy, and the like, in that these altruistic virtues as well as responsiveness involve altruistic motivation and sentiment toward others."

guide the development of our children in a way that will promote structural justice in a variety of possible ways.[20] For example, we can tell our children that they already form a part of the global community and model globally ethical behaviors for them. We can choose to send our children to schools with greater diversity, encompassing broader international demographics. Such behaviors may include a genuine concern for global justice in the form of conversations about these topics or demonstrated donations to effective charities or to charities that have a tangible significance to the child. One instance of failing to fulfill one's role-ideal as a parent would be to teach children that they should distance themselves from children with a different skin color. Hoffman (1976, 135) inquires about the emergence of children's genuine empathy for each other once they can differentiate between their own sense of self and that of others. He responds by suggesting that they realize the commonalities they share with others are more significant than the disparities. This perception of likeness forms the basis for a child's capacity to empathize with others. Even disparities in skin color do not inherently create a divide between children, except in situations where the child has been taught (for instance by parents) that skin color implies varying worth or demands separation.

The second stage of moral development, which Rawls calls the morality of association, consists in the gradual acquisition of skills required for social cooperation and for choosing among several heteronomous rules which sometimes come into conflict. This stage involves learning to see things from other people's perspectives and conducting oneself with reference to these perspectives, which makes cooperation possible. It also involves

[20] Here, an objection could be raised: how can parents who were not raised in accordance with Rawls' model act as ideal versions of the social role as parents? Even if they are not capable of fulfilling this ideal, they might strive to become the best versions of themselves as parents as much as they can. If this progresses in a linear way, every next generation will approximate their ideal roles as parents more and more.

navigating social situations and commitments within a larger group of people. In this stage, the individual develops and cultivates the desire for forming ties of friendship with other members of her associations, and comes to obey the rules of the associations out of these ties of friendship. Rawls also characterizes this phase as the one when the child acquires the skills necessary for (however crude) social cooperation and for feeling mutual respect. Acquiring the morality of association thus consists in recognizing that different points of view or perspectives exist in the minds of different people. These, in turn, lead people to have different desires, plans, and motives. Morality of association involves moral obedience for the sake of maintaining good social relations and receiving the approval of others in the association, as well as obeying any democratically accepted legal norms because they are socially useful. (Rawls 1999a, 409-13)

Looking at the second stage of ideal moral development through the lens of RIM, it presents us with an opportunity to expand what we conceive of as our immediate social circle and the community in which we are embedded. This stage overlaps with late childhood, teenage years, and perhaps even early adulthood, and thus with the years during which an individual receives different levels of schooling. In order to fulfil one's ideal social role of 'student' in a way that fosters responsibility for global injustices, one can actively seek out communities outside one's own country. According to Blum, "[t]o be concerned for a friend, or for a community with which one closely identifies and of which one is a member, is to reach out…to what shares a part of one's own self and is implicated in one's sense of one's own identity." (1994, 195) This can be done by learning about other cultures (at school or on one's own), by forming one's identity as a global citizen who feels concerned about other members of the global community, and by exposing ourselves to people who differ from us.

As Darwall writes, “it is impossible for individuals in racialized groups to relate to one another as equals and be mutually accountable for doing so, unless they encounter one another in daily life—in their neighborhoods and parks and other public spaces. The only way to abolish racial hierarchy and eliminate ‘badges of slavery’ is to establish relational equality, and that will require the abolition of racially segregated spaces” (forthcoming, 159-60). Hence, an ideal global citizen is someone who is aware that we all indirectly interact with many people around the world (through participating in economic activities, policy selection, media presence, and culture creation) and who engages in these activities in a way that treats these people in a just way. Some practical examples include traveling abroad or engaging in international virtual communities and expanding one’s social ties to people from other countries. For instance, a college student in Europe can participate in the Erasmus exchange program, during which students live and study in another country for a semester or undertake an internship abroad. Other programs that promote global citizenship include international service learning trips, where students volunteer abroad and reflect on global inequities. Religious and secular organizations also sponsor international youth exchanges to build cross-cultural understanding. Virtual platforms, social media networks, and online discussion forums have democratized the process of forming global connections, enabling individuals to engage in meaningful dialogues with people from diverse backgrounds without the confines of geographical borders. These digital interfaces provide a medium for sharing experiences, perspectives, and concerns, fostering a collective sense of global citizenship transcending physical limitations. As individuals partake in these transformative experiences, they are poised to develop a heightened awareness of the shared challenges and aspirations

that unite humanity, underscoring the significance of collaborative efforts to address global issues collectively.

The final stage of Rawls's account of moral development, the morality of principles, is aspirational (regulative or ideal): adults may oscillate between the second and third stages for their entire life or approximate the third stage as they mature as adult citizens. This stage differs from the previous two: persons in this phase of moral development understand why they ought to act in accordance with principles of morality or justice and choose to do so without the need of any external coercion or incentives—autonomously. Persons in this phase of moral development understand that acting in accordance with principles of morality or justice involves acquiring a sense of the self as a member of a harmonious community of people who regard one another as moral persons. (Rawls 1999a, 414-9)

The final stage of moral development presents an ideal model of how to look at others in this world no matter what one's exact social role (as an employee, parent, citizen, etc.) is because it involves generalizing moral rules into principles that can apply to every human being in the world, not just to people one is directly associated or familiar with. Kohlberg (1981) expresses a similar sentiment that a moral principle is a procedure or method called "ideal role taking" for making moral decisions. For instance, in ideal role taking, an agent figures out the right course of action by envisioning themselves in the place of everyone impacted by their potential decision. (Blum 1994, 206) One of the moral principles we can learn and adopt, therefore, is to care about people globally and to help those who are in need regardless of where they live. In Moody-Adams's (2022, 4) terms, we can develop "human regard—a combination of compassionate concern and robust respect" to other global

citizens.[21] As a citizen of a well-off country, one can perform such roles in a variety of ways. To return to the earlier example of the businessman: for those who work at multinational corporations with operations in poor countries, their role as an ideal businessman ought to include considering if they are performing it in a globally just way, not just maximizing corporate interests. An ideal consumer, in turn, will be aware of being part of a global consumer chain and will avoid purchasing items made in unjust ways, such as in sweat shops. For others, it may involve looking out for the interests of their fellow global citizens, not just their compatriots. Ordinarily citizens can do so by caring and being knowledgeable about foreign policy, voting for politicians who want to address the struggles of the global poor, raising awareness of global issues in one's immediate community, or donating to the right charities.

3.2 The Justification for Extending the Rawlsian Framework onto the Global Scale

Before concluding this section, we want to address a number of objections to utilizing Rawls's moral-psychological account in the way we do, including the worry that Rawls himself did not wish to extend the scope of his framework of moral maturation onto global issues and the worry that his account of moral maturation might be inadequate to guide the development of liberal citizens because it is "comprehensive". We hope to show that even though Rawls himself did not believe that global justice requires of us any economic distributive principles such as the Difference Principle, his account of moral maturation from

[21] Moody-Adams (2022, 4) argues in a similar vein that for progressive social movements to happen, comprehending individual moral growth is prerequisite to embedding compassionate concern and robust regard for the disadvantaged within institutions and social practices.

Part III of *A Theory of Justice* may arguably provide us with the tools needed to build such a framework, and that his account of moral maturation need not be seen as comprehensive in a way that precludes it from being used in a liberal society.

To begin with, Rawls's account of moral maturation might be seen as an inadequate framework to guide the development of liberal citizens because it is "comprehensive", i.e., relies on certain metaphysical and normative commitments that go beyond the scope of the "political" or of what public reason is supposed to determine.[22] Though Rawls never suggested this about moral maturation explicitly,[23] he did claim in his later work – in *Political Liberalism* – that certain elements of his earlier theory of justice from *Theory* were too reliant on Kant's moral philosophy and hence comprehensive, and he sought to remedy this in his later work.[24] Since the account of moral maturation does not explicitly appear in this later work, it might seem that it was part of what Rawls abandoned due to an unacceptably comprehensive nature. However, in what follows we will show that this is not the case by providing two arguments for viewing his account of moral maturation as non-comprehensive.

First, just because Rawls's account of moral maturation is Kantian,[25] it does not necessarily follow that it is comprehensive. A popular view in the Rawlsian literature is that

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[22] Rawls distinguishes a comprehensive doctrines from a non-comprehensive political conception of justice grounded in public reason in "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited" (1997), reprinted in *Political Liberalism: Expanded Edition* (Rawls 2005: 440-90).

[23] Even though in the Introduction to *Political Liberalism* Rawls claimed that his account of stability from *Theory* III was comprehensive, he did not mention his account of moral maturation in particular. What is more, he endorsed this account later on – in his *Justice and Fairness: A Restatement* (Rawls 2001, 163).

[24] In "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited" (1997), reprinted in *Political Liberalism: Expanded Edition*, Rawls writes: "the content of public reason is given by a family of political conceptions of justice, and not by a single one. There are many liberalisms and related views, and therefore many forms of public reason specified by a family of reasonable political conceptions. Of these, justice as fairness, whatever its merits, is but one" (Rawls 2005, 450). In the Introduction to *Political Liberalism*, he also explicitly admits that *Theory* mistakenly relied on a comprehensive doctrine (Rawls 2005, xv).

[25] For an explanation of why Rawls's account of moral maturation is Kantian, see Lenczewska (forthcoming).

by the time *Political Liberalism* was written, Rawls largely abandoned the Kantian components of his earlier view, as part of his attempt to present that view without relying on any particular comprehensive doctrine. (Dreben 2002, Quong 2013, Rostbøll 2011, Wenar 1995) However, there is scholarly disagreement about whether various Kantian components were really abandoned and (relatedly) whether the presence of certain Kantian elements necessarily entails reliance on a particular comprehensive doctrine. (Forst 2017, Taylor 2022) The latter is especially relevant to our argument. According to Rainer Forst (2017, 143), *Political Liberalism* "is best read as a Kantian view, that is, as one with conceptualizes a noncomprehensive, autonomous, moral grounded theory of political and social justice for a pluralistic society. It is noncomprehensive in that it neither rests on some metaphysical notion of human nature nor seeks to give guidance on questions of the good life." So just because Rawls's account of moral maturation is Kantian, it does not necessarily follow that it is comprehensive (especially since, and we will shortly show, Rawls endorsed this account in his later work). One reason for the view that Rawls's mature work can be Kantian without being comprehensive is that this work retains the Kantian notion of reasonability, both in continuing to describe citizens as "reasonable and rational" (2005, 450, 481, 487) and in claiming that a non-comprehensive (freestanding and independently grounded) political conception of justice has the power normatively to determine which of the comprehensive doctrines is reasonable (acceptable), and which not. (Forst 2017, 128) This latter notion of reasonability is Kantian because, as Forst explains (2017, 128), it follows Kant "in emphasizing that both the categorical imperative and the principle of right had to be grounded completely independently of any doctrine of value leading to the good life (or *Glückseligkeit*) in order to take priority over them." And the former notion of reasonability (of citizens) is

Kantian because it conceives of citizens as required to justify their reasons for organizing a basic structure in a particular way without appealing to their comprehensive doctrines, but on the basis of their common practical and public reason. (Forst 2017, 129) Rawls's late work is also Kantian in retaining the moral conception of "full autonomy" in relation to constructing, through practical reason, political norms that no reasonable person could deny. This conception is not ethical in the sense of requiring metaphysical or value commitments that go beyond the scope of the political, but it is nonetheless moral because it is "connected to the grounds and normative quality of the political conception." (Forst 2017, 129)

Since various Kantian elements of Rawls's framework should not be seen as comprehensive just because they are in some ways Kantian (as Forst showed), one might wonder if this is also the case with Rawls's (Kantian) account of moral development. We believe that this is indeed so. As we have seen in Section 3.1, developing one's moral capacities to its fullest by reaching the third and final state of moral development means, for Rawls, the ability to see others as reasonable and rational human beings who are free and equal. Crucially, one is able to extend this view of persons to *all* other citizens, not only to those with whom one has formed special ties of affection or association; this is what distinguishes this stage of moral development from the previous one. This ability to see others as reasonable and rational human beings who are free and equal, we believe, is compatible with the late-Rawlsian freestanding ideal of public reason, which encompasses a family of non-comprehensive, political conceptions of justice. This is because Rawls writes about these non-comprehensive, political conceptions that their "limiting feature (…) is the criterion of reciprocity, viewed as applied between *free and equal* citizens, themselves seen as *reasonable and rational.*" (Rawls 2005, 450, emphasis added) In so doing, Rawls postulates

that the kind of people who would be able to exercise public reason and participate in the procedure of political constructivism in order to determine (non-comprehensive) norms of justice are people who are reasonable and rational – and the very goal of moral maturation is to develop or realize a person's two moral power: the capacity for a sense of justice (reasonability) and the capacity for forming a conception of the good compatible with a sense of justice (rationality). (Lenczewska forthcoming, §2)

The second reason why Rawls's account of moral maturation should not be viewed as comprehensive is that Rawls himself endorses this account in later, mature work, in which he disavows any comprehensive elements of his previous works. Specifically, in *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* he writes that "essential to the role of the family is the arrangement in a reasonable and effective way of the raising and caring for children, ensuring their moral development and education into the wider culture", and appends a footnote that refers to "*Theory*, §§70-76", i.e., to his account of moral maturation presented in *Theory*. (2001, 162-3) By doing so, he strongly suggests that his views on moral development of the citizens of WOS from his earlier work remain unchanged. And since he cares a great deal about the final form of his theory of justice to be political and non-comprehensive, he thereby also implies that his earlier account of moral maturation should not be seen as part of a comprehensive doctrine.

We will now move to another objection against using Rawls's account of moral maturation for our purposes in this paper, namely, to the claim that he himself does not wish to extend this account onto the global scale, but confines it to matters within particular nation-states. Arguably, extending Rawls's moral psychological account of moral maturation from *Theory* III onto a global scale goes against Rawls's own views regarding global justice from

The Law of Peoples. After all, Rawls suggested in *The Law of Peoples* that there should be no equal distribution of goods at an international level. However, according to Pogge (1994, 195-7), Rawls made a mistake in his attempt to apply his theory of justice to the international sphere, and this mistake is relevant to our response to the above objection. Pogge argues that Rawls' theory should consider social and economic inequalities to be a criterion for global justice. Specifically, he could have adopted one of two following strategies: extending his two principles of justice to the international level, or starting with a "global original position," whereby parties in this original position would not know their nationality. (Scraffe 2016, 207) Though Rawls did not pursue either strategy, believing that the institutional inequalities that exist at the state level are not equivalent to those at the international level, we here wish to suggest (with Pogge) that a consistent application of his theory from his work on domestic justice would commit him—and Rawlsians more generally—to extending the two principles of justice, and his theory of justice as fairness at large, to the international level. Ideally, citizens will grow up in a world that affirms the idea that we are so connected as one human community that we should pre-theoretically care about others even though they are far away and differ from us in profound ways. Nothing in Rawls's moral-psychological developmental framework precludes extending one's morality of principles onto a global scale.

Another objection to extending Rawls' moral maturation account onto the global scale would be that citizens of WOS cannot hope to receive the same as what they give to the poor—something that Rawls would see as necessary for reciprocal, egalitarian relationships. However, given the economically asymmetrical relationships between the affluent and the poor, we should not expect to receive from the poor what we give them. Citizens of well-off countries have more to share with those from poor countries, and more global means to do

so, than is the case the other way around. Once the veil in a global original position is lifted, then, citizenship of more affluent nations would generate different (more stringent) global obligations than citizenship of poorer nations. Moreover, even if such reciprocal treatment is not received right away, the role of an extended Rawlsian global justice would be to gradually instill in these citizens an appropriate moral framework—especially once economic injustice is ameliorated. The moral treatment of individuals from far-away nations should not be contested simply due to prima facie, or initial, lack of reciprocity.

This is even more salient given the current economic, technological, and geographical interconnectedness humans face on a global scale. Given the increasingly global life citizens lead, Rawls's framework applied today would require a citizens to care about people who live far away, beyond one's national border. In the presence of the right kind of institutional (educational, familial, and socio-political) arrangements, one can grow up to see oneself as a member of a global, harmonious community of people who regard one another as moral persons. These members of the global community should respect one another's moral personality by treating others in the way that justice requires. Given what we argued for, Rawls's theory of moral maturation can and should be extended onto the global scale.

Furthermore, Rawls's account of moral maturation and, more specifically, his view on the ideal moral psychology of a developed citizen (who has attained the final stage of moral maturation) is compatible with Zheng's RIM in not guiding individuals as to what exactly they should do to fulfill their role-ideals and to push the boundary of their roles in the right direction. This is because, as we have argued above, the Rawlsian account does not adjudicate between various (reasonable) comprehensive doctrines, and hence it compatible with all of them. In so doing, it does not force individuals into particular role-ideals or into

specific ways of fulfilling these role-ideals based, say, on specific comprehensive ethical, religious, or metaphysical commitments. This is an advantage of Zheng's framework and of Rawls's account: the individual pursuit of structural justice should be allowed to take on many forms and to stem from many motivations, so long as the general commitment to justice is retained – a commitment which is, of course, non-comprehensive in nature. While one might wonder whether the kind of role-ideals we have suggested in this paper inherently push individuals toward particular actions or whether they can accommodate diverse approaches to justice, we believe that the best approach is to allow them to do the latter – so long as these approaches are compatible with, and fall within, the broad Rawlsian framework (i.e., treat individuals as free, equal, reasonable, and rational in his sense of these terms). Role-ideals understood and defined this way will be able to accommodate the sort of pluralism that characterizes our world (although only of the reasonable kind). While this framework allows for potential disagreements arising among individuals about the best way to ideally fulfill their roles, we believe that in most cases there will simply be several ways of ideally fulfilling a particular role, not merely a single one.

We acknowledge that, in our current world, the institutional arrangements necessary to foster a robust global community are still developing. In the absence of a just global order, it may seem unrealistic or implausible to see oneself already as a member of an ideal global community. However, we believe that aspiring toward that ideal remains crucial. One can still strive to regard all persons, including globally distant strangers, as moral equals worthy of respect and consideration, even if existing institutions do not always reinforce those attitudes. The limitations of present social conditions do not negate the ethical claims that all of humanity has upon us. We must let the moral demand like that of RIM and the Rawlsian

framework of moral maturation shape our attitudes and actions as best as possible under non-ideal circumstances.

Conclusion

As Rawls reminds us, justice requires that we think beyond our own self-interest and work toward a world where everyone has an equal opportunity to lead a fulfilling and dignified life. In this paper we have argued that common-sense philanthropy championed by Effective Altruism is not a sufficient response to global poverty and, consequently, that well-off individuals should both recognize and be motivated to discharge their negative duty not to further contribute to the unjust distributive structure of our world. Role Ideal Model makes it evident that discharging this duty by promoting structural change is not as practically and epistemically difficult as it may seem. Though the model places more commitment on individual life other than political responsibilities, we have also shown how the Rawlsian framework for moral maturation can help us become ideal versions of the social roles we already occupy and identify with.

Though the present global order may fall short of the ideal, with concerted effort we can progressively reshape our conceptions of the social roles we occupy and reimagine our institutions from generation to generation, in order better to approximate an ideal of shared global community. If each generation dedicates itself to this task, slowly but surely social roles and practices will be brought into greater alignment with our moral duties to all people. This path may not be linear or smooth, but over time our social arrangements can be reformed to foster the global perspective necessary for justice. Despite current limitations, we must

remain hopeful that our ideals as global citizens can gradually become the reality through intergenerational commitment to moral progress.

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