

## **In Defense of Socialism, Chapter 2: Pragmatic Progress**

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I

Besides *Black Mass* the other philosophical book I read during my sojourn in the hospital was Brian Barry's *Why Social Justice Matters* (Barry 2005). Barry's book is a very different book than *Black Mass*. It is a book whose content I anticipated from a lecture Barry gave in Pasadena a few years ago which drew on his about-to-be published book. His book was something I expected to be roughly in agreement with from familiarity with his earlier work and from his Pasadena lecture. I was not disappointed.

In *Why Social Justice Matters*, Barry sets himself a very different task than what he has developed in detail in his earlier work which has spanned a good bit of his life. This book, as he puts it in his preface, consists

... of the ideas about social justice that I have developed over the years and their implications under contemporary conditions—for individual countries and also for the world as a whole. There will be nothing startling about the principles of social justice that I put forward: they are widely accepted by politicians, media pundits and the general public, at least nominally. Most of the book will be devoted to arguing that these ideas are being abused systematically to justify the massive inequalities that we can see all around us.

Thus, lip service is paid to the virtues of equal opportunity, but the usual incantation is 'equal opportunity to become unequal'. I shall show that this is incoherent, and that equal opportunity can be achieved only in a society that keeps the range of inequality within narrow bounds. Similarly, appeals to 'personal responsibility' are all the rage among political leaders, and inequalities are attributed to the different choices made by different people: those who do well have made choices that reflect their personal merits, while those who do badly have made choices that reflect their personal defects. I shall

show that only a very small part of actually existing inequality can be explained in this way, and that choices are socially constrained in ways that are simply overlooked by those who play up the role of personal responsibility.

All this still leaves two questions that are bound to occur to anybody. The first is: if the diagnosis of what ails our societies is correct, what should actually be done to redress these injustices? I shall do my best to rise to this challenge by proposing some reforms that would, if adopted, bring the attainment of social justice much closer (Barry 2005, vii-viii).

His views there are not only compatible with vast bits of public opinion at least in Western societies but with the major theories of social justice such as those held by John Rawls, Amartya Sen, Stuart Hampshire, Norman Daniels, Ronald Dworkin, G. A. Cohen and Phillippe van Parijs—all of whom are social liberals (in the American sense), social democrats, or socialists. They differ importantly among themselves and with Barry on *philosophical* issues (issues that philosophers concentrate on) but as far as ideas of social justice that Barry discusses in *Why Social Justice Matters*, they are in at least rough accord. Their various accounts of justice with their somewhat different principles of justice could all be used to justify them. Moreover, they are broadly in accord with great swaths of the convictions about social justice of reasonably minded people in North America and Western Europe and the West (what geo-politicians call ‘the North’) more generally. (I did not say that with some people they would not have a resonance or that there would not be some dissent in the West.) Indeed they are also the considered convictions of many people in the South. But still in many societies of the South they are not the considered convictions of the majority. And we should recognize that in the North as well they are not the considered convictions of everyone. The North has its fundamentalists, racists, neo-Nazis and, perhaps more significantly, firmly anti-liberal traditionalists. Still, the convictions Barry articulates and relies on are the considered convictions *at least nominally* of most people in the North and of many people in the South. That last qualification is important for in our societies, indeed all societies, some more than others (e.g., the United States more than Sweden) these considered convictions are routinely in practice—the place where it really

counts—run roughshod over, ignored, held only lip service to, or are so ideologically treated that they are anesthetized. Barry is acutely on to this and responds to it. He directs his arguments to considering “what should actually be done to address these injustices” and to “proposing some reforms that would, if adopted, bring the attainment of social justice much closer” (Barry 2005, viii). He also feels that they are in the ballpark of things that could be adopted in our extant societies or at least in the liberal ones. But he also, and importantly, though still with something that needs a bit of demystifying, asks (something Gray would sniff at), “what reason is there for supposing that history is on the side of social justice”? Or, put differently and more adequately, what reason is there to think that social justice will prevail in our world or even in the North? Barry then adds:

Inequality has got worse in the last twenty-five years, and the ideology justifying it has become more pervasive. Why should we expect the future to be any more favourable for social justice? I do not claim the gift of prophecy. However, one thing can be asserted with certainty: the continuation of the status quo is an ecological impossibility (Barry 2005, viii).

He and Gray are at one about the status quo being an ecological impossibility (Gray 2008). I think Gray is more cynical about anything even nearly adequate happening while Barry is *somewhat* less pessimistic about the possibility of meaningful reforms. He, unlike Gray, believes that for that to happen, it will require a social democratic or socialist outlook prevailing in the world or at least in the West (what is also called the North) while Gray thinks social democracy and socialism are complete non-starters. They require the resurrection of a discredited myth articulating a dead utopia. One of the aims of this chapter is to put that in question. I will then turn subsequently to Barry’s grounds for hope, but he is not full of joyous expectations. He, too, has a hard-nosed look on the world.

Barry says, probably correctly, that he “doubts if it [this book] will do anything for my standing among professional philosophers...” (Barry 2005, ix). I would say so much the worse for professional philosophers if this is so. It would be evidence of more fiddling while Rome burns

(Nielsen 2008a). Barry does not say this, but responds that “it [his book] is not intended for them. To the best of my ability I have aimed to reinforce the convictions of those who think things are bad and getting worse and to provide them with intellectual ammunition that will be of use in the fight for a better future” (Barry 2005, ix).

At the beginning of his first chapter, Barry brings out two deep-seated motives for his writing. The first one he calls “the desire to see things as they are.” The second is what he calls his political purpose, using the word ‘political’ in the widest sent, which is the “desire to push the world in a certain direction to alter other people’s idea of the kind of society they should strive after” (Barry 2005, 3). He also adds that he was definitely led to write *Why Social Justice Matters* by just such a political motive. (I should add parenthetically that this is exactly what motivates almost all of my own later writing, particularly my more recent writings.)

How would Gray respond to this? He plainly, and as strongly as Barry, rejects post-modernist obscurantism and is determined, as is Barry, to do the best he can “to see things as they are”, though they would disagree *sometimes* over what that comes to. I also sign on here, though I have (as we shall see in a later chapter) a dose of the historicist and contextualist understanding that this is inordinately difficult (Nielsen 2008b). If we attend to the world, we must recognize that whole ways of viewing things, whole ways of life and *Weltanschauung*, are often very different and conflicting. It is sometimes, indeed often, difficult (to put it mildly) to escape ethnocentrism. But historicism and contextualism (as I understand them) are inescapable.

That said, it still seems to be the case that over particular things that both Barry and Gray stress, it seems possible to get things right or reasonably so. Moreover, both Donald Davidson and Richard Rorty have given us strong reasons for rejecting claims of *incommensurability* which is standardly appealed to to rebut claims to be able to see things as they are (Davidson 1984, 193-98; Rorty 1999). Yet Rorty is also very historicist and has a historicist understanding that we cannot overleap history. And, as I think as well, that historicism, as distinct from relativism or scepticism, is

inescapable (Rorty 2006, 126). But I think in some sense, that perhaps should take some explicating and demythologizing, that for political, moral and many practical (including genuinely scientific) purposes there must be some sense to the claim that we can, if we work hard enough and are in fortunate circumstances, get things approximately right. (I do not say for all times or even, for some things, all places.) Moreover, there is something historically cumulative here. There is something imperative about the ambition of trying to see things as they are. Yet we must be very careful here how we take this. We must not let what Bernard Williams calls 'linguistic idealism' befuddle use or for that matter metaphysical realism. Still, I remain somewhat ambivalent (perhaps philosophically confused) particularly about our ability to put these particular things we see as they are into a coherent package yielding a cross-cultural consensus.

However, maybe we do not need to get a cross-cultural consensus here. I remain conflicted and somewhat ambivalent. But that is still driven, if we can get it, by the desire to see things as they are. Neither Barry nor Gray (as distinct from me) is influenced by historicism. It is hard to deny—nor do I wish to do so—with their examples that they both are on to something. Moreover, I do not suffer, any more than they do, from a historicist melancholy, resignation or weariness.

Be that as it may, how would Gray react to Barry's political purpose? Would he not scoff at and reject the very idea of, if one would be reasonable and rational, trying or even working towards pushing the world in a certain direction, to altering other people's ideas of the kind of society for which they should strive? Would he not think this 'political aim' of Barry's expresses a kind of rationalistic *hubris*? Moreover, would he not think it is too interventionist and activist? The world, wouldn't Gray say, is too diverse and conflicting for these things to be plausible aims. It leads, would he not continue, to the utterly and dangerously mistaken idea of world transformation that we have seen to have had such disastrous and cruel consequences. Yet even accepting that—something I later on shall put into question—there is something paradoxical about Gray's stance. With his hard-nosed political realism, he, too, is trying to push us in a certain direction as well. He is trying to change

people's beliefs in what he takes to be a very core way of viewing things. Isn't there something almost inescapable about this if we care (as Gray plainly does) about what we are saying and writing and the world we live in?

Certainly much that Gray says would lead us to the conclusion that he is telling us to be hard-nosed. But it would be a mistake to say that he is a nihilist. He is a political realist (or sympathizer) though he certainly is not what in aspiration has been called a value-neutral political realist (but he is not alone in this). He does not think we can or should try to avoid using a normative vocabulary or somehow having a normative outlook with its thick evaluative and normative vocabulary. But he certainly rejects grand historical narratives of how the world is, can be and ought to be. But does take normative stances and important and controversial ones. As we saw toward the end of the last chapter, he takes it as a central task of government to work out and enforce a framework whereby the various people in a society or a cluster of societies can live together. While he rejects politics as a vehicle for universal projects—for providing *Weltanschauung*—he sees politics as needing to develop, “responding to the flux of circumstances”, ways for people to live together, though without a grand vision of human advance or perpetual peace. He is utterly sceptical about the very possibility of such an advance and the vision that goes with it. But he acknowledges the necessity for and applauds having the courage to cope with recurring evils (Gray 2007, 208 and 210). So there is, in spite of what he *sometimes* leads us to think, no nihilist or *ersatz-realpolitik* thinker retreating from the normative. There is no acceptance that a Hobbesian anarchical world is inevitable. But for him it is important to accept a chastened, modest normative stand and to accept it is something that people should take. Moreover, we could not seriously (genuinely) accept his normative picture of the world and be indifferent to having it prevail. He fears we will too often not take such a turn, but rather be caught up in some apocalyptic or *ersatz*-apocalyptic fantasy. To look at the world non-evasively is often too much for us, particularly the world that much of geopolitics is making a reality. The disagreement between Gray and Barry is not over whether to take a moral, politically normative

stance or not, but over what normative stance to take and over what can be done and, in the light of what comes to be an accurate description of the world (if such there can be), what normative stance to take and as well in the light of that, what we should take to be and not to be a nonstarter. (Gray thinks that philosophers pose too many questions about questions. That no doubt is sometimes so. But are these questions I have just raised idle?)

There is at least one straightforward difference between Barry and Gray. Gray thinks, as I have noted, that both social democracy and socialism are failures and that there is no reasonable prospect in going again in such directions while Barry thinks that only if we find the intellectual and moral resources to do so and deploy them concerning the public sphere can we escape disaster. For Barry, social democracy/socialism is essential; for Gray it is not. They both realize that we face disaster but they think each other's strategies for resisting that are themselves disastrous. (They don't discuss with each other but what each says about their general positions has this clear implication.)

## II

I shall now show why Barry thinks we must move in a social democratic/socialist way and I will then ask whether he has made his case in such a way that it would overcome a scepticism of Gray's sort about both social democracy and socialism. It can and should in turn be asked of Gray whether he suffers from what Andrew Levine calls utopia phobia (Levine 2003, 2).

Let us first see what Barry says about social democracy and socialism. (He doesn't seem, as we have noted, to want to distinguish between them but that *may* be purely *tactical*). He starts off by saying that the modern concept of social justice emerged out of the throes of early industrialization in France and Britain in the 1840s. "The potential revolutionary idea underlying the concept of social justice was that the justice of a society's institutions could be challenged not merely at the margins but at the core. What this meant in practice was that a challenge could be mounted to the power of

the owners of capital and to the dominance of the entire market system within which capitalism was embedded” (Barry 2005, 5).

During the first part of the twentieth century, he goes on to say, social democracy flourished. Moreover, “social justice became the rallying cry of social democratic parties everywhere in Europe, but argument raged over the institutions that were required to realize social justice”(Barry2005, 5)<sup>1</sup> Social democracy took its most sophisticated forms in Sweden and Germany. “It was in Sweden that the most fruitful developments occurred because the task of creating a program was seen by social democrats as collaborative rather than confrontational” (Barry 2005, 5). By the end of the Second World War, social democratic parties had converged on a handful of key ideas. The conception of social justice that Brian Barry sets forth in *Why Social Justice Matters* “will support the case for the institutions of the kind given” by the core of social democratic ideas described below. They are the following:

1. The power of capital must be curbed by strong trade unions (perhaps also worker representation) and by regulation to ensure that people come before profit. As far as public ownership was concerned, non-socialist parties had already, from the nineteenth century on, put public utilities and public transport under municipal ownership or control in most countries, but its extension beyond this was not essential to social democracy. (It is significant that the Swedish social democrats, who were the best exemplars, did not have public ownership as part of their core programme.)
2. The distribution of income and wealth created by capitalism was unacceptably unequal, and should be changed by appropriate measures of taxation and transfer. In particular, the market mechanism failed to provide support for those unable to earn enough to olive on at a level consistent with social justice. Institutions (the ‘welfare state’) must therefore be created to provide adequate incomes.
3. Education and health services of uniformly high quality should be provided universally in such a way as to be equally available to all, thus eliminating the market criterion of ‘ability to’. Although housing was not treated in the same way across the board, it was universally recognized as too important to be left to market forces, though intervention might take different forms (Barry 2005, 5-6).



This sounds, to me at least, more social democrat than socialist, though socialists would also adopt such reforms. But they, as well, seek a more fundamental change in the economic structure of societies. Moreover, they would regard that as necessary for the secure attainment of those reforms. However, and be that as it may, Barry alternatively speaks of himself as a social democrat and as a socialist. It is, however, often thought that it is important to distinguish them and essentially for the reason just mentioned. The standard distinction is that socialists believe that some form of public or common ownership of the means of production is definitive of socialism and that social democrats, by contrast, have made their peace (however bitterly) with capitalism and seek not the demise of capital and its replacement by public ownership of the means of production but to tame it as much as possible—to give it something like a human face. They realize, or think they do, that capitalism can't be overthrown or in any other way replaced, but it can, they believe, be tamed and that a lot of what would be achieved by increasing achievement of social justice—the social justice matters that Barry argues for—and that could be done by carrying out feasible reforms within capitalism. Socialists argue that that will always be inadequate for capital will always seek to dominate and to exploit. This will obtain as long as we have a capitalist order. Capitalists will dominate and exploit in one way or another depending on their circumstances and, to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the circumstances. Under pressure they may pull back a bit. But where they can, they will seek to maximize their profits. Whether it is overthrown or ended by the ballot box, capitalism must not just, socialists claim but social democrats do not, be tamed but be ended. We need to realize social democratic reforms will only be accepted by capitalists where they are thought to be useful in containing the Red Menace or a similar menace or to contain labor militancy where it cannot for a time be effectively contained by other means. The capitalist system will never seek labor's betterment except where doing so will in some way or another answer to the capitalist's own interests. When things of the above sort are not threatening, or thought by capitalists to be threatening, capitalists will claw back the gains that labor has made in previous periods in which such

threats were real or thought to be so. Indeed sometimes capitalists and their apologists may try to engender the widespread belief among their populations that the threat is real and not just to the bosses to gain a firmer control over their populations they will try to spread fear that there is the threat of deep unsettlement, something in some day like a Jacobin terror. However, this last bit *may* be an overstatement. But the claw back part on the part of capitalists is confirmed by our experience from around 1975 to the present (2008).

However, I shall not argue for any strict division between social democracy and socialism in this chapter. As far as actual political usage is concerned, at least in the mainstream press, even the thoroughly non-radical 'center left' parties (or at least the major ones) of France and Italy label themselves 'socialist', though they have a thoroughly neo-liberal conception of the economy and accept most of the social and political consequences that involves. Yet I would rather have had Royalty elected than Sarkozy and I was glad when Prodi, however as it subsequently turned out insecurely, ousted Berlusconi. Still, the very notion of 'public or common ownership' is slippery. It has usually been taken to be 'state ownership' but, as is now widely recognized on the Left, this is clearly inadequate and, if strictly followed, leads to statism, not socialism (Wright 2006). As anarchists long ago saw (as well as Simone Weil), it leads not to a dictatorship *of* the proletariat but to a dictatorship *over* the proletariat. Without the jargon, it leads to elitist and bureaucratic control of the working class rather than working class control over themselves and society and finally to a classless democracy which is not only a political democracy but also an economic democracy where classes will have disappeared from the world scene.<sup>2</sup> However, public or common ownership can take many forms. There is prominently among them cooperative workers' workplace ownership of their means of production. A problem with this (probably no insuperable) is that it can become in a certain respect very close to private ownership of the means of production where we can have a group of workers controlling their means of production *perhaps* at the expense of other workers more generally. There are all sorts of arcane disputes about public or common ownership which I think

can be set aside *for what Barry wants to achieve and what would be possible to achieve in the foreseeable future*, particularly in the capitalist North. *Perhaps*, as Barry thinks, the Swedish social democrats (the most progressively advanced of the social democrats) were right in not taking public or common ownership as part of their core program. But we also must think what it meant to the British Labour Party—becoming ‘new labour’—to give up Clause 4 and to cut out its commitment to common ownership of productive property (Cohen 1995).

What Blairites call ‘old labour’ saw this, and rightly, as the death knell of British social democracy. But ‘new labour’ thought that a blessing. But it is here where we also need a dose of pragmatism. In class struggle for a better world (a more equal world with more freedom, more realization of human potential, and more equal meeting of needs) there are times when we, if we are at all tough minded, must realize we cannot for that time topple capitalism. Suppose it is alive and well in the United States and Japan and has (however mystified) considerable popular support. (People would not vote in socialism.) In such a situation, to achieve anything like an approximation of human emancipation, we must fight for the most progressive reforms we can get: the closest approximation to material equality and to common ownership that we can get. That little gain, if we can get it, will strengthen us to fight for further gains.<sup>3</sup> Or so, at least, it is reasonable to believe. We do not know how far social democracy can go towards greater equality or what the offshoot of these progressive reforms will lead to, but at least it will lead to a little less misery. Sweden is a better place to live for working people and non-capitalist unemployment than the United States.

Barry makes it plain that he detests capitalism, as do I, and like me he calls for revolution (Barry 2005, 272; Nielsen 2007, 257). Barry writes that an author on health and social justice asks ‘Is capitalism a disease?’ Barry remarks:

It seems hard to deny by now its author was right in concluding that it is. It should be added that it is a disease whose severity can be reduced by government intervention to equalize the distribution of wealth and income . . . . Unfortunately, however, it is in just the countries that are most in need of strong government action that rich

individuals and corporations, directly or through foundations that they finance, have gained the most pervasive grip over the commonly shared ideology and the public agenda. The lying propaganda disguised as information disseminated through textbooks and televisions in American schools may perhaps be the most repulsive manifestation of this, but it is only the tip of the iceberg (Barry 2005, 93-94).

He says of socialist intellectuals that they can provide “some direction that will be of inestimable value for the transformation of society” (Barry 2005, 13)—something that to Gray will seem completely off the wall. Barry remarks of capitalists:

Our societies have become ones in which your standing among your peers (the very rich) is unaffected by evidence of greed, corruption, illegality and knowingly ruining thousands or hundreds of thousands of people—just as long as you stay rich.

This is a class that is, let us hope, in the process of destroying itself. The robber barons—the unscrupulous monopolists and oppressors of labour—are the closest analogy. It has been said of them that ‘by exercising their unparalleled economic power without a corresponding sense of public responsibility they undermined the moral prestige of the leading capitalist country in the world to an extent that is almost incalculable’. At the end of this book, I shall offer reasons for hoping that (among other factors) the greed and abuse of power shown in recent years by private companies will undermine the moral basis for capitalism still further and help to open up the political possibility of radical change ((Barry 2005, 145).

He writes concerning revolution right at the end of his *Why Social Justice Matters* and right after he has written of the threat to humanity—a threat to the very continued existence of the human race—of global warming. “The need for another revolution should be obvious to all those who are not willfully blind. It is not, I fear, probable. But without doubt it is possible” (Barry 2005, 272). He does not—perhaps wisely—say exactly what he means by ‘radical change’ or ‘revolution’. But from everything he says it would have to be for a thoroughly social democratic or a socialist world: a world of Norways and Swedens or of Cubas and Venezuelas or perhaps a world of both, depending on the particular conditions of the societies. They would, to fulfill social democratic/socialist aims, be societies which as far as possible had achieved, or was achieving, an approximate material equality

and a condition where people had control over their own lives. (The latter is something that goes with a comprehensive equality.) For socialism to achieve fully and securely its aims, it would not be sufficient for some discrete societies to have achieved that but it must be worldwide. Gray would say that is just in the fantasy of a spirit-seer. He might remind us with a touch of political realism how far we are from the above four societies that resolutely are trying (though in different ways) such an emancipatory social experiment. Think how distant the great majority of the societies of the North, to say nothing of the South, are from anything like that. But all these societies, the ones set on emancipatory paths and those that are not, are still class divided, though Cuba less so. But still class divided Norway, Sweden, Cuba and Venezuela are resolutely trying to end that or at least ameliorate it. But think of the vast majority of the world's societies. They are a great distance from social democracy, to say nothing of socialism.

Certainly Barry cannot (nor can I) be nested in with what Gray regards as the fanatical, blinded and dangerous revolutionaries such as in the traditions of the Jacobins, Anarchists, Bolsheviks, or Maoists. We are pragmatist, historicist, contextualist, and fallibilistic about such matters. For me, that goes all the way down. We have no idea of making a new human being, a radically different society and world that reflects nothing of the things, the often very different things that went before. But we want to, and hope we can, transform society in some emancipatory ways. But we cannot sensibly treat it—the society and world we would transform—as a *tabula rasa*: something without traditions and various conceptions of itself. But we do hope to be part of a movement which will extensively transform society and the world. But this does not mean to build it anew, trying to start from scratch. All practices—our societies being a cluster of social practices—have been revisable and have changed over time, sometimes more rapidly and extensively than others. Still, without these practices we would have no sense of ourselves or of our world. This is where we start and we cannot just set those practices aside. But we can and do change them and sometimes for the better. When we eradicated serfdom and chattel slavery, we moved forward

toward a better life. Even if, as it did, slavery came back in a different form, at least it can be no longer something in our world which can be broadly and publicly acknowledged as legitimate. Just that state, we have reason to believe, will never happen again. That we have done something, again through intense struggle, in some parts of the world for women's rights, e.g., the right to vote, the right to divorce, the right to go to a university, the right to work at professional occupations and to have professional training shows that we have achieved in some societies something even if sexism remains there now often in more subtle forms. (We, of course, should not be complacent about women's achievements.) The unthinking patriotism of George W. Bush (to move to patriotism as another example), rightly criticized by Richard Falk, and widely ridiculed, is no longer, thank God, nearly universally accepted (Falk 2002). The knee-jerk patriotism 'My country, right or wrong, but still my country' is no longer, to understate it, in most places uncritically accepted. In spite of Bushian backsliding, we have moved on. Some of us now even speak of cosmopolitan patriotism (Falk 2002). These little changes—actually often hard-won reforms—cumulatively add up over time. And there it is not unreasonable to believe, unless we have an environmental, economic or nuclear meltdown, that we will go on to, again incrementally, better things. We won't, of course, get Shangri-La but a better world is possible and even necessary if we are to at least get decency. (That comes close to being a tautology.)

Still, I can hear Gray mockingly saying, 'All complacent and historically blind Whiggism'. We live in a horrible world and it is getting worse. Gray is right in making that last claim. (Barry makes it too.) There is not only unnecessary starvation, poverty and growing gross inequalities that not even Robert Nozick or Anthony Flew could claim to be justified. We are at a great distance from the approximate material equality that Barry and I seek and, given how we are behaving environmentally, there is a real possibility that by the beginning of the next century we will have put ourselves out of commission. Gray stresses these things; Barry does so even more (Gray 2008). How can there be any grounds for Barry's hope and mine that we can, if only we hold on to our brains and

moral sensitivities, build a better world? Do we not face a grim struggle for survival that, if we survive at all, will be in some skewed sense a survival of the fittest? Tick off some of the things which oppress us: (1) There is, perhaps irreversibly, severe environmental degradation; (2) there is growing inequality that is so extreme that starvation and malnutrition are common among the very poor; (3) there is increased stress among poor people and, with the undermining of unions, increased domination and exploitation; (4) there is increasing undermining of people's control over their own lives, with the vast oppression of the peoples of the globe (most seriously in the South) by American imperialism with its new increasingly flawed resort to bloody and protracted wars that reign death on civilians; and (5) there are terrorist threats (including potential nuclear and biological threats) exacerbated by the terrible situation in large part brought about by American imperialism. (Think of not only Iraq, but of how the Middle East as a whole is being turned into a sectarian battleground.)

I haven't ticked off all of our maladies but we have enough here brought to our attention to make us very cynical about even a modest so-called incremental pragmatist belief in progress. Talk of a better world being possible sounds extremely hollow and Panglosian. Small wonder that many of us have Gray's bitterly cynical view of the world. His extremely modest proposals for making things humanly tolerable are so modest as to come to almost nothing at all.

I don't see any response to this except to keep on repeating that we are in for a long hard slog, but we must keep on struggling even with the odds stacked against us. We are not just observers but agents as well. It is our lives that are at stake. We will probably, very probably, be defeated. But we must not give up hope; indeed for our very survival and for there coming to be a better world or indeed any human world at all, we must not give up struggling. (As it says in one of Leonard Cohen's songs, we must go on.) Remember my earlier accounting that many of us who write feel about Barry's following Orwell in saying that we write with (a) the hope of getting things straight, or better, at least straighter and (b) we write to do our best to change the world by making it a little more humane place. But (a) and (b) are things that are very likely to sit badly with each other. The more we meet

(a), the more we seem at least to see that (b) is an impossibility. Barry, unlike Gray, does not think we are left in quite such a grim situation. And recall that I have pointed out how in *some* ways we have progressed so that we can see what it is to in some way make some progress. Barry's suggested reforms make sense and if put into practice would do much to relieve such a grim situation—a situation which, as Barry sees, as does Gray, is staring us in the face, and as something we must not blink at, though most of us will. Yet I remain, Gray-like, bitterly pessimistic. Our progress has been minimal and we have little in the way of reasonable expectations that Barry's or Barry-like reforms will obtain.

### III

I want now to start to see in this section if Barry has given us viable or even plausible reasons for having his hopes. He thinks that the facts he assembles for our reflective consideration will, if duly and carefully reflected on and put into the fire of something like wide reflective equilibrium, engender anger in us—meaning the populations of the world—and a determination to do something about our drastic situations. We will be motivated to resist. We will be like those Greenpeace activists who scaled to the roof of the British Parliament and placed protesting signs against the expansion of Heathrow Airport in the face of air travel's contribution to global warming. We, if we take these matters to heart, will feel this way, he thinks, unless we are very privileged and as well without compassion and an elementary sense of fairness, ill-informed, or cannot think clearly. If things in the world are as bad as Barry describes (and Gray as well) and getting worse, we will in our collective anger and as peoples becoming increasingly discontent resolve to do something about it if we can. We will come to have the feeling that we have had enough of those bastards who so structure our world, propagandize us about it, and let it go on that way when they could readily do something about it. (It is not like when you go downhill as you age.)

So what are some of these facts?



(1) The children of poor mothers get a different (an unequal) start in life from their very conception because of the fact that poor mothers typically cannot afford nutritious food or to live in a non-toxic environment. As Barry even more strongly puts it, arbitrary inequalities begin before conception, since the health and nutritional status of the mother at the time of conception is critical. In the womb “the future child is vulnerable to lack of essential nutrients (adequate folic acid can prevent most cases of spina bifida, for example)” (Barry 2005, 14). But the mothers of poor children very well may not have these nutrients. “The advantages of some newborns and the disadvantages of others...are likely to follow them through life” (Barry 2005, 15). In all sorts of ways, even in rich countries from the United States to Saudi Arabia, advantages and disadvantages—sometimes extreme ones—are perpetuated over generations. “The bottom line, however, is that parents’ social class predicts children’s school success and thus ultimate life chances” (Barry 2005, 15). It is not difficult to see why. Children’s proper maturation requires a lot of talking to them and their not just being propped up before the T.V. by parents exhausted from long hours of work and poor transport by an inadequate public transport system. Where these exhausted and stressed parents talk very much at all to their children, their talk often comes principally to a string of ‘Do this! Don’t do that!’ These stressed out parents are often parents desperately trying to make ends meet and threatened with the loss of an insecure, low paying and usually unpleasant job or of having to make out instead on the pittance of welfare. In either case, their children’s life prospects are bleak. Later in life, where a child needs an environment of books, music, art objects and, perhaps most of all, conversation, there is little in the way of those things for the typical poor child. It, that is, very rarely is a part of the poor child’s life while normally all kinds of advantages are showered on rich children’s lives. (I am not saying that rich children’s lives are always or even usually a rose garden. Their parents may be neurotic and in one way or another mistreat them or the children may be caught in the middle of a marital conflict. But the poor child is likely to be subject to those things too as well in addition to all the other more material and almost impossible to escape matters I have just described.) It, as Barry

points out, is that for the parent and in different ways for the children of those parents that stress goes up the lower the social ladder in which they find themselves. We have vast and arbitrary inequalities (as he well specifies) for which those suffering from them are typically not in any way responsible. Moreover, these inequalities are growing worldwide both *between* the North and the South and *within* nation-states of both the North and the South. These considerations are obviously extremely relevant to social justice and make uninformed or hypocritical a lot of talk about responsibility.

(2) Barry also points out that many “of the losses inflicted on the poorest people are the results of deliberate policies adopted by the governments of the rich countries or the international institutions they control (Barry 2005, 15). The treatment of so-called ‘guest workers’ in Europe is clearly exploitative and instituted not just by employers but by the restrictive regulations of their governments as well. They work together. Moreover, it is even worse in wealthy countries such as Saudi Arabia and Dubai. Moreover, migrant workers in the United States and Canada are treated scandalously and again abetted by the governments of those countries. It is interesting to see how governments in collaboration with capital add to this. When Indonesia, for example, was hit by a sudden economic collapse the capitalist order, principally the IMF, “had billions of dollars to bail out foreign creditors, but paying out far smaller sums to provide fuel and food subsidies for those thrown out of a job or who saw their wages plummeting was viewed [by the IMF] as a waste of money” (Barry 2005, 15). This is exacerbated by the fact that the collapse was at least in part caused by the unbridled financial speculation of casino capitalism. That is the logic and morality of the capitalist states and the institutions which are a part of or supported by global capitalism. Capitalist governments serve as facilitators for capitalism, particularly big capitalism.

(3) The power of trade unions in both the North and South has since the 1980s been sharply reduced and with this workers’ working conditions have been considerably eroded and their rights lessened, though more so in the United States, Canada and Britain than in France, Norway, and

Sweden. This goes with the deterioration of unionization, a deterioration that is much greater in North America where there is little in the way of social democratic protections. Workers, particularly in the United States, where before they were sometimes unwittingly against their own interests anti-union or indifferent to unions, have been partly turned around. By now 50% of the workers where they are non-unionized want to join a union (Barry 2005, 271). This is understandable when most of them are what Marxists call 'wage slaves'. We should recognize that most work is a form of servitude and is engaged in out of economic necessity. Academics are in a poor position to appreciate that for much, though certainly not all, of their work is challenging and interesting. Moreover, they have considerable autonomy in what they do. But that is not so for the vast amount of labor in the rich North, to say nothing of the whole world. (There are some places, particularly but not exclusively in the South, where some work is hell.)

(4) The prevailing belief system of any extant society, Barry contends, is largely, directly or indirectly, the work of those in power in the society, particularly the dominant powers of the society (Barry 2005, 27). In our capitalist societies it is that of the capitalists, upper managers they hire, and their high political facilitators. Not infrequently, they are politicians at time T1 only to become capitalists at time Tn or vice-versa. There is frequently a revolving door between politics and executive positions in corporations.

(5) Poor countries need, in a way they are often prevented from doing now, to control their own financial transactions so that their economies will not be devastated by financial withdrawals in speculative raids on their currencies. But the IMF and the World Bank demand that countries should not impose controls on the movement of capital.<sup>4</sup> They make this a condition for loans or aid (Barry 2005, 29). This leads to some incredible economic catastrophes and social injustices.

(6) Social mobility is falling. In the North a middle class child is now fifteen times more likely to stay middle class than a working class child is likely to move into the middle class. This was less true in earlier times in our recent past, though escape from the working class was always difficult.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, those who fail to have middle class jobs do not find themselves having stable working class jobs as they did in the recent past, e.g., works in steel mills or car factories are often either unemployed or marginally employed. This has contributed to the rise of inequality, to increased poverty and insecurity with the stress that goes with it. And it has led, not unnaturally, to increased crime.

(7) Students from low income families may be going to college in the United States in increasing numbers. But, in very considerable and disproportionate numbers they attend lower ranking colleges and junior colleges leading to jobs lacking status—indeed often, in fact, vocational jobs (Barry 2007, 62). Similar things happen, though the educational structure is somewhat, though still not essentially, different, in Britain and Canada.

(8) Upper class and middle class parents in Britain, for example, often spend more than one hundred pounds a week on tutoring for their already advantaged children. This is more money than typically members of the working class (often black) live on for a week. This compounds the disadvantages of working class children already (as we have seen) disadvantaged.

(9) “Health is an asset and a resource critical to human development...the distribution of ill-health and long life in the populations depends on relative incomes, on autonomy or powerlessness in the workplace and on a multiplicity of other aspects of the basic structure of society” (Barry 2005, 70). We should remember Barry’s point (previously mentioned) that anxiety and stress tend to increase as we move down the social scale and chronic stress (something the very poor extensively experience) leads to ill health and premature mortality (Barry 2005, 77). Again, the lower classes fare badly here compared with the middle class or the upper class. We can see the potential here—for me, something to be hoped for—for the renewal of overt class conflict, though we have in the North little of it yet. But the pressures are building up. The poors, as they are called in South Africa, may rise up against their oppressors and exploiters and when we look at the whole world—both the North and the South—they are the multitude.

10) We hear a lot of verbal outcry against the chaos and repeated civil wars or proxy civil wars in the failed states, particularly in Africa and the Arab world. But in relation to that Barry stresses, something that Thomas Pogge has stressed as well (Pogge 2002), that the possession of natural resources invites political manipulation. The insurgents in Sierra Leone, for example, maintain themselves with money from diamond companies. This suits the companies fine for they can buy diamonds in such a situation cheaper and with fewer restrictions than from an established government. Failed states are sometimes useful for companies. So the companies do nothing to end it. The “chaos in the Congo [to switch to another example] also suits international firms just fine, since there is nobody capable of taxing or controlling them” (Barry 2005, 74). Among other things, the systematic raping in villages of women along with their further gross abuse, makes for a situation which should not be tolerated. But it is.

11) Barry, in his chapter “The Making of the Black Gulag”, points out to the preponderance of Blacks, particularly in the United States, in prison or harassed by the police. [He should also have mentioned the preponderance of them in the armed forces of the U.S. or in the private armies outsourced by the American government and explained why.] He rightly observes that prison “has a monstrously destructive effect. While in prison, one-third lose their home, two-thirds lose contact with their families. And it should be added that after imprisonment it is very hard for them to find even a bad job. “It is hardly surprising that two out of three are reconvicted within two years, with the proportion among males aged 18-20 rising to seven out of ten” (Barry 2005, 105). Here we see race riding along with class for what we have been talking about are principally black people.

12) We still have the widespread and a self-congratulatory belief among the upper classes and the middle classes, that the “rich owe their wealth to hard work, enterprise, and frugality while the poor have a bad moral character which leads to laziness, fecklessness and the kind of behavior that...is liable to land them in prison” (Barry 2005, 135). But this (as Barry recognizes) is pure right-wing ideology belied by the following facts: (a) the behavior of the robber barons in the past and

present day executives and owners of major capitalist enterprises, e.g., Enron's chief executive or Conrad Black (Barry 2005, 103-104)—to be fair, not all are that extreme but there is (in varying degrees) plenty of that rot among corporate elites; (b) the effect (as we earlier noted) of social factors on children for which they are not responsible but which disadvantage them all their lives and are largely not controllable by them; (c) given the factors noted in (b), there are factors deeply affecting people's lives that have little to do with whether they work hard and diligently or not; (d) there is for the advantaged financial aid from the parents and grandparents. Rich kids get a boost from such help, something that poor kids almost invariably do not have. It is not because their parents or grandparents care less about them but because of their lack of resources—something that the rich have. Furthermore, as Barry points out, “the Great Depression in America made manifest nonsense of the notion that the unemployed could all get jobs if they tried harder”. This has again and again been reconfirmed where the job market tightens (when it does the jobs are just not there). Most of the time, market tightening or not, the jobs are just not there in sufficient numbers for anything like full employment. Social democratic, but still capitalist, Sweden aimed for full employment in the 1970s. But as global competition tightened, it became impossible for them. Finally, in Third World countries where unemployment is high, it is completely absurd to speak of jobs being available for everyone who tries hard to get them. In South Africa, with 40% unemployment, it is manifestly impossible as it was in Rio de Janeiro where 160,000 people applied for only 1,000 jobs as rubbish collectors. That everybody could have a job if they try hard enough is the grossest kind of capitalist ideology. The idea that there is a natural order of inequality is of the same order of nonsense. The order of inequality results principally from social factors which are not written in stone. That there is more inequality in Canada than there is in Sweden is a matter of different social-political-economic arrangements.

13) In his chapter on “Rights and Responsibilities” Barry writes, “Instead of accepting their responsibilities, the current business elite both in Britain and the United States appear to be

interested only in the 'bottom line' – how much profit they can generate for the company and how much (even if the company loses money) they can carry off themselves" (Barry 2005, 144). Barry then goes on to remark, moving to an overt normative assessment, "greed and abuse of power shown by chief executives and other people in influential positions in great capitalism firms undermines the moral basis of capitalism and helps open up the political possibility of radical change" (Barry 2005, 145). Capitalists and capitalist managers could be *capitalist responsible*, e.g., just going out for advantaging their corporation as much as possible or even at the extreme trying to advantage the whole capitalist order as much as possible. Capitalist managers almost never do the latter and the former is becoming rarer. They are, often, ignoring their capitalist responsibility, looking out for number one. As Barry chronicles, they increasingly try to feather their own nests even when it hurts the firm they are working for (Barry 2005, 144). So much for capitalist solidarity.

14) Barry remarks concerning homeless people that, faced as they are with a bleak and meaningless existence, it is understandable that "homeless people resort to some reliable means of obtaining oblivion.... [I]t may be almost impossible for homeless people to kick addictions to drugs and alcohol. So again, instead of holding individuals responsible, we should apply the public health model and change the circumstances in which they find themselves" (Barry 2005, 161). Speaking now only of the North, there are increasing numbers of such people. Of course, the situation is much worse in the South. There is (speaking again of the North) something that a vigorous social policy in such circumstances is capable of halting or at least ameliorating. This is particularly true of a wealthy society like the United States. But the policy isn't there. We should not be Kant's grandparents holding people responsible for that which they can hardly help given the society they live in.

15) The struggle for status, the attainment of positional goods (having, for example, a bigger home or a more fancy kitchen than their neighbors), 'keeping up with the Joneses', having more and more things, is rooted in the way our capitalist societies operate. If people are so oriented, capitalist profits are greater. But acquiring these things for most people is stressful and psychologically

destructive. “A more equal society could create a sort of mutual disarmament in the struggle for status through material accumulation, allowing people to be more relaxed about their incomes and work less hard” (Barry 2005, 178). Something the developed societies of the North could afford if this consumerist orientation were abandoned. (It just in pure economic terms could be afforded anyway.) And it could not be feasible in a socialist society which need not be growth-oriented while for a capitalist society it is necessary. For capitalist firms, or at least the big ones, it is either grow or die.

16) “The superrich subvert democracy by their control of the media” (Barry 2005, 180). Three quarters of the press in Britain is controlled by three men: Rupert Murdoch (*The Sun, The Times, The Sunday Times*), Lord Rutherford (*The Mail*), and Conrad Black (*The Telegraph*) (Barry 2005, 235). In the United States, six do. Similar things obtain for Canada and Australia. Murdoch shows up again notoriously with his control of Fox TV and the *New York Post* in the United States (Barry 2005, 235).

17) “...the social pathology of a highly unequal society consists in the destructive effect that inequality has on social solidarity: the sense that those who live together share a common fate and should work together” (Barry 2005, 183). Something that is essential for socialism as well as a political democracy will be an economic democracy with firms worker owned and controlled. This will generate considerable worker solidarity at least in a firm. We can hope, and it is not unreasonable to expect, that it will extend wider to a workers’ solidarity—a solidarity that will even cross borders.

18) “We are simply kidding ourselves if we think that [capital grants] are a painless substitute for equalization of wealth. There is no threshold of an ‘adequate’ capital grant if those with access to more can still stay ahead” (Barry 2005, 197). And there are such people. In our societies there are people, as we have seen, with access to parental and grandparental help to top off their capital grants while there are many without such access or even the possibility of such access. It is



no accident that those who have such access and those who do not is tightly linked to class. Parental capital so distributed will reproduce class-based differences in life-choices and life-chances. The “great enemy of social justice remains the vast inequality of wealth and its tendency to increase” (Barry 2005, 199). But it is this that a capitalist society gives us.

19) Employers can keep the threat of dismissal in the background as a disciplinary weapon in their treatment of employees. Moreover, they “can choose to rule...by fear, and throw out employees regularly simply to make the threat of unemployment more salient. Thus, the president of General Electric recommends firing 10 percent of the company’s employees each year automatically—*pour encourager les autres*” (Barry 2005, 205). Barry goes on to add that this “strategy is especially attractive where there is a large pool of available labour, the job requires only a minimal ability and training, and where monitoring is either unnecessary or easy” (Barry 2005, 205). An example is that of working at a checkout counter in a supermarket. Working conditions there are often tyrannical and the job with the development of electronics has become de-skilled. It is no longer necessary to calculate change or even to be able to. Moreover, the cash registers are connected to a central computer so that management “can easily monitor the average time per transaction taken by each worker” (Barry 2005, 205). And, particularly where the supermarket workers are non-unionized, they can easily be fired.

20) “If we want social justice, we have to reduce the importance of having paid employment” (Barry 2005, 208). Barry gives two reasons for this. “The first is that the less intimidating the threat of being unemployed, the more choosy workers can be and the more employers will have to make their jobs attractive. The second is that there is no adequate justification for large inequalities of earnings—so that the smaller the part played by earnings in people’s standards of living, the more just is the society” (Barry 2005, 208).

21) Instead of having set shifts organized at least three months in advance, there is coming into being quick shifts of days or hours of employees. There can be made simply by a phone call so

that a computer scanning when employment is most needed will decide on a day-to-day or even on an hour-to-hour basis when the employees should come to work. This makes the work increasingly stressful for workers. They cannot plan their days and weeks. They can't determine a time to do essential shopping, make a trip to the doctor, plan a family outing. This Wal-Mart strategy is a great capitalist ploy which clearly, and in an incredibly crude way, puts *profits before people*. However, it maximizes profit. But is it *parti-pris* to say that is essentially what capitalism is about? I don't think so. Am I mistaken or exaggerating? Am I being too reductive or essentialist? Again, I don't think so.<sup>6</sup>

22) Public political debate, with which we are familiar, debate that gets a substantial hearing in the United States and Britain closes, down a lot of options that would be open for debate in a more democratic society. There is little difference, though particularly now (2008) there is *some*, between the Democratic and Republican parties in the United States or between the Labour ('new labour') and the Conservative parties in Britain. (Rhetoric aside—and not all of that—Thatcher and Blair seem to stand for much the same thing.) Neither Britain nor the United States—nor Canada, for that matter—has proportional representation and this makes it very difficult for small parties to get a hearing in parliament. I don't want to suggest that there is no difference between the major parties in these countries, but it is not very significant. If I were a citizen of the United States, given the extreme nature of the G. W. Bush administration, I would hold my nose and vote democratic and the same thing would obtain if I was in an Ontario riding (district) where the only genuine competition is between the Conservatives and the Liberals. Again, I would hold my nose and vote Liberal. I don't know what I would do if I were in Britain. I probably would vote (if there is one) for some small socialist party with no chance of winning. Our only genuine choice in such societies is that of choosing the lesser evil. We repeatedly vote strategically if we vote at all. But Barry's point is very well taken that in Britain and the United States (and he could have added Canada, the NDP is particularly pallid as a left-wing alternative) our choices are very constrained. The contending parties are all for growth and lowering taxes. Hilary Clinton in an authoritative political statement makes that very clear

(Clinton 2007). But it is both these positions that need firm challenging, examining and parliamentary debate. But there are no major parties in Britain, Canada or the United States that do so. In the last U.S. presidential elections Ralph Nader (who would have done so) garnered only 0.3 percent of the vote and was barred from the presidential debates. The same thing happens to the Green Party in Canada. Its voice, given the threat of global warming, would have been particularly important to hear.

Barry rightly remarks:

Nobody has suggested that taxes should actually be raised to pay for education, health care and enough money for everyone to live on decently, or that 'defence' spending should be cut drastically to help fund domestic programmes. Rather, the only argument has been about how much taxes should be cut and how much more money should be committed to the project of empire. That craven acceptance of the other side's agenda illustrates perfectly the triumph of the ideas of the right (Barry 2005, 237).

These 22 points are just a sampling of some of the factual-cum-interpretive considerations Barry sets out. But they are sufficient to give us something of his rationale for a social democratic/socialist orientation and for a conception of social justice that would go with it. But it is important to remember that there is a whole family of conceptions of social justice that would also do so, e.g., John Roemer's or Stuart Hampshire's. (See Rawls's remark in his Preface to the French edition of *A Theory of Justice* where he says of his position that while in the United States it "has been referred to as liberal, sometimes as left-liberal; in England it has been seen as social democratic, and in some ways as labor" (Rawls 1999, 416).)<sup>7</sup> And Hampshire has made his affiliation to social democracy clear. Yet they all have conceptions of social justice that significantly differ from those of Barry in his more standardly philosophical works. Yet they all belong to a family of conceptions of social justice which are equally compatible with the factual and the factual-cum-interpretive twenty-two statements just taken from Barry. *Perhaps* with Rawls, Barry does not think so. He has been a sharp critic of Rawls, particularly his later thought, believing, I think mistakenly, that Rawls has

departed too much from his original egalitarianism. Whether that is so or not is very disputable and I believe that it should in standard philosophical contexts be disputed. But that aside, Rawls makes clear in the same Preface his commitment to social democracy and rejection (*pace* Gray's understanding of him) of the welfare state and welfare state liberalism (Rawls 1999, 419-20). Barry's social democracy/socialism are equally supported by Rawls. But Rawls thinks that welfare states do not move far enough in the direction of social democracy. A social democracy, on his account, must either be a liberal socialism or a property-owning democracy (Rawls 1999, 419-20).

There is a considerable range of conceptions of social justice from G. A. Cohen to Ronald Dworkin that are equally compatible with social democracy and liberal socialism, i.e., the kind of socialism that Barry defends, not the socialism of Jacobin inspiration that Gray describes and criticizes. Its core is nicely captured by Barry in the extended quotation he takes from Harold Pinter which introduces his introduction to Part I of *Why Social Justice Matters*. But when it comes to philosophy's attempt to give the most perspicuous representation of the principles of social justice, there will be the familiar philosophical disputes about what conceptions best capture that. But, as Barry makes clear, he is not concerned with that in *Why Social Justice Matters* as he was, for example, in his *Justice as Impartiality*. But the factual-interpretive claims we have been concerned with here are meant to stand independently of any particular such philosophical theory. They don't take sides on what divides Rawls, Cohen, Barry, Dworkin, or Levine. They will take us, if near to the mark, to social democracy or liberal socialism and to the varied philosophical conceptions of social justice compatible with those political orientations. But they will not take sides concerning the family of such philosophical conceptions. Should it be G. A. Cohen's or Amartya Sen's or someone else's? Or is it, as Gray rather imperiously claims, too much of a dispute about "arguments about arguments", typical, he has it, of philosophers fiddling while Rome burns? (I leave aside such meta-philosophical questions here.)

## IV

I now want to say something about the 22 claims I have taken from Barry. They, as I have remarked, are just a sampling taken from this very rich book. But they are sufficient, if they are near to the mark, to show that (1) social democracy or some form of liberal socialism is morally mandatory and necessary (but perhaps not sufficient) to save us from what is a looming disaster of mind-numbing dimensions, i.e., where global warming and population growth are threatening the very existence of humankind (see the last three chapters of *Why Social Justice Matters.*); and (2) that if these 22 claims (or at least a decent number of them) are not on some plausible readings of them well-justified and functional motivationally then social justice is unachievable. If that is so, we will get a world something like that which Gray believes we are caught in. These are two issues we must face.

Barry's claims are all at their core empirical claims or empirically grounded claims. And claims which are empirical or empirically grounded are open to confirmation or information. Many are, I believe, empirically well-warranted. For what I have just said to be warrentedly assertable requires empirical attention to the world. This is also true of empirical claims or empirically grounded claims that turn out—just turn out—to be non-warranted. Testing or testability is crucial all along the line. It is perhaps not too extreme to say that with some of them, e.g., about global warming, our very survival depends on gaining a correct account of what is going on here and what is likely to happen. It is imperative that we get reliable knowledge here and then act on it promptly.

The facts at issue here cannot simply be read off to the world without conceptualizing and interpretation; some would say (*seemingly* Barry among them)—extending, I think what counts as 'theory a bit'—without a theory. But, theory or not, empirical evidence comes in here crucially. Suppose, as Barry says, we can reliably predict the general course of what will happen to a person from very early on. If a child comes from an impoverished family and goes to school repeatedly

without breakfast and hardly a very nourishing meal in the evening, he/she will predictably fall asleep in class and do poorly in class and will hardly go on in school beyond the legal limit where he or she can leave, let alone go on to university. We will have to look and see what happens to children in such situations whether their lives will track the pattern hypothesized. Sociologists and social psychologists have done this—this looking and seeing—and have found out that this is how things go, not for every child, of course, but for most of them. We might not know why there are these few exceptions, but we know that to attribute laziness on the part of a child exhausted, perhaps beaten, and without encouragement that does badly is way off the mark. To attribute laziness as the cause of his poor behavior in school is not plausible since there are so many other explanations that can more plausibly be given to explain his behavior. But how do we explain the few exceptions? *Perhaps* we do not have a good explanation. But whether we can explain them or not does nothing to show that the usual explanations by sociologists and social psychologists—the kind given by Barry drawing on that literature—are not appropriate. And what Barry describes is what happens to the mass of impoverished children. And it is this that counts in giving social explanations and attaining social justice. Probably the child, who unlike most poor children, does well, even with all her disadvantages, had in the womb the important nourishing fluids or something else biological was at play or perhaps she was lucky enough to have parents who were determined, and worked against all odds, that their child should not fall into the poverty trap they did and perhaps these efforts paid off. But for both the biological causes and the social causes (or some combination of both) there is nothing the child himself or herself could reasonably be blamed or for that matter praised. It is not something for which he or she is responsible. But the most important point is no matter how we explain such individually deviant behavior, i.e., departing from the statistical norm, that it is the latter that counts in thinking about how children from impoverished backgrounds will behave. Is it not the case, as Barry claims (following certain social scientists), that generally speaking children of the working class who are so impoverished, so deprived, that they do not perform in mathematics and reading

skills as well as middle class or upper class children, that they tend to drop out of school and more commonly drift into crime than middle class or upper class children? And is it not true that for even those working class children who do stay in school that they tend to opt for a vocational rather than an academic route with its lesser privileges? This can and has been ascertained empirically. The answer to the above questions is yes. It is not a matter of speculation or philosophical dispute.

To be warrantably confident of that we have to be able to determine who is working class, middle class and upper class, but this can also be done empirically by attention to income. That is often not adequate for class analyses as is well known (Sen, 2006). But it will do for the above purposes. Perhaps it will be observed that we have to know what that income is. But now things are getting absurd. The engine is idling: we are pointlessly asking questions about questions. If we must have an answer we can say we are talking about income when we say A has thirty thousand dollars that he can access while B has only two hundred. There we have a difference of income. The point to be noted is that we have all along the line things that are empirically verifiable and falsifiable. Very probably never with certainty, but reliably fallibilistically so that what happens—empirically happens, if that is not pleonastic—counts for or against the warranted assertability of the claim. And thus we can give evidence for what happens and does not happen.

Barry's claims—though not everything he says about them—are empirical factual claims or rest on empirical factual claims. They are not evidence immune. But they are not what some have called brute descriptions, e.g., 'Bush weighs 160 pounds' or 'Bush has brown hair'. They are things that can be in a plain sense (though perhaps not in a philosophical sense) conclusively established. Contrast this with a description that (while remaining empirical) is not a brute description, e.g., 'Bush is both ill-educated and rather dumb in spite of the schools he went to.' This also makes a factual claim and many believe that it is true. But both those who believe it to be true and those who do not recognize that, unlike 'Bush weighs 160 pounds' or 'Bush has brown hair', 'Bush is both ill-educated and rather dumb in spite of the schools he went to' or 'Bush is fanatical and dogmatic' are not so

*simply* empirically determinable, though that does mean that they are evidence immune. Some of the words in the last two sentences, namely 'ill-educated', 'dumb', 'fanatical', and 'dogmatic', are certainly not value-neutral as are the words in the first two mentioned sentences. But these last two sentences remain descriptive: confirmable or disconfirmable, not just any behavior can be intelligibly called fanatical or dumb, though there will be some disagreement about what is fanatical and what is dumb. They are contested, and sometimes hotly contested, though they are not what has been called 'essentially contested', since nothing is, there being no essences (Rorty 1999). These words, in contrast to 'ought', 'right', 'good', are said to be thickly evaluative and have both a descriptive and evaluative force (Putnam 2002; 2004).

Many of Barry's key sentences in the 22 claims I have given use thick evaluative-cum-descriptive terms. The sentences in which they are used are both evaluative and descriptive. 'Working class people tend to be disadvantaged' or 'Work for most working class people is a form of servitude, stressful, anxiety arousing and alienating' are sentences using such terms. They are both descriptive and evaluative or normative. Unlike 'Working class people do not live as long as middle class people' or 'There are more (proportional to their numbers) blacks in jail than whites in the United States' or 'Prisoners in the United States are not allowed to vote' or 'In the United States but not in Italy there is a death penalty', whether we assent to the claims made by these last four sentences or not. These sentences, taken in themselves, are non-evaluative. I can tell you that the death penalty exists in Iran without giving you to understand whether I approve of it or not, but I cannot tell you that 'Bush is a dumb bastard' without revealing my attitude toward Bush. Yet with this last sentence I am also still describing him though tendentiously and perhaps falsely. Yet I can say 'You ought not to lie' without describing you.

Most of the key sentences in Barry's 22 claims utilize thick evaluative terms and so they both describe and evaluate and it is impossible (*pace* R. M. Hare) to split off the evaluative part off from the descriptive part. That is, we can't do this without some qualifying of the sentences (and thus



changing them) or, uttering them, with some distinctive use of our intonation contours. In this way they are unlike 'Happiness is good' or 'You should never tell a lie'. If I assert 'Bush is a dumb bastard' I have both described him *and* evaluated him. If I *so* describe him I cannot, while continuing to so describe him, withdraw the evaluation. It makes little sense to say 'Bush is a dumb bastard' and still say full stop that he is a good man. It is not like saying 'In America they have the death penalty'. You cannot determine from my just asserting that (unless I utilize a certain intonation contour) whether I approve of the death penalty or not.

At the core of Barry's claims there are such mixtures (inextricable mixtures) of the evaluative and the descriptive. But they are claims which are still truth-apt and admit of empirically evidentially, though *perhaps* never so decisively as certain brute or brutish empirical claims, e.g., 'Bush graduated from Yale' which is different from saying 'Surprisingly, Bush graduate from Yale.' My claim is that all 22 of Barry's claims have such a status. They are, that is, empirical and thus confirmable or disconfirmable and they are evaluative or normative as well. I further claim, perhaps mistakenly, but without any metaphysics or ideology or being subject to Gray's strictures, that they are claims we have reasonable evidence to believe to be true. So they cannot be justifiably dismissed on *a priori* or purely conceptual grounds or on ideological grounds (if anything can be legitimately so dismissed) or on metaphysical grounds. We have with Barry's claims conceptually modest, empirically responsible claims that cannot be dismissed on Gray or Gray-like grounds. (*Some* of them I do not think we would want to disclaim at all.) We have a case for social democracy or socialism without obscurantism, myth-creation, obfuscation, or utopian fantasies.

## V

The conception of social justice that Barry gives us to go with his defense of social democracy/socialism is a robust egalitarianism that commits U.S. to the ideal of an *approximate material equality* worldwide. (Something that Gray would surely dismiss.) He, quite rightly, worries

about the feasibility of such a conception of social justice. We are certainly a great distance from it—to put it mildly—in the world we live in. Indeed even in the best of extant societies. Barry remarks, “The current economic regime [referring to the US] is designed to replicate on a world scale the most abhorrent features of American society. A fundamental change in the whole system of global governance to control the power of capital rather than to maximize it would obviously make an enormous difference” (Barry 2005, 216). Note here that Barry is reasoning social democratically rather than socialistically. A socialist, except as a temporary expedient, would not talk of ‘*controlling* the power of capital’. She would talk instead of *eliminating* or overcoming capital. Barry would no doubt say in the foreseeable circumstances that control—some form of taming—is the best we can get. And a socialist could very well agree with that. But ‘control’ or ‘eliminate’, we are a long way from either. How do we get from here to either a genuinely social democratic or socialist future—let alone in Marx’s and Engels’s sense—a communist future? (Marx and Engels 1978). (For commentary see Levine 2003, 158-71; Ollman 1978; Moore 1993.)

But how are we going to “change in the whole system of global government” to yield economic justice even in the countries of the rich North, let alone the whole world feasible? It is quite possible to be cynical about this. But we should not forget about Barry’s notion of ‘extending the time horizon’. Things are bleak now but what about in twenty years’ time? What Barry’s proposals actually show, if well-taken, is that we have the resources for and could organize our societies (indeed the world) into *more equal* societies and indeed into a more equal world. There could both *within* societies and *between* societies be much more equality than we actually have. But he does not show, what he and I as cosmopolitans and egalitarians very much want to be shown, namely, that a world of approximately material equality is feasible. Perhaps this is only a heuristic ideal? But if so, it is desirable to keep it at least as a heuristic. He does argue that we can afford social justice, that, politics apart, it is economically feasible. Indeed, he argues toward the end of Chapter 16 (correctly I believe) that the question to be asked should instead be ‘Can we *not* afford social justice?’ (Barry 2005, 229).

But does that mean, except as a heuristic, approximate material equality? I would think it should mean rather much more equality (including more material equality) than we have now. But whether we could ever plausibly have approximate material equality, unless we play fast and loose with 'approximate' is another matter.

For him social justice is not an optional matter but a life and death matter. In actual life we cannot separate the political and economic and consider them independently. When we consider them together, things become much bleaker. Still, it may be methodologically useful first to consider them separately. So Barry considers first whether it is economically feasible to achieve a more equal society. (Notice that still does not show how to get to a world (not even a society) of approximate material equality. Again, isn't that *just* a heuristic ideal?) We have already seen that he believes that we need a fundamental change in the whole economic system for this to occur: to get, that is, a more equal society and eventually a more equal world. Indeed I also think (perhaps mistakenly) that this is so, but what he actually gives U.S. is a set of reforms that could be carried out in a social democratic but still capitalist society, exemplified by Scandinavian societies and best exemplified by Sweden in the 1970s. The rich societies of the North seem the most obvious places to start, though, as John Roemer thinks, that may be a mistake (Roemer 1994). But in a global economy which has poor societies, even partially developed big poor societies, e.g., India, South Africa, Brazil, with a partly but extensively highly trained workforce (e.g., doctors, engineers, software designers), there is always the problem of brain drain and of capital flight. If a rich country, or indeed any country with a trained workforce, taxed their highly skilled workers (doctors, for example) higher to achieve greater equality in their society or just raised the taxes of the wealthy, including foreign enterprises in the country, in order to reduce the inequalities of wealth, there will be both a brain drain and capital flight. Such taxation (the Right wrongly calls it 'punitive taxation'), rather than being recognized as just an effort to achieve greater fairness, will soon begin to trigger immigration or at least change in domicile and capital flight. Barry translates this into the concrete with the following example:

The worst off people in India are better off with doctors, engineers and other trained professionals, being retained than they would be without them. 'In Bangalore, the "Silicon Valley of India", highly skilled computer software designers...earn[ed] an average of \$960 a month [in 1993], one eighth of the comparable American wage.' But in a country in which the average income is a lot less than that per *year*, this is still, comparatively speaking, a lot of money. If they are allowed to keep a lot of it, these software designers can live a pretty comfortable life—especially if it is true that the biggest luxury of all is being able to have full-time domestic servants—and still contribute something. But at some point (a long way before taxes reduced their incomes to, say, three times the average) emigration would surely become very attractive. Considerations of social justice therefore have to give way before the need to head off a 'brain drain' (Barry 2005, 217).

Capital flight would affect countries of the North as well. I have met wealthy Swedes who became ex patriots, taking their money with them and bitterly opposed to Swedish proposals to achieve greater equality. (Some Swedes who were not ex patriots but still opposed to Swedish social democracy who I managed to probe were not at all living badly while they remained resident in Sweden. One Swedish professor I met had an apartment in Stockholm, a country house, and another home in Mexico.) And we in Canada have had wealthy people like Irving decamping for Bermuda, keeping his wealth and paying no taxes. There are plenty of offshore niches that enable the wealthy to keep their wealth and to avoid paying taxes designed by the government to achieve some redistribution downwards (Toynbee 2008). Capital controls have helped and countries with relatively stable economics, to the displeasure of the IMF and global capitalism, but they can sometimes in part get away with it (Chile, for example). But for the South there is the acute problem of brain drain. Look at the number of South African doctors practicing in Canada when they are so badly needed in South Africa. It isn't as if their professionals could not be employed there. So how can—or can—a social democracy or a socialist state exist in a world which is capitalist and overcome these problems? And how can countries effectively control finance capital given present electronic

technology where money can be instantly transferred with a click of a mouse? I don't say these problems are unsolvable, but they need solving.

Barry also poses the following two problems for countries like Britain and the United States, but they might apply to other countries of the North as well. (1) These countries (the U.S. and the UK) might not be able to afford social justice for "the high level of universal public services called for would be too expensive"; (2) Where and how social justice with a more egalitarian society "might be infeasible is that the economy of a relatively equal society (especially one with a basic income above the poverty line) might collapse because the motivation to work would be inadequate" (Barry 2005, 217). How does Barry respond to these alleged problems and how successful is he?

In responding to the charge that to attain a more equal society would be too expensive, Barry first says that it is important to distinguish between public expenditures and transfers. Public expenditures are real costs "in the sense that they use resources that could otherwise have been at the disposal of individuals." If a country spends money on the military, police, prison service, social work, medical care, education, "that is money that is subtracted from the flow of total disposable income" (Barry 2005, 218). Transfers occur when the government shifts funds from one public expenditure to another. An example would be to shift funds from the prison system to health care or vice versa. No new funds are involved for public expenditure but already available money is just used in a different way. In my example above, it is not just the starting up a public health care system *de novo* (as it would be in the US) while holding other costs intact. It is the transfer of public funds from one domain (e.g., prison services) to another (e.g., health care).

With that distinction in mind, let us look at the claims that such an egalitarian thrust as Barry suggests would be too expensive or cause the economy to collapse. Why would, or would, for example, universal payments without means testing (which is very expensive to administer), such as payments to children for day schools or payments for old age both of which do not cost much to administer, be too expensive? Or why would, even more centrally, having a basic income as a

universal unconditional entitlement instead of welfare with its costly means-tested benefits be too expensive? Indeed, it might be less expensive. With unconditional basic income, the state would be rid of its costly welfare payment and much of its welfare bureaucracy. Much the same would be true if child allowances or old age payments were means-tested. So right there is (or there very well might be) a savings for the government along with universal payments serving social justice.<sup>8</sup> Why would such things be too expensive? The only personal taxes that we would have are income tax, wealth tax, gift tax, and inheritance tax. These would affect mostly the wealthy. But having a basic income would hardly undermine the economy or impoverish the wealthy. Moreover, what is too expensive is very much a subjective matter. Rich Swedes pay a lot of taxes but, along with the rest of the society, they receive a lot of public benefits rooted in public expenditures and public transfers brought about by transfers of money not spent on the military, police and prison system to money directed to medical care, education and other social services. Here everyone would, in one way or another, benefit and from such transfers and public expenditures. (Instead with us the transfers usually go the other way. Transfers from health care to the military benefit only capitalists. And tax reductions, as during the second Bush regime, benefitted the wealthy as they do now under the Conservative government of Harper in Canada.) The military expenditures of the United States, to give a salient example, are enormous and growing. They spend more than the next twenty-five countries combined. The United States does not need such a military expense for their own security or for the security of the world, but for something which could not be justified in terms of social justice, namely the attempt to control, police and (to put it crudely) bully the world. It is to shore up its empire: a hyper-empire meant to control the world. (Indeed, with the expenditures to achieve military control of anyone who would go in another direction, it causes more suffering in the world than would otherwise occur. See Foster and McChesney 2004; Freeman and Kagarlitchy 2004; Harvey 2003; Panitsch and Leys 2004 and 2005.)<sup>9</sup> Some of these expenditures, even allowing the U.S. to remain the most powerful military power in the world, could instead be used for transfers to health care and

education. Such a switch could make a lot of people better off than they are now without new public expenditures (new taxes) being taken from individuals to pay for it. (I'm not saying new taxes would be a bad thing, but by intelligent transfers of needless expenditures a lot could be done without them.)

And who is benefitting? The military manufacturers. Barry writes:

[W]e should distinguish between public services that do harm and public services that do good. I am interested in improvement (in both scope and quality) of those that do good: health care and all kinds of services to enable the elderly and sick to live independent lives, education (at all ages for more hours a day and providing more help), social work, drug rehabilitation, and so on. But a great deal of American and (to a somewhat smaller extent) British public expenditure is devoted to doing actual or potential harm: prisons and the military are the prime examples. As far as prisons are concerned, I cited numerous studies in chapter 7 showing that benign intervention in areas such as education, housing and help with drug problems would save many times their cost because of the consequent lower expenditure needed for prisons. Drastically reducing the use of custodial sentences, which generate high rates of recidivism, would also make for a great saving. More than anything else, perhaps, the legalization of marijuana in the United States, taking a public health rather than a punitive approach, would have the prospect of halving the prison population all by itself. The United States has more people in jail on drug offences than those in jail in Western Europe on all offences put together. (In addition, of course, if we are talking about ways of raising money, taxing marijuana along similar lines as tobacco would transfer the profits now made illegally to the coffers of the state.) (Barry 2005, 219-20).

It is also the case that the subsidization of farming by the U.S. and the E.U. does great harm globally and is expensive for these Northern states. There are increasingly fewer family farms and there is a growth in capitalist agro-businesses. The few family farms that there are should be cushioned from the loss of revenue because of the cutting of subsidies. The agro-businesses would just have to absorb their losses without state help. They would just have to compete on an open capitalist market. Instead, the agro-businesses of rich countries have subsidies and their facilitator capitalist states are blocking the South's free access to global market by tariffs imposed on the countries of the South. These agro-businesses and governments should practice the free market

ideology that they preach. Let them put their actions where their mouths are. Let them live with their own propaganda. These subsidies and blocking tariffs should be ended and with that there would be an ending of cheap food from the North flooding the global market—cheap because of the subsidizing of these agro-businesses. For example, the dumping of corn grown in the U.S. on the Mexican market, along with the tariffs imposed by the U.S.—the great free market empire—has all but wiped out the Mexican corn growers and increased the slum problem of cities. Such actions greatly harm the South while making expenses for the U.S. and the E.U. that could be used for other public expenditures. The economy would not collapse or even be harmed with such a social justice reorientation with its considerable move toward more equality. In many ways it would be benefitted. Surely it would not collapse or even harm the economy. Moreover, what over such matters is or isn't too expensive is, as I have remarked, very much in the eye of the beholder. Capitalists and their capitalist governments (governments that facilitate capitalism) wouldn't like it but they wouldn't go under or even seriously be harmed.

There remain the problems of brain drain from the South and capital flight from countries taking social justice moves. These are largely unsolvable as long as we consider only individual nation-states. But as we see our economy under globalization becoming a far more global economy, we need to develop structures of global governance to meet many of the problems that arise up from it. This may be a long time in coming, but, as Barry insists in later chapters, it is necessary (Barry 2005, 264). To match a global economy we must have such global governance. Here it is a mistake to talk about what is economically feasible apart from what is politically feasible, and vice versa. But there is nothing in our increasingly global economic structures which would impede solutions to those problems. Only a continued commitment to Westphalia does—something that has been seen not to match with what is going on in the world (Held 2004; Falk 2002).

Barry has some additional cogent points to make about the feasibility of a just social order (2005, 217-30). But I shall pass them over though this is not to suggest that they are of lesser



importance than the ones I have discussed. His argument for basic income is crucial (as is Phillippe van Parijs's). And in the last pages of his book he makes evident how moving in any extensive way to a less inegalitarian society would not be capitalist friendly. This would seem to suggest we would need to move not just to social democracy but to a genuine socialism.

## VI

Barry wishes to show that social justice and the social democracy or socialism that goes with it is not only economically feasible but politically feasible as well. The facts that he takes to be the most immediately salient in achieving impetus towards both global and domestic justice involve overcoming “the lethal cocktail of renewable resource depletion, population growth and global warming” (Barry 2005, 249). In his powerful chapter “Meltdown?” (Chapter 19), Barry begins by saying “It is quite possible that by the year 2100 human life will have become extinct or will be confined to a few residual areas that have escaped the devastating effects of nuclear holocaust or global warming or both on a scale that has in the past wiped out almost all existing life forms” (Barry 2005, 251). He vividly and convincingly shows in that chapter and the one following how and why this “meltdown” may well occur. We may have already passed the point of no return (something that worries Gray as well) and we are just doomed (Gray 1999, 84-85).<sup>10</sup> But that is not certain. We, if we would be non-evasive, must look at the facts square in the face and in the light of them without evasion or denial see what can be done—indeed, has to be done—and then with dispatch set out to do it. The situation is very grim but while there is any hope at all (as there is, though it is withering), we must act and act rapidly and resolutely. It is impossible to overestimate the urgency of this matter.

Let us first see what Barry takes to be the essential facts concerning these matters. Indeed, as we shall see, and as Gray has stressed as well, it is very hard to face these facts. There may be too much grim reality here for us to be able to swallow and we will just go into a state of denial. But if we would save ourselves, we must face it and do what is required, and with all due haste, if humanity is to have any chance of anything but perhaps a very limited and very unpleasant survival. So what,

according to Barry, are the facts that we face here? Each element in the lethal cocktail is interrelated as Barry well realizes but we will start by discussing them separately.

Let us first consider resource depletion. When we speak of resource depletion, we have in mind the rapid depletion of our fossil fuels—oil, gas and coal. Once gone—and that is happening—they cannot, except perhaps in a very, very distant future time, be renewed. That possibility is so distant as to be irrelevant to our calculations about survival. For us and for many generations to come they are non-renewable. But our industries and a good bit of everyday life (our use of the car, train, airplane, heating of our homes, etc.) is now based on them. But before this century is out they will be for the most part (if not entirely) gone. We must find substitutes for them, and rapidly, that are sustainable for the populations we have now and are likely to have by mid-century and as well are non-polluting. But that, as Barry observes, may be—indeed probably is—impossible.

However, it is not that we are running out of fossil fuels that essentially engages Barry. He believes that most of these renewable resources should stay in the ground and perhaps forever. He remarks “Although renewable resources—especially fossil fuels—are often thought of as a serious problem, it is the exploitation of existing economically accessible reserves that will be catastrophic rather than their exhaustion” (Barry 2005, 252). He backs this up as follows:

Coal reserves would create more than 600 billion metric tonnes of carbon if burned, oil reserves more than 200 billion and natural gas just under 200; around 1,000 billion tones together. Greenpeace, which advocates an attempt to keep global warming down to 1°C above its historic average, calculated in 1997 that this might be achieved only by burning less than a quarter of these reserves—ever—so that the rest would have to stay in the ground. Given the havoc already wrought by a rise of 0.6°C, a rise of 1°C sounds like a prudent target. But it is now widely believed that things have already gone a lot too far for global warming to be checked at that level. The most recent estimates of the impact of atmospheric carbon dioxide on global warming (which I shall discuss shortly) suggest that even keeping global warming down to 2°C will be extraordinarily difficult to achieve and may also already be out of reach. The conclusion therefore remains: even keeping global warming down to three times its present level will require most of the economically exploitable fossil

fuel reserves already discovered to stay in the ground (Barry 2005, 252).

It looks like we are between a rock and hard place. We seem to need, at least for the near future, these fossil fuels to keep going; yet if we use them all up, or indeed even a lot of them, we will, with global warming, destroy ourselves or bring about something catastrophically near to that. The only hope is for “fossil fuels...to give way to renewable sources of energy, generating electricity from the sun with photovoltaic cells and wind with turbines. Research and investment in “capturing the unlimited power of the waves and the tides would have to become a priority” (Barry 2005, 269). It may also be possible in a few decades to use laser-induced magnetic fusion to provide cheap and safe energy (Randerson, December 21, 2007, 43). As a stop-gap measure, I add, we would have to use extensively, in spite of its dangers, nuclear power. Yet even all these things would not be enough. Barry remarks, “...in the end, however, we cannot get round the fact that all of this put together would not be anywhere near enough without a change in the way of life in rich countries” (Barry 2005, 267). Cars will no longer be possible except for short distances, and even then they should be infrequently used. Electrically powered trains “will be the primary means of long-distance travel. (Laying the tracks over existing motorways would help to achieve both ends simultaneously.)” (Barry 2005, 268). Barry goes on to add “Air travel is especially pernicious because it pumps carbon dioxide straight into the upper atmosphere, but it also produces too much carbon to be consistent with a low-emissions regime. The end of flying would mean that the pace of life would have to slow down, making it less stressful” (Barry 2005, 268). But with that we would also lose a lot of other things we otherwise would reasonably want.

That things like this must (morally and prudentially ‘must’) be done, and with the utmost speed, does not mean that they will be done or even that there is much of a chance that they will be done. Barry doesn’t think the current politicians will change much. There is a lot of talk, but nothing much is happening and certainly not of the magnitude that is necessary. Moreover, the population

and the mass media (the only media that counts except among a few intellectuals and radical militants) is quiescent over global warming. A friend of mind told me that he didn't see any signs of global warning. People who so react are uninformed and blind.

I live in Montreal on one of its great boulevards. A big window in my study looks out over it. I see a constant stream of cars (typically quite large ones unneeded for an urban setting), trucks and buses passing by in a steady stream. No tracks for electric trains are being laid—nor are there any plans for any—and there are very few electric cars. (Comparing Montreal with Paris is instructive here.) Nothing is being done though things could be. As a stop gap measure, rationing gas for car travel such as was done in North America during the Second World War should be imposed and lights that stay on all night in unused office complexes should be turned off. People would have to drive less and much slower to save their rations as they did during the Second World War. This would lower carbon emissions somewhat and would serve as a stop gap until we could phase out private cars and replace them with good public transport based on a network of electrically powered trams taking people all over the city, the increased use (and improvement of) the Metro (subway, underground), and the use of electrically powered trains to take us to outlying districts and for long-range travel. The heavy dependence, as we have now, on huge trucks could and should be replaced by electric trains and the use of boats on the St. Lawrence River and its navigable tributaries. There are in many other places navigable rivers, navigable canals (they might need a little digging out) and lakes that are little or not at all used that could be brought back into use. And new canals could be dug. All of this is quite feasible but nothing like this is being done. It is not even widely being discussed. Moreover, Montreal (to stick with my hometown) and the countryside around it could be made considerable more pleasant and more socially interactive without the car (aside from a few taxis) and the frustrating bumper-to-bumper traffic replaced by the use of clean, pleasant, rapid and efficient public transport. And cyclists and pedestrians would be safer and less stressed. And with this activity human health would be improved.

Montreal is a token of a type that characterizes large and medium sized cities in North America. But things can be, and are, ordered somewhat differently some places elsewhere. A trip to Amsterdam, for example, reveals this. There are many cyclists there going to work as well as taking family outings on Sundays and a clean, rapid and efficient electrically powered tram system taking people all around the city and a system of rapid, clean, efficient and frequent electrically powered trains going to outlying districts, to others cities in Holland, and abroad. Granted, as far as Amsterdam is concerned, that is encouraged and made more of a necessity by the pre-existence of Amsterdam's extensive system of canals (something that has been there for a long time.) But even without the canals it could be replicated in large cities all over North America. But nothing like this, or next to nothing, is done. There is not the political will from our politicians (often with menial interests coupled with culpable ignorance) and there is insufficient awareness by our populations. We need to create this awareness in our populations. (Here it is less their fault.) And our capitalist masters put up with plain public bads, indeed sometimes encourage actions that lead to them for the short-run profit there is in it.) We need, but do not have, a major assist from the mass media. (Indeed, we hardly have any assist at all.) It needs to be added that even where there is some awareness there still is the problem of the commons. If some (indeed any) individual does not fly to Paris for a vacation meaning by so acting to act against the horrendous airplane pollution, he or she will achieve precious little—indeed nothing—in the way of carbon emissions reduction while depriving herself or himself of a pleasant vacation. It is only if they could somehow make their action *exemplary* and by it start a trend to lesser frequent and unnecessary flying would it have any point. Otherwise, it is only if it is part of some *collective* action that their action will count (as a part of and reinforcement of human motivation for such an action), but his or her defecting from what otherwise would be solidaristic action where there is no such solidaristic movement or one on the horizon will not do much if any harm and their now doing so will deprive them of a pleasant vacation. (It is not as if they are Al Gore or some movie or sport star and their action would be, given who they are and in Gore's

case what he has done, exemplary.) So we have the familiar problem of the free rider. Yet somehow this solidaristic commitment must—morally ‘must’—on the part of individuals come into being for there to be a collective action. Individuals must somehow stand out as motivators. This is plain for a figure like Al Gore, given what he has done, but how is it possible for a Joe Blow? He is more likely to be thought of as a sucker and, indeed, be one. People might well call him an economic fool. That aside, is there the awareness or the will on the part of a sufficient number of people to get the solidarity to make such actions pay off? The mass media is, to understate it, not pushing it. (Indeed, they are sometimes hindering it.) Is our action here to turn this around a spitting into the wind?

Barry thinks with anti-globalization movements and social justice movements something like effective solidaristic resistance is coming into existence, but he acknowledges it is not yet a mass movement. Will it have the strength to trigger the actions we need here? As far as the crucial global warming side is concerned, people need to become properly scared by repeatedly hearing some unpleasant truths. But is there the achievement of this awareness and the motivational impulse on the part of a critical mass of people to try to fight against our looming catastrophe? One can hope there is increasing discontent and a sense that things are very bad and getting worse. We can hope there will emerge sufficient dissent among journalists—a few more George Monbiots and Naomi Kleins—and among politicians people with the determination to tell it like it is no matter how unsettling. And we must as individuals do what we can, whoever we are and in whatever small way that is in our power, to combat these ominous ills. We must fight back the temptation to say to ourselves ‘Why should I be a sucker and deprive myself while others will not even for our common survival?’ (All these, of course, are moral ‘musts’. But there is nothing wrong with that as long as we know what we are doing.) There will not be any survival without massive collective action. We need to put a fire under our politicians and media tsars. Perhaps down the road they will begin to make some modest moves. But that will not be enough and it will come too late. We must as a people act now! (If this be simple moralizing, so be it.)

We need to return to Barry's point that it is not running out (which we are) of fossil fuels that is troublesome, but our insane determination to use up every available drop no matter at what cost to the environment. In that way we increase global warming and destroy our environment and put ourselves at risk. The Alberta Tar Sands Project is a striking case. It has oil and gas that should have been left in the ground. The project extensively contributes to global warming, and enormous amounts of water are used in its extraction which in turn pollutes the nearby lakes and land (arable land). Moreover, it is harmful to the health of people nearby and destroys a part of the environment the size of a tenth of France as *Le Monde* observed. It brings wealth to Alberta and work for a lot of people both locally and from afar, but that will be temporary and at what costs? By the last quarter of this century, Calgary and Edmonton (the two major cities in Alberta) will be ghost towns and even part (perhaps all) of the wheat crop, another major source of income, will be destroyed by pollution. That's short term gain that will yield long term pain.

It is not resource depletion that is the really bad news. "The really bad news," Barry tells us, "concerns what is happening to the soil, the oceans and sources of fresh water" (Barry 2005, 252). We are exceeding our biological capacity and by 2050 it will be critical unless something drastic is done. "Seventy percent of the drylands used for agriculture—a third of the world's land area—is threatened by being turned into desert" (Barry 2005, 252). There is a danger that the sea level will raise by eighteen feet. Though this is *perhaps* too extreme, the sea level is steadily and dangerously rising. There is no question at all about that. Huge areas along the coasts and the shores of rivers pouring into the sea will be inundated by the rising sea and become so saline that the land, even *if* the water recedes, will be unusable. Already the world's wheat crop is dropping so that severe shortages are occurring with rising wheat prices (Barry 2005, 253). And, with price rises, capitalism is for a time making a nice profit out of that. They, that is, profit in the short term from a public bad.

Ocean resources fare no better. Overfishing and destructive methods of fishing have reduced drastically the fish stocks. "Ninety percent of the large fish stocks have been removed worldwide"

(Barry 2005, 253). In many areas, there are virtually no fish around and global warming has caused cold water plankton in the North Sea to withdraw hundreds of miles further north and it has been replaced, where that plankton once was, by a less nutritious, smaller water species. This has had devastating effects for fisheries as well as for all wild life (Barry 2005, 253).

Perhaps the most alarming effects caused by global warming is on our fresh water which, after all, is an irreplaceable source of life. Salinization and pollution destroy more and more supplies of useable water. Moreover, there is the breakdown (the radical change) of the global system. These shifts in the atmosphere and the oceans around the globe are central causal factors in the increasing unreliability of seasonable rainfalls which many people rely on for their harvest. (A striking example is what is happening to farming in Northern Uganda.) Moreover, the increasing population is putting an increasing demand on our water supplies, including drinking water supplies. Finally, with these shortages there are increasing conflicts between states over water. The struggle between Israel and the adjacent Arab nations is a striking and disturbing case. Social justice requires that water be shared equitably with everybody's fundamental needs satisfied before anybody enjoys abundance. Few countries have accepted this elementary but fundamental moral principle, least of all Israel; as one Palestinian put it, 'No one can accept that he does not have water to drink and his neighbor has a swimming pool' (Barry 2005, 255).

We see in these discussions of resource depletion that it has been impossible to at all adequately discuss it without bringing in population growth and global warming. However, Barry turns to discussing these last two issues directly. By 2050, our population will be 9.3 billion, perhaps even 10 billion. Barry remarks that such an increase will be "ruinous to the future of the planet as it will be, is almost unavoidable" (Barry 2005, 255). Moreover, the increasing population is in the poor countries. Many of them have had such rapid growth that half of their populations are under the age of fifteen years. Barry remarks, "Short of the universal adoption of the Chinese one-child-per-woman policy in all countries with rising populations, there are only three plausible ways in which the world



will fail to grow: the classic triad of war, pestilence and famine” (Barry 2005, 255).<sup>11</sup> They will have to work together—as they well might—to carry off billions of people to get a sustainable world environment. Even though the earth’s carrying capacity, unlike that of a lifeboat, is not a very determinate thing, it is becoming increasingly evident that at that level—9.3 billion—we are exceeding it. In 1830 the world population was 1 billion and in 1930 it was 2 billion. Even with resource depletion, something between that could make for a pleasantly livable planet. But things are going the other way now. We can hope we can reduce it and avoid resorting to the classic triad to bring it down or other draconian measures. It has gone down in all countries that have become wealthy and where women have some reasonable education and autonomy and with that gain more control over their lives. In some places—Italy, for example, and in spite of the Pope—the country is losing population to its needless worry. But this loss of population presupposes wealth and a level of extensive education that the South doesn’t have and is not even remotely likely soon to get. In any event, this standard and benign way of population reduction will move too slowly to meet the looming threat of an unsustainable world population. Barry remarks rather nostalgically, “It may be too optimistic to hope to get back to a world population of a billion in less than two hundred years. But the closer to it the human race gets and the quicker, the less pressure it will put on the environment and the greater the chances of human life surviving over the thousands of years that may still be just within the realm of possibility” (Barry 2005, 256). But, as Barry well knows, we don’t have 200 years; we have around 50. We, outside of some horror (e.g. a nuclear holocaust or a Third World War), will have no chance within that time to bring it down to 2 billion but perhaps we can without catastrophe or draconian measures we can keep it around 6 billion—our present level—and find ways, with that population, of making things sustainable. As he goes on to show, even here the prospects look bleak, but with struggle and intelligence, there is a chance (Barry 2005, 256-58).

What about global warming? Global warming is a fact. It finally got pushed even into the head of George W. Bush that the science concerning the occurrence of global warming is not

uncertain. (Except, of course, in the rather arcane philosophical sense that everything is uncertain.) As Barry puts it, “The only room for uncertainty is about the size of the effects: what is the precise relation between the emission of greenhouse gasses and their concentration in the atmosphere” (Barry 2005, 257). Concerning the uncertainty that there is here, Barry rightly invokes a wise procedure of *methodological conservatism*, namely, that what Barry calls the “precautionary principle” concerning such matters of life and death. It is to “act on the assumption that the least favorable assumptions are correct” (Barry 2005, 258). It in such contexts is a bit of wise common sense. It is like the strategy of when to take an umbrella when we go out. We do not reason or believe ‘Take an umbrella only if we think it is more likely to rain than not’; rather, we take one if we think there is any plausible chance of it raining (Barry 2005, 258). The temperatures have risen recently above anything like they have for the last two thousand years. Moreover, if we look at the natural ups and downs in the temperature, we will not find anything remotely like what we are seeing now. Even “if we were to stop putting any more carbon dioxide or other industrial gasses into the air today...temperatures would continue to rise for another 40 years.” (This is a quotation from Geoff Jenkins, head of the Meteorological Offices Climate Prediction Program, quoted by Barry 2005, 258). The crucially relevant question then is how much temperatures will rise “since we are going to go on dumping some greenhouse gases into the atmosphere for quite a while yet, come what may” (Barry 2005, 258).

How much can we expect them to rise and how much must greenhouse emissions go down to avoid catastrophe? Barry says bluntly a lot. He remarks “only a complete reversal of current trends can hope to limit the increase on average of 2 degrees Celsius above the historical norm.... Total global gas emissions must soon drop to 60 to 80 per cent below their 1990 levels” (Barry 2005, 258). Nineteen-ninety was chosen as the baseline for the Kyoto Protocol. However, global emissions have greatly increased since 1990. So the “reduction from the present level must be correspondingly greater” (Barry 2005, 258).

What about the effects of global warming? There will be rises in the average world temperature as a result. There will be an increase in number and severity of extreme events: hurricanes, cyclones, tsunamis, heavy rainfall or snowfall some of catastrophic proportions, extremely hot summer temperatures with an increase in forest fires (something we saw recently in Greece, Italy and the South of France). Indeed, it looks like climate change, with its destruction is proceeding much faster than predicted. While generally the world will be getting warmer, Western Europe will have temperatures like those in Siberia and the Canadian Northern Territories now. The thermohaline circulation of the oceans will be radically altered. There is a large-scale melting of Arctic ice with a consequent pouring of huge volumes of fresh water into the North Atlantic. This will cause those colder temperatures. Similar things, if not quite so drastic, are happening in Antarctica. Throughout the world water levels will rise rendering much of the regions around the coasts so salinated that they will be incapable of being cultivated. Some cities, including large ones, may well be inundated. Bangladesh may well, for the most part, be rendered uninhabitable. Down the pike a bit—or so the current worst case scenario tells us—there will, as I previously mentioned, be an increase of eighteen feet in the sea level. Moreover, “average global temperatures could rise by 7 degrees Celsius to 10 degrees Celsius by the end of the century.” And to add insult to injury, “the decomposing matter trapped in permafrost could be laid bare and release enormous quantities of carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere” (Barry 2005, 266). This would have disastrous results. What is left of the Amazon Rainforest may very well die back due to drought, thus turning it into a source of greenhouse gases rather than a sink. As the IPCC reports, the Amazon rainforest will be transformed into savannah. And what is now savannah will become largely desert or perhaps even completely so.

All told, there is very, very likely to be a desertification of a third of the earth’s arable land, on the one hand, and, on the other, a widespread salinization of other sections of previous arable land. This will yield catastrophic results, namely, famine and starvation with desperate peoples fleeing

from these unlivable lands to the lands which are livable with the very likely result of violent struggles for survival where many will not be able to survive. It will be much like the Hobbesian world with its conception of the state of nature.

Barry succinctly articulates at the very beginning of his final chapter the predicament in which we find ourselves in. I will quote it in detail:

Over the next fifty years, renewable resources will continue to become scarcer, world population will grow and global warming will have more and more adverse effects. The only alternative is a nuclear holocaust, which I would not recommend as a solution. Leaving that aside, the question left is whether the dismal prospect that I laid out in the previous chapter will be left to play itself out to the end, or whether the steps needed to control the situation (which will become more drastic for every year that they are postponed) will be taken.

What makes the choice even more stark than it might already appear is that economical breakdown can scarcely fail to be accompanied by political breakdown. In *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes said that, in conditions of anarchy, life would be 'poor, nasty, brutish and short'. But in the seventeenth century anarchy would have been tempered by a population that was not excessive, a relatively small human impact on either the earth or its atmosphere, and average temperatures within a range that supported human life and that of other species. International anarchy will be far less benign in a future world containing in excess of ten billion occupants, with average temperatures far above the historical norm and suffering a crisis in renewable resources. In addition to deaths as a direct or indirect consequence of wars fought over the control of natural resources—water supplies, cultivable land, marine life and (in the world that will be created by the continuation of 'business as usual') oil—hundreds of millions of additional people will die each year from lack of drinking water and sanitation, starvation and the spread of tropical diseases to ever wider areas. The instability will be reinforced by the number of refugees created by global warming, as their living places disappear under the rising seas and as drought and infestation make agriculture impossible (Barry 2005, 261-62).

So what is to be done? What can be done? Have we already dug our own graves? We face the considerable likelihood of an 'anarchical world' in which disruption and harsh conflict will be endemic features of life. In such a Hobbesian world, if that is to be our future as it very likely will, "the distribution of goods will depend on the distribution of the means of coercion and extraction. In

such a world, there can be no place for justice” (Barry 2005, 262). Barry says there is still the possibility of—he didn’t say it is a likelihood—of a non-Hobbesian world where social justice would prevail (Barry 2005, 262). If we take what he calls this ‘second way’—the way that will give us some hope—it will have, he claims, four implications for justice.

First, the policies needed will in themselves be in line with the requirements of global justice. Second, these changes will have knock-on effects that are likely to amplify the improvement in justice. Third, the new international and domestic institutions that will have to be created to implement the needed changes will be able to be put to use in order to make distribution more just in other ways as well, and it will be very hard to provide any coherent rationale for failing to use them in this way. Finally, the kind of mobilization that will have to occur can scarcely fail to have a momentum leading to changes beyond those strictly required for stabilization (Barry 2005, 262).

What would we have to do to achieve those things? We would have to drastically lower the world population by non-draconian means. For this to obtain, the women of the world have to attain more control over their lives, that is, more autonomy. This will not occur without women having education. There must be in place all over the world, and quickly, universal and free education—for both girls and boys—and it would have to be effectively compulsory until the age of sixteen years. Even that is just barely, and insecurely, enough to enhance the emancipation of women. Moreover, to give this any force, all people must have the means to send their children to school and to keep them in school. But this is something that many people in the South do not have now. With these things and with it becoming more expensive to have children, the birth rate will predictably drop as it has in the wealthier parts of the world. For this to go worldwide, rich countries must extensively help poor countries to have the wherewithal to have universal free education and there must be social safety nets so that people will not have so many children such that when they grow old (assuming the do) they will have someone to look after them. There is no place else for the money to come for the South from than from the rich countries of the North. “Educating women and giving them more autonomy is bound to change the dynamics of society. Relations between men and

women will become more just and indeed more pleasant. And with the birthrate going down, there will be less pressure on the world's supply of food and less starvation. (But a bit of Grayian scepticism and a bit of bitter cynicism is likely to enter here prompting us to mutter to ourselves, 'Nothing like this will happen in time.')

Secondly, all the above notwithstanding, with the world exceeding its carrying capacity in relation to all renewable resources, water is becoming a prominent problem. The world will become increasingly conflictual as a result. Failure to keep these forces in check will make for the realization of the worst case scenario of a global Hobbesian world. (But how is this to be done?) Barry remarks:

Defusing these conflicts requires an international body with powers to enforce the distribution of these scarce resources equitably. Giving priority to needs over wants must mean that the lot of those who now have least must improve in comparison with the lot of those who now have most, which is what justice demands (Barry 2005, 264).

Barry does not say much about what this international body is to be. But he does say a few pages later that "there has to be a new world authority replacing the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO, with a constitution that is in some way representative. It is surely clear that the model of the IMF and the World Bank, which is completely controlled by the rich countries and dominated by the United States, is inappropriate. But the WTO, which requires unanimity among all countries within it, is not a practicable framework" (Barry 2005, 269). He then adds, "It is not my job to produce blueprints: there are plenty around already and once scrapping existing institutions and replacing them has been recognized as an imperative there would be plenty more. The essential point is that the new organization has to make population, renewable resources and global warming its central mission" (Barry 2005, 269). (But again scepticism and cynicism raise their ugly heads.)

I agree that we should—indeed must—scrap existing institutions if by that is meant scrapping the WTO, IMF, World Bank, and similar organizations. I also agree that this new international body as a new world authority must make population, renewable resources and global

warming central to its mission. But I think—in spite of his talk about blueprints—we have to give more structure to what this new international body as a new world authority is to be. If it is simply a Heldish so-called global governance without global government, some kind of ‘cosmopolitan democracy’, we will be just getting shop talk without the necessary authority. Talk of a ‘global state’ or a ‘global federation’ has been a no-no—something that, it is widely thought, would be both despotic and unworkable (Nye 2002; Walzer 2007). But in recent literature, talk of global government is coming back on stage. Elsewhere I have articulated a conception of a thoroughly democratic form of global governance in the form of a global federation (Nielsen 2008). I give it a form and a home in a more robust General Assembly of a much strengthened United Nations. It would be a United Nations without a Security Council or, more plausibly, an enlarged and more representative Security Council without anyone in it, or even the Security Council as a whole and acting in unanimity, having a veto over the legislation of the General Assembly. The Security Council might be so empowered (as the Canadian Senate is) that it could send a bill passed by the General Assembly back to the General Assembly for ‘sober second consideration’, but it could not override or in any way block the General Assembly’s vote after that sober second consideration. (Such a return of a bill could not be unduly delayed as it is sometimes in the Canadian Senate.) The General Assembly is to be sovereign. That would, while remaining democratic, give us the global authority we need.

Perhaps this is too utopian and would always be rejected and derailed by the Great Powers. But some structure should be given to Barry’s notion of an international body with global authority. It must be designed so that it is both authoritative in its proper sphere *and* democratic. But Barry’s recognition that we need an international body with teeth (a global authority), going along with the scrapping of the type of existing institutions that I have mentioned, is essential.

However, let us return to global justice and what Barry believes it can do here. Social justice, whether domestic or global, must recognize that, as we have previously remarked, the lot of “those

who now have least must improve in comparison with the lot of those who now have most” (Barry 2005, 264). Suppose, as there is, a large consensus among the world’s people that “the atmosphere is to be treated as a global commons on which everyone has an equal claim” (Barry 2005, 264). Making the same underlying assumptions, we should also believe that countries that have fertile soil and a climate suitable for growing valuable crops should share with countries with arid land and with poor soil. As desertification increases, this will become increasingly urgent. We in Quebec with plenty of water should not cut off New York from water. Countries with harvestable fish within their 200-mile limit should share with countries with no fish. The same should obtain for natural gas, oil and minerals (to the extent we will have to use them at all). The United States seizes, though it now turns out somewhat fragiley, oil and gas spigots in the Middle East. Will it share with China and India when things get tight, expect perhaps under threat of war? If water in Quebec gets scarce, will we in Quebec, except under threat from the United States, continue to share? The Arctic is now a global commons. Will it remain so when oil gets scarcer and Arctic oil (25 percent of the world’s resources) comes in the range of future extraction? (Here is another point where, as Barry argues, the oil should remain in the ground.) Already, various countries are staking their claims and there seems to be no doubt on the part of any of them that when it becomes possible that oil should be extracted. (That this should not be seriously considered is a genuine horror.) Space is another commons but the United States is seizing and claiming its ground in space in its bid to gain exclusive military control of the world. When with global warming, salinization and desertification of great swaths of the earth occur, will countries with arable land share when food all around gets increasingly scarce? When water is in short supply, will they share? Israel’s record with its Arab neighbors doesn’t encourage us to think there will be much such moral behavior. They have allowed settlers in the occupied territories—arguably illegally occupied territories—to dig deep wells depriving Palestinians close to them of water while forbidding Palestinians to dig new wells or deepen existing ones. It is hard not



to be, and indeed very sadly, political realists about moral appeals in such circumstances. We remember Athens and Melos.

However, things *may* be different about global warming. It is becoming such a threat to the planet as a whole that people (including capitalists and their entourages, along with the rest of us) will come to realize (probably only when it is too late) that we are all and equally under a common threat, caught up, whether we like it or not, in a common fate. There will be, it is not unreasonable to hope and even to expect, a realization that we must all act together and with dispatch. We, even big capitalists with their willingness to give us public bads, may come to realize, conflicted in many of our interests and even in our moral ideals as we are, that we better hang together or we will all hang separately. The capitalist leopard, a type of capitalist that is increasingly gaining strength in the global economy, will have to change its spots if we (including them) are to survive global warming (Ramonet 2007, 1). They may, if they are not too deep in denial, come to realize that. But that is not because they have come to see—or at least it need not be so—the value of egalitarian justice or any other kind of justice but because they want to survive and want their children to survive. Some, taking survival as their bottom line, may craftily contrive to make a little money out of a bad situation by radical greening. But it is surviving that for them will become paramount. There they will not put profits first.

Here it is not implausible to believe that capitalists may be motivated—pushed by circumstances—to do what should be done. They will become, as Kant would put it, men of good morals rather than morally good men. They will follow roughly Barry's trail, but not for his social democratic or socialist reasons or reasons of social justice. (Propagandistically, they may crow about the latter but that is all ideology or self-deception or both. Am I being too *parti pris* here? I don't think so, though many people will say I am. But is it not they who are taken in by capitalist ideology here?)

Consider how differently they can be expected to behave along with their capitalist facilitators in the various capitalist governments a propos global poverty eradication than they might be expected to act about global warming. Both Thomas Pogge and Jeffrey Sachs have given us carefully researched, empirically responsible, and morally compelling accounts concerning how we can and should carry out worldwide poverty eradication (Pogge 2002; Sachs 2005). They have shown how it can be done with dispatch by the rich capitalist nations of the North with expenses so minimal that it would not have deleterious effects on anyone, not even the capitalists. (Perhaps for the capitalists they would lose a *miniscule* amount of profit. But that would hardly constitute 'deleterious effects'.) Yet, though what is argued by Pogge and Sachs must have been learned by people in capitalist think tanks (typically right-wing) and by the policy advisors to our respective capitalist-supporting governments, next to nothing is being done about global poverty. The shame and disgrace of this becomes crystal clear when it becomes apparent that it could be done and done painlessly. It is not done because there is no profit in it or threat of loss of profit if nothing is done. Indeed it might even be marginally useful to capitalism. Only if it could be shown that the poor nations of the sub-Saharan are worth exploiting beyond in some places, with the help of bandits, for bagging some diamonds and the like, or in the richer ones where they do perhaps expect, e.g., in Nigeria and South Africa, economic usefulness would be enhanced by lessening poverty there or that, if poverty is not addressed, there will be threats of violent uprisings not easily contained. Only where such things obtain is there much chance of poverty being ameliorated. If these conditions obtain, something would be done to relieve poverty. (That is not to eradicate it. That would also depend on its economic usefulness. For workers to be at risk of unemployment and recognize that it will be unpleasant is useful to capitalism.) Where there is no threat of turbulence, the smart capitalist thing to do is to carry on with business as usual. After all, capitalism is not the Salvation Army. But global warming is different. It is a common fate for rich and poor alike. No one can escape into gated villages or securely, if at all, by going somewhere else.

Global warming brings such threats. Our very survival is at risk. To say this is not to engage in left-wing hysterics or hyperbole. Barry argues carefully and convincingly (as have others, including Gray) that these dire prospects here are very real. (See also briefly *The Weekly Guardian*, November 23, 2007, page 8 and *The Weekly Guardian*, December 21, 2007b, page 19.)<sup>12 13</sup>

To understand why global warming is different than concerns about poverty eradication or growing inequality or poor public health services or lack of education, however legitimate and urgent they are morally speaking, we need to understand that global warming has as well human life-threatening dimensions for all of us, rich and poor alike, in the South and North alike, though in the *first instance* it will be visited more on the global South where the poor are concentrated than on the North. However, as things unfold, it will become apparent that we are all in the same boat. It is life-threatening for all of us. In this way it is different from poverty eradication, growing inequality, poor health care, and insecurity of employment. That global warming is so life-threatening for us all may force the capitalists to act in a way that they would not in these other cases.

Barry, with his usual close attention to relevant facts, points out:

[W]hat, on the best scientific evidence available, would be the rate at which carbon emissions would have to be cut to avoid a dangerous increase in average global temperatures? The answer is, unhappily, that there is no 'safe' trajectory, no guaranteed 'soft landing'. The present level is already melting the ice at the poles, interfering with the thermohaline circulation and causing droughts, floods and hurricanes on an unprecedented scale. If the average temperature were merely to stay where it is now, these trends would continue. But there is nothing we can do to avoid an increase over the next forty years because of the length of the carbon cycle and, we can add, the effect of clearer skies. The only question is, therefore, as I pointed out in the last chapter, what we would have to do about greenhouse gas emissions to keep temperatures down to an acceptable level (Barry 2005, 264-65).

Moreover, we should ask, acceptable to whom? Well, not just acceptable to someone driven by politics who will only make suggestions compatible with getting re-elected or more charitably and more plausibly give priority to such suggestions. We should take as acceptable what a reasonably

informed person would find acceptable where they were concerned about human survival—including their own—and the possibility of a reasonably flourishing life for all people in the North and the South. Using that—or something like it—as a criterion, consider the following situation. It was first assumed that, as global temperatures rise, that 2 degrees Celsius would be acceptable. But even 2 degrees Celsius is dangerously high. At that world temperature, the polar ice caps would continue to melt and at an accelerated rate. The Gulf Stream may very well disappear. The increase of cold water from the northern polar regions entering into the oceans would cause extensively lower temperatures to the countries most directly affected and flooding with salinization making much land previously arable un-arable. The rich North could, though at great expense, probably absorb such losses. But the South is far less well placed, if we can speak of anybody here being well placed. Brazil, China, Bangladesh, and India have millions of people who could not be defended at any expense against an increase in the sea level of even two or three feet, to say nothing of the eighteen feet which very well could be down the pike. Moreover, “there is nowhere that they [the displaced populations of these countries] could be relocated” (Barry 2005, 265-66). But 2 degrees Celsius, horrendous as it is, is now generally recognized as too low an estimate of global warming. It looks like we are in for a 5 degrees Celsius rise by 2050 and now it is projected that we may very well be in for a rise of 7-10 degrees Celsius by the end of the century. Governments and industry are in a state of denial about this. But, as Barry puts it, “even achieving that modest target [not going above an increase of 5 degrees Celsius] will require a revolution in the way in which the world—North and South alike—does business” (Barry 2005, 266). It was earlier thought that carbon emissions would have radically to go down to gain even modest targets—from about 8 gigatonnes [what we have now] to about 6 by 2050. But now, with new information flowing in, it looks like carbon emissions will have to be reduced to 2 gigatonnes to meet that target, i.e., to be acceptable given my characterization of ‘acceptable’ above. But even with that, we still have a massive violation of the *precautionary* principle. Indeed, it is quite possible “that the average temperature would rise to a dangerous level

even if emissions of carbon fell to zero tomorrow and stayed there for a long time” (Barry 2005, 266). There have to be massive reductions to meet the target of 2 gigatonnes by 2050, the reductions rapidly phased in as they must be would have to come down very fast. To meet these targets we must have energy-efficient production and building. “Fossil fuels would have to give way rapidly to renewable sources of energy, generating electricity from the sun with photovoltaic cells and with turbines” (Barry 2005, 267). We would—and this should be a priority—have to capture the unlimited power of the waves and the tides. This last matter would require extensive research and government involvement. (Another place, it might be bitterly said, for capitalist profit. But even so we need the investment.) But this utilization of the sea is not science fiction or whacky science nor is another possibility: laser induced magnetic fusion.<sup>14</sup>

However, even if all these measures are expeditiously put into effect, all of them together would not be anywhere near enough without a radical change in the way we live in rich countries (or the way the elites live in poor countries). The private car would have rapidly to be phased out, something which might be very hard to take for many people. The use of it has been crucial to their lives and for some it is an important status symbol. But, though of course not overnight, the private car has to go. We would need to switch to electrically powered trains for long distance travel rather than, as the British government is doing, expanding Heathrow; and we need electrically powered trams for city travel. Air travel would have to be drastically cut back, perhaps even eliminated. Ocean liners, made now for more fuel efficiency, would need to come back into wide use and we would—as we have done in the past—use large sailboats again for some cargo shipments. (I saw this in South America during the Second World War.) Again, and generally, there must be a greatly increased river, canal and ocean transport. Horses would have to replace tractors for cultivation. (This sounds like a reversal of the fruits of industrialization and in *certain* ways it is. But there would also have to be a lot of new uses of how industrialization is deployed.) We would need, as well, more fuel-efficient houses with people keeping down house temperatures and wearing warmer clothes. Some people,

New Zealanders for example, fully modernized, have long been accustomed to that. We will have to put up with a lot more heat in summer and keep air conditioning to an essential minimum. (Perhaps we would have to eliminate it altogether.) And there would have to be a lot more walking and biking and in some places cross-country skiing or snowshoeing. This would have a double benefit: it would aid in cutting down carbon emissions and it would improve health and longevity. (When Cuba lost its Soviet support and its economy went down, its population's health went up with more walking and a leaner, though not malnourished, diet.)

China and India are dangerous sources of pollution. But it is both unjust and (justice apart) unrealistic to expect them to forgo industrialization and for them to be forever condemned to be poor. The North—the rich industrial countries—will have to pay for and, where necessary, aid them in their industrializing in their using renewable energy. The North may resist paying and the South resist moving to using such renewable energy, but it must be made crystal clear to all parties that there “must be massive cascades of clean-energy development in the South, because without them there will be a global ecological disaster” (Barry 2005, 268).

Social justice, as we have seen, requires, to put it mildly, a lot of changes. Economic changes, whether we go from capitalism to socialism or not, must become less productivist with less emphasis on growth. (But can a capitalist economy be a no-growth economy?) We must go for zero-growth in the North and controlled growth in the South. We do not need so much industrial power—I speak here of the North—to make our societies livable. Indeed, with simpler, less frenetic organization—less concerned with every growing consumption, the need for more and bigger and more complicated things—we would lead more leisurely, simpler and less stressful lives. The whole capitalist ethos pushes on us such a consumerist and stressful life-orientation and it must be resisted. The leopard needs either to disappear or lose its spots.

For most of the things that Barry wants capitalism must at least be tamed and, better still, radically altered (into a proper social democracy) or arguably preferably be replaced by socialism. It

is not clear which Barry is advocating. Perhaps—I conjecture very likely perhaps—he is saying in some situations one and in other situations the other. Perhaps he is saying that social democracy is the most we can get at least for the foreseeable future and that we must (to be reasonable) settle for that but that, where it can be attained, socialism is better. For the world, that is, it would in the longer run be better. Or perhaps he is giving us to understand that due to the ambiguities of ‘public ownership’ and the lack of clarity as to whether it in some form is necessary to attain the ends of social democracy/socialism, the distinction is not very useful. Moreover, he might contend, it is unnecessary to worry about it. But whatever he is saying here, it is clear that he believes we have a need for a radical change away from our at least present capitalist ways of doing things. We need some fundamental institutional changes, a shift in social ethos away from the class divisions and capital class rule toward a deeply egalitarian classless conception of social justice and this, for Barry (and for me), would be toward an approximate material equality. (But is that asking for pie in the sky? Remember my earlier remarks about a heuristic ideal?)

There is one possible institutional change that I have already discussed, but I shall return to it briefly here. In his repeated but cryptic articulations in his last chapter, Barry speaks of the need for ‘an international body’ and ‘a new world authority’. He asserts that we need a world authority “with the capacity to impose its decision in relation to actively contested disputes over the sharing of water, fisheries and renewable resources” (Barry 2005, 264). Barry adds that this world authority “would have to have the capacity to carry through a plan for the more systematic redistribution of the benefits flowing from control of natural resources.” I think this is fundamentally and importantly right. It also seems to me—though Barry does not explicitly say so—it would require what I have called a global federation and perhaps even a world state. For we are talking about an institution that globally and over nation-states or over entities like the European Union, the African Union or a Bolivian Union would have to have the coercive power to settle disputes like those mentioned above. Having such a coercively empowered global authority is the only way we are going to get such

matters settled and that is the only way a rough material equality worldwide can even be approximated. (We may not get it even then, but that is the only way it could even be approximated.)

The having of such a world authority will be fiercely resisted. But with globalization Westphalia is both impossible and even if possible (to speak counterfactually) undesirable. The worry, however, is that a world state would be despotic. But this is not necessarily so. The route I suggest for its attainment is through the United Nations' General Assembly, and that would be thoroughly democratic. That would be the closest thing we could get in contemporary times to a worldwide *demos*: the rule for and by the people. If it is said correctly that it would still require a world authority with coercive power to make such determinations (with the implementation of globally democratic votes in the General Assembly), it should be recognized that it would be no more despotic than what we now have and probably less so and would be a way of overcoming reliance on Hobbesian anarchical power which, as Hobbes said, leads to lives which are nasty, brutish and short. Moreover, it would be about as democratic as you can get for it would be a rule by and for a worldwide *demos*: rule by and for the population of the world. My worry is that a world state would not be powerful enough to keep some nation-states from being secessionist and starting the whole horror all over again. We need to have some effective final authority over such matters. This final authority would be the world's populations represented in their democratic General Assembly by the majority vote of the world's peoples (or rather their delegates in the General Assembly) after democratic deliberation making the decisions that are necessary to make for global problems, e.g., global warming, global distribution and about immigration. We need a United Nations to be coercively powerful enough to implement them. This will never give us *certainty* that the right decision has been made but then nothing will.



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**NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> See Gray on ethical socialism (Gray 1997, 103).

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed and articulate characterization of economic democracy, see Schweikart (1993 and 2002). If Stanley Moore (1993) is correct in arguing that Marx's own historical materialism gives us no warrant that we will get to a classless society with an economy without muskets, then economic democracy will not yield a classless society and, as capitalism is a dictatorship over the proletariat, socialism is a dictatorship over the bourgeoisie, a class that will not (as Marx believed) wither away. But it is important to recognize that the world 'dictatorship' can and should be defanged. For how such talk, while remaining fully cognizant of Marx's position, can be defanged (emotively neutralized), see C. B. Macpherson (1965).

<sup>3</sup> I do not mean to suggest, not even for a moment, that 'new labour' had anything like that in mind. It is perhaps not just an accident that Blair is a good friend of Bush but more tellingly also of Berlusconi. With the latter there is not the same *realpolitik* reason.

<sup>4</sup> It is not clear to me how this could be done, given our technological sophistication, for finance capital.

<sup>5</sup> There are a few determined working class militants who do not wish even when they could to have an *individual* escape from the working class. Rather, they seek working class liberation itself. But this requires socialism. See Cohen (1988, 255-85).

<sup>6</sup> I am not committed to essentialism and with that I am not committed to there being essentially contested concepts. For a brief but sound critique of essentialism, see Richard Rorty (1999, 47-71).

<sup>7</sup> See also John Rawls' "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited" (1999, 573-615).

<sup>8</sup> Some might content that though it would indeed be less expensive, it would be *unfair*. Those relying only (as some people could) on basic income would be free riding and thus be living off the labor of others and this is not only unfair but it is exploitative and undermines solidarity. I admit that the unfairness is a problem. Basic income could only work in a society where most people wanted to work. But where that obtains, even under bad working conditions, it would, were it adopted, make working conditions better and free up money from the costly welfare system for, say, education and health care. For a society in which there is a work ethic, it is worth the tradeoff. Some free riding won't kill us. If a few people like to spend their lives surfing, well, why not—particularly when leaving that option open leaves the society as a whole better off? Why be so bloody Kantian?

<sup>9</sup> See the articles in Leo Panitch and Colin Leys, eds., *The New Imperial Challenge* (London, United Kingdom: The Merlin Press, 2004), as well as their *The Empire Reloaded* (London, United Kingdom: The Merlin Press, 2005); Alan Freeman and Boris Kagurlitsky, eds., *The Politics of Empire: Globalization in Crisis* (London, United Kingdom: Pluto Press, 2004); John Bellamy Foster and Robert W. McChesney, eds., *Pax Americana: Exposing the American Empire* (New York, New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004); and David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> That we already faced destruction by what we are doing to it was realized by Gray in 1997. See Gray 1997, 74-75. For his present stress on the destructive catastrophe that looms, see Gray 2008.

<sup>11</sup> There is now the tragic possibility that—though for understandable, even though mistaken, reasons—China is about to abandon this enlightened policy for a two child per woman policy. See Branigan 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Some have argued that equality is neither required nor attainable. What instead is crucial is that everybody have enough (Frankfurt 1998), that what we should aim at is not the unattainable ideal of even approximate material equality but sufficiency where everybody has enough. Enough or sufficient is a relativistic thing. What is sufficient in Niger is not sufficient in India is not sufficient in the Netherlands. However, even though what

counts as basic needs expand with greater wealth and scientific development, there is a minimum that would be recognized everywhere. People need clean water, nutritious food, a livable shelter, and control over their own lives, companionship, and other things of that order. These are necessary for a decent life and for anything like autonomy (a rational control of one's own life, a self-mastery which is the ability to choose between different options with an understanding of what they are and something of their comparative value). These are things people need for anything like a decent survival. But just what counts as 'a livable shelter' or 'health care'? Certainly everyone needs that but how much and of what kind? The same goes for education or nutritious food. How much and of what kind do people need to have enough? And the same goes for 'decent' in 'decent survival'. When do we have enough? When do we have sufficiency? But even on the most minimal understanding of these things, as Pogge vividly points out, vast numbers of people, particularly in the South (though not all in the South), do not have their needs met. Moreover, having enough would involve having those needs met at least in a rather minimal manner. But this would be a long, long way from equality on any reasonable reading of equality. With the vast amount of extreme world poverty with its starvation, near starvation, extreme malnutrition and the incredible cluster of other ills, enough or sufficiency so defined as I have defined it would be a godsend. But such a meeting of needs would have to be above starvation and debilitating malnutrition. What could just minimally meet needs is something better (speaking in global terms) than what we have now. Enough must be higher than that. But we have no non-contextual criteria for what is enough. But even a modest meeting of needs would eradicate poverty and, as Pogge and Sachs both show, it could be readily achieved and at little expense to the North. But there is no political will to do so. Still, if by some political miracle it was achieved and the social wealth of the world came to flow freely, then we should aim at equality (or something approaching it) and perhaps, if we also deepen democracy radically so there could be something like equal political power, we could approach it. But in all instances equality should be our *heuristic*, though for now our first effort, the environment aside, should be poverty eradication and the bringing down of our stark inequalities. It is an abomination that in a rich country like the United States 37 million live below the poverty line.

<sup>13</sup> In two short but incisive articles, George Monbiot (2007a; 2007b) makes two crucially urgent central claims: (i) Only *full* de-carbonization can save us and we have the technical capacity to do it but the political will is completely lacking. (This fits well with what Barry is saying, and Gray is saying as well, but it is put more starkly.) The U.S. is the main culprit here for it has sabotaged without appearing to do so what was trying to be achieved at both Kyoto and Bali. The U.S.'s political funding system puts politicians in the hands of the great corporations and, in the case of climate change, in the hands of energy and transport sectors that stand to lose (in the short run, at least) if something serious is done about climate change. "Ganging together with these capitalists and the government leaders in hock to them, the corporate media downplay the threat of climate change and demonize anyone who tries to address it" (Monbiot 2007b). (ii) Monbiot also carefully argues that to keep the earth's temperature rise to 2C or even 3C, without which we will be courting global disaster, we will have to go for full de-carbonization but (though it is not physically and scientifically impossible) none of the governments are proposing it. There are no fixed carbon cuts in the proposed Bali agreements. Monbiot remarks, "There are still two years to go, but so far the new agreement [Bali] is even worse than the Kyoto Protocol. It contains no targets and no dates. A new set of guidelines also agreed to at Bali extend and strengthen the worst of Gore's trading scams [1997], the clean development mechanism" (Monbiot 2007b). He also shows in that article how these tradable emission cuts are scams, something that is usually not noted. We have been sold on their efficacy. But this is indeed to be sold down the river.

<sup>14</sup> Why, when the necessity to move toward rapidly to full de-carbonization is so glaringly imperative, is it resisted so much by our governments? Is it because the world leaders are so badly informed, ideologically blinkered, or so short-term oriented that they cannot see it? Are all their advisors so ill-informed or ideologically blinkered or just protecting their own backsides by telling, regardless of what they know, these political leaders what they think—probably correctly—these leaders want to hear? These things are difficult but not impossible to believe, but psychological denial is very easy when things are threatening. We have known about this at least since Freud. But that apart, what then can explain their proceeding on such a suicidal course? One thing which might explain it, or partially explain it, is a belief that science and technology will somehow save us. Since the rise of science, it has come to our aid in the past, so it is reasonable to believe it will now. Hang in there with fossil fuels for the time being and wait for science to come up with a replacement and a way of deflecting global warming. They might even realize that it must come in a hurry, but have faith—

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what is regarded as a rational faith—that it will. There are things on the horizon (e. g. that laser-induced magnetic fusion will supply abundant clean energy) that might well save us. Again and again, that is how science has worked. Laser-induced magnetic fusion was until recently regarded as whacky physics, but some reputable scientists are now seriously advocating that. With many people wanting to stick with business as usual, why not put your faith in that? This seems to me like some of the Nazi elite (perhaps even Hitler himself) who put their faith in coming to have a ‘wonder weapon’, i.e. the atomic bomb, which would suddenly turn the tide in their favor when otherwise it was clear that they were being decisively defeated. And perhaps it would have if they had beat the Americans to having the bomb. So perhaps the capitalist order will develop a ‘wonder weapon’ to extricate us from looming disaster—disaster for the whole world—caused by global warming. Well, perhaps, but not very likely and certainly not in time. Such reliance on science to save us completely ignores Barry’s precautionary principle (methodological conservatism).