Beyond Poverty
Social Justice in a Global Marketplace

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ABSTRACT

The social justice paradigm, developed in philosophy by John Rawls and others, reaches limits when confronted with diverse populations, unsound governments, and global markets. Its parameters are further limited by a traditional utilitarian approach to both industrial actors and consumer behaviors. Finally, by focusing too exclusively on poverty, as manifest in insufficient incomes or resources, the paradigm overlooks the oppressive role that gender, race, and religious prejudice play in keeping the poor subordinated. The authors of this article suggest three ways in which researchers in marketing could bring their unique expertise to the question of social justice in a global economy: by reinventing the theoretical foundation laid down by thinkers such as Rawls, by documenting and evaluating emergent “feasible fixes” to achieve justice (such as the global resource dividend, cause-related marketing, Fair Trade, and philanthrocapitalism), and by exploring the parameters of the consumption basket that would be minimally required to achieve human capabilities.
“Global justice cannot be understood on the model of social justice, at least not for the foreseeable future,” pronounced David Miller in the first chapter of *Principles of Social Justice* (1999, p. 19). Miller, a leading thinker in the philosophical debates over “social justice”—a term used interchangeably with “economic justice” and “distributive justice”—surveyed the basic assumptions underpinning that discourse and offered that distributive justice had been made unachievable by the transnational face of global markets and the perceived “fragmentation” of national identity in the West.

Though some trace its origins back to Aristotle, the modern concept of social justice begins with Adam Smith and is strongly rooted in the utilitarian and empiricist traditions of Britain and the United States, with special debts to Hume, Locke, Mill, and Bentham (Fleischacker 2004; Frohlich 2007). The notion fully emerged only in the 19th and 20th centuries, when the social, political, and economic circumstances of these two Western democracies uniquely created the setting for the idea that all citizens should be able to claim some form of material equality (Fleischacker 2004; Miller 1991). However, this same distinctive confluence has also circumscribed the first principles, tacit assumptions, and pervasive prejudices, leaving the philosophical principle of social justice—at a moment when many quarters call for global material justice—oddly bound by self-imposed national borders and a requirement for cultural homogeneity. Thus, in spite of the initially positive influence of thinkers like John Rawls (1971, 1999) on policy development in marketing (see Laczniak and Murphy 2008), academics in our own field hoping to build a stream of study aimed at achieving distributive justice in the global economy will need to substantially reinvent the theoretical basis.

**Impoverished Premises**
A brief examination of the philosophical limitations of the social justice debate is useful at the outset. We can only summarize here; readers are encouraged to read further analysis elsewhere (Clayton and Williams 2004; Freeman 2003; Kukathas and Pettit 1990).

The requirements for social justice, as conceptualized to date, are:

1. **A populace willing to be party to a consensual arrangement that provides basic rights to all citizens.** The necessity for a shared ethos of justice is recognized in the debate (Rawls 1971; Cohen 2004); what is not recognized is the problem posed by the potential definition of “citizenship” or even “persons” for the purpose of claiming basic rights. Further, the willingness of the populace to debate and agree on arrangements that would level differences is taken too much for granted: this literature seldom confronts the strength of will to hold power over others of a darker skin, a different religion, a lower class, or another sex in any meaningful way. Hence, the focus is usually on some income adjustment, as opposed to addressing the social means of oppression, which often occur with and perpetuate deprivation.

2. **A competent, benevolent, and well-resourced nation-state with sufficient tools at its disposal to enforce compliance.** The “basic structure,” as it is called by John Rawls (1971, pp. 4-10), is practically defined as “the nation-state” throughout this literature and the major requirement is the ability to hold coercive power over the citizens, in the form of laws, taxes, and punishments (Cohen 2004). The state acts through regulations that sometimes pass through other institutions, such as universities and employers. Points of contention are the wrongs perpetuated by institutions, such as the family, that act unjustly through informal behaviours and traditional customs, or the media, who often perpetuate injustices by fostering stereotypes (Okin 1991).

3. **A formal economy that is monetized, fully monitored, and, because it encompasses all possible sites for adjustments, can act in conjunction with the state to enforce the social justice ideal.** Importantly, even where injustice attributable to gender, race,
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religious difference, and the like are brought into this debate, the proposed solutions
nearly always entail an act of law, a change in the tax code, or some adjustment in
incomes effected through a formal employer (for instance, Casal 2004; Miller 1991;
Okin 1991). Full information is consistently assumed. Ironically, the willingness of
the industrial sector to collude with the government to equalize incomes is often taken
for granted, yet the discourse also holds to a view of the market economy that is
sometimes so baldly economistic as to constitute caricature (Cohen 1994; Miller

(4) A secular worldview shared by all citizens. A consistent requirement is that religion
has been set aside (Casal 2004; Fleischaker 2004). The reasons given are the religious
upheavals from which the Enlightenment thinkers emerged (Rawls 1993). Yet the
history of social justice thought draws a path from Hebrews through Acquinas and the
Quakers, unambiguously pointing to Christian roots (Fleischaker 2004). Other world
religions have developed economic philosophies pointedly aimed at social justice
(Iqbal and Mirakhor 2007; Pryor 1991), so the imperative to specifically exclude any
religious “comprehensive world view” that might compete with this ostensibly secular
(but historically Christian) agenda, seems, at best, prejudiced. This discourse also
does not engage with the ancient systems of reciprocity still visible among rural
communities in the developing world (Mauss 1990), which also could offer
important—and perhaps more practicable—guidance. Paradoxically, the
comprehensive world view, shared sufficiently by all parties to have consensually
agreed to build the basic structure, is consistently presumed to be absent among the
most well-off citizens, “market high-fliers” who are sometimes made to look like
paper cut-outs of greed and myopic self-interest (Cohen 2004; Miller 1991). Yet
professionals and high net worth individuals are also part of the “web of obligation”
that makes an economic community. The perception of belonging to a society—local,
national, or global—is a powerful explanatory factor for the benefactions that the rich bestow and their occasional willingness to compromise in selfless ways on legislation. A theory built on the pure self-interest of rational utilitarianism ignores the social fabric that previous societies relied upon (see Mary Douglas’ comparison to British utilitarianism in her foreword to Mauss 1990).

(5) Agreement on the items and services constituting the “primary goods” that enable citizens to realize their full human potential. From Rawls (1971), the discussion of goods, while rhetorically admitting complexity, is addressed in very abstract terms. In practice, defining “necessities,” even for survival, is sticky, because such judgments are so mired in history and culture (Douglas and Isherwood 1996; Schudson 1984). Further, the discourse on social justice aims to enable more than survival: development of “potential” or, in Amartya Sen’s terms, “capabilities,” is the ultimate objective (2000; for an instance in which marketing scholars have engaged with the capabilities theory, see Santos and Laczniak 2009). The primary goods package would have to attend to needs beyond basic biological necessities (even if we agreed on what those were), and thus open into a multitude of cases and contradictions.

Beyond these requirements, there are three other issues worth noting. First, the focal intent of the well-ordered society in this vision is the perpetuation of the national culture—a prescription that would tend to outlaw meaningful change. Second, the influence of culture, except for the national culture needed to mutually bind citizens to each other, is either negative or absent. Finally, the appeals to common sense are frequent enough to be disturbing; there is no apparent understanding that common sense is the most intransigent ideology of all (compare Casal 2004, Cohen 2004, and Miller 1991 to Geertz 1985).

The debate on social justice is based on an imagined ideal community, much like that envisioned by the U. S. Declaration of Independence, composed of equal persons sharing a common vision. But we know that, in truth, the citizens who could claim “basic rights” after
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the American Revolution were kept to a short list (Wood 1993). Legal definitions of “persons” or “citizens” did not include women, slaves, Native Americans, immigrants, the landless, or, for that matter, Catholics or Jews. Having taken a nostalgic vision as a truthful description of life in their national past, these 20th century social justice theorists now believe themselves suddenly confronted with a sea change in which a once homogeneous nation has become unworkably “multicultural.” They are dismayed to find that many of these hitherto invisible groups are as interested in positive cultural recognition (and the cessation of disabling stereotypes) as in a basket of basic goods, but respect is a concept too intangible to fall workably within a frame bounded by classical economics (Miller 1991).

Trying to step beyond the American or British national borders presents an even more daunting cacophony of difference. Though the social justice debate has engaged with socialist thinking in the past (Nozick 1977), there has been no recognition of any other philosophical approach nor any other tradition’s precepts about economic justice. Presumptions about government are even more problematic. It is easy to say that the states of the rich nations are not as fair, as competent, or as well outfitted as the ideal put forth. But the vastly different motives and conditions that animate other state regimes around the world make the foundational premises about government seem almost perverse. How would the “basic structure” concept travel to Somalia or to any one of some 50 countries that effectively have no state (Collier 2008)? How would one execute such principles in Myanmar or in any one of the undemocratic states around the world where deeply corrupt dictators funnel wealth into their pockets to the detriment of the citizens? And what of the many earnestly well-intentioned states that simply do not have the organizational power to wrest wealth from elites or provide essential services to the poor? We cannot dismiss these examples as exceptional or irrelevant—it is where government is weak or corrupt that we find the largest and most intractable pockets of poverty (Collier 2008; Sachs 2006).
The heterogeneity of states is not the brick wall the social justice debate sees itself facing. Instead, it is the globalization of markets that has presented the insurmountable barrier. Trapped as they are by an unrelieved, Friedmanesque view of economics, social justice philosophers anticipate that all industry will move, like water, toward the lowest wages and costs, thus abandoning any societies that intend to redress severe inequalities among their citizenry (Miller 1991). Industrial actors are not deemed to have the national loyalties the rest of us hold. Nor do they have any other transcendent affinities or moral codes or even everyday considerations that might lead them to choose just, stable societies over unequal, volatile ones. Certainly, there is no other ethos that might cause industrial players to alter their own practices, which are assumed to be utterly exploitative. The social justice theorists see the worldwide web primarily as a transfer mechanism for corrupt transactions, not as a means to build grassroots coalitions or keep watch on corporations. They see the global culture mainly as a new springboard for inequality (because it produces international athletes, actors, and rock stars), not as a potentially unifying set of forms and traditions (Miller 1991).

**Empirical Evidence and Alternative Futures**

In this dystopian vision, the global super-rich are merely fugitives from taxes. They do not contribute to global culture. They do not found charities nor champion causes. Nothing like “philanthrocapitalism” is possible (Bishop and Green 2008). “Cause-related marketing,” “corporate social responsibility,” and “green marketing” are not just innovations to be viewed sceptically—they are unimaginable. “Corporate foundation” is an oxymoron.

There would never be, in this worldview, a consumer boycott by Americans on behalf of sweatshop workers in Southeast Asia. The surprising majority of Muslims who recently told Gallup their French, British, or American citizenship was as important to them as their religion are freakish anomalies, not opportunities for dialog (Gallup, Inc. 2009). Similarly the burgeoning youth culture, in which young people from around the world signal membership with brands or songs and jabber with each other on Facebook—or the international women’s
movement that funnels charity from the rich nations into female empowerment projects worldwide—are affinities that only detract from national bonds.

The international NGOs who coax governments, police companies, and teach communities to thrive—using funds from a diverse array of mostly private sources—cannot achieve social justice, by definition, because they do not constitute “a single, coherent institutional structure” (Miller 1991, p. 253). The idea that such organizations would enter into public-private partnerships with corporations and employ “market-based approaches” to poverty alleviation would be utter nonsense, not a potential path to sustainable relief (Brugmann and Prahalad 2007). There would be no Muhammad Yunus in this world and no Grameen Bank (Yunnus 2007), no Clinton Initiative and no Gates Foundation. The long distance awareness of suffering and corruption that has made “transparency” a main condition of leadership in our times, is only a by-product of the transaction machine, not a channel for advocacy. There is no Kiva network in the world of utilitarian social justice.

At the same time, the often bleak view of global economics espoused by social justice philosophers overlooks some of today’s most frightening spectres, mostly due to the over-emphasis on formal, monetized, regulated and nationally-tracked industries as exhaustive and constitutive of economics. The epochal supranational trade in drugs, guns, counterfeit items, and humans completely disappears into this myopia (Bales 2004; Naim 2007). And the fact that the disadvantaged everywhere—including the developed nations—are most likely to be engaged in the informal economy, where payments and abuses go on, irrespective of laws and taxes, simply escapes notice (Portes, Castels and Benton 1989).

The social justice debate, indeed, seems oblivious to the conditions most of us would recognize as “everyday life in the 21st century.” In at least one regard, this obliviousness is not surprising. Historians tracing the evolution of “social justice” as a philosophical concept like to earmark Smith or Mill or Rawls. But there is glancing recognition that social justice has always followed, not led, conditions and sentiments on the ground (Fleischacker 2004).
And it is also recognized (though the model cannot account for it) that a socially just ethos toward any group is something that emerges organically and over time, from sources like religion and art (Fleischaker 2004). Further, it is only reasonable to note that the foundations of the debate were laid down in 1971 by John Rawls—on the heels of the Civil Rights Movement, at the dawn of the Second Wave of feminism, when globalization was embryonic, and the worldwide web barely imaginable. However, most of the thinkers who followed have merely patched over that theoretical base; few admit its foundational flaws.

Thus, in addition to noting the need to re-theorize social justice for a diverse global marketplace, we find that the empirical bent of most marketing academics is very much in need: to document and analyze the possibilities emerging in the global economy right now.

*The Feasible Fix*

Thomas Pogge, one of a few trying to address global injustice through this debate, has a dark view of the setting for the world’s poor, yet produces one of the most optimistic, and simplest, solutions (2004). Pogge suggests that the widespread fact of radical inequality shows a violation of negative duty, using the following set of logical proofs:

The world’s poorest suffer in both absolute and relative terms.

Their inequality is impervious to improvement and pervasive in every aspect of their lives. Further, this permanent inequality cannot be traced to any extra-social origin (e. g. genetics or disasters), nor can it fairly to be said to be the fault of the poor that they suffer.

Speaking globally, the different starting points for the rich and the poor is the result of a shared history of massive wrongs perpetrated by the rich nations upon the poor ones.

The world’s rich have little contact with the world’s poorest and thus have little idea of the nature, depth, and breadth of their suffering.

Yet the suffering of the poor is avoidable: the rich can help the poor without becoming poor themselves.
There is a global formal order shaped by the rich and imposed on the poor.

However, this formal order is not a necessary one and so it could be replaced by an alternative order (266).

By showing that the above conditions are met, Pogge argues that the world order is *prima facie* unjust and must be changed. This kind of analysis is required to establish credibility with social justice philosophers—we believe that most of Pogge’s premise would be readily agreed by many ordinary citizens today and by nearly everyone who might read this article. Importantly, Pogge remarks at the end of his logical exegesis, “advantaged and influential participants in the present international order grant the argument” (269, emphasis ours). So, in the space of a few pages, Pogge gets to a place Miller thought unachievable, mostly by invoking a common extra-national understanding. We want to further highlight an addition to the argument: Pogge recognizes that the behavior of well-ordered states outside their national borders is often not at all just, even if we could agree that, within their borders, they attempt to behave justly toward their own citizens. Thus, constraining the argument to the area within national borders actually serves to obfuscate the roots of our most pressing problem.

What remains, of course, is the solution. The conclusion typical of much of the academy—a call for total revolution—is, we are glad to say, avoided here. The world record for revolutions is not as sanguine as some seem to think; they usually lead to more suffering, more brutality, more poverty. Revolutions that achieve their goals (of which the American Revolution of 1776 would be one) are extremely rare in world history (Wood 1993).

Pogge argues instead for reform: a “global resource dividend” (GRD) to be paid to the poor in compensation for the exploitation of the natural environment for the profit of the rich. In a line of reasoning reminiscent of Sachs (2006), Pogge argues that if the total value of this dividend were set at 1% of aggregate global income, it would raise six times the money given in development assistance to the poor nations, but would still be less than the
US spends on defense every year. The impact on the average citizen in, say, North America would be small; he estimates that a reasonable dividend on crude oil alone would raise nearly 20% of the needed revenue, but would cost Americans less than a nickel a gallon.

Would such a small dividend work to solve such a huge problem? Pogge believes it would, arguing on the basis that the world economy does not inevitably produce poverty: “Present radical inequality is the cumulative result of decades and centuries in which the more affluent societies and groups have used their advantages in capital and knowledge to expand these advantages ever further. This vast gulf between rich and poor does not demonstrate that economic systems have irresistible centrifugal tendencies. Rather, it shows the power of long-term compounding when such tendencies are not continuously resisted (as they are, to some extent within most modern states). It is quite possible that, if radical inequality has once been eradicated, quite a small GRD may, in the context of a fair and open global market system, be sufficient continuously to balance those ordinary centrifugal tendencies of markets enough to forestall its re-emergence” (272). This simple solution—however workable it may or may not be—thus builds on a basic concept of classical economics (compounding of benefits) and does not find unavoidable injustice in globalization. But it could not spring from an economic philosophy that is built only on self-seeking and thus recognizes neither a positive duty to the poor nor the negative responsibility to avoid profiting from their misery.

But how would one distribute the GRD? The international aid and charity given to poor governments is often spent on weapons or diverted into personal accounts; “first world” government funding is often used as a political inducement (Collier 2008; Sachs 2006). So, it seems likely that the GRD would be administered by NGOs in order to ensure that benefits reached the intended recipients. The emergence of the international NGOs, imperfect as they may be, as a means of promoting development was probably necessary to circumvent the dysfunction of governments, both rich and poor. The prerequisite that social justice only be carried out by government closes the door to that solution.
Several other new approaches to poverty have caught the global community’s imagination in the past ten years, making, for example, a Nobel Prizewinner of Muhammad Yunus (2008) and a media celebrity of Jeffrey Sachs (2006). Their proposals, as well as other new ideas based on market-based mechanisms, such as social entrepreneurship and cause-related marketing, would be excluded by the axioms of social justice, as would international consumer boycotts, because they do not emanate from a nation-state nor focus on internal affairs. Some of the best new ideas combine the forces of the NGO and private sector, as in the Pampers/UNICEF effort to eliminate maternal neonatal tetanus through a global promotion that raises money from young mothers’ purchases. These “feasible fixes” have problems on the ground and Pogge’s GRD, no doubt, has some, too. But when the market, like the international charities, is simply excised from consideration by the inward-gazing ideology of social justice theory, important avenues are closed off.

Openness to creative market solutions signals an important opportunity for marketing academics with a social justice bent. Imagining and proposing new means of adding to, working with, or reforming the global economy, as well as evaluating the proposals of others, is one way that our field could make a contribution using our existing expertise.

“Bads” and Goods

Development studies already provides a multiplicity of terms, some of them with measurements, for defining poverty (Addison, Hulme, and Kanbur 2009; Maxwell 1999). However, the other side—what constitutes the material basis for developing human capabilities—is still in need of articulation. We believe marketing scholars would be in an excellent position to investigate the basket of goods necessary to realize human potential. Though race and gender studies long ago began documenting the connection between marked goods and space (toys for girls or boys, stores for black or white), biased messages, and limited opportunities, these links have been difficult for social justice philosophers to make or accept (Cohen 2004; Miller 1991; Okin 1991). More work of this nature in other societies—
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for example, the differing consumer behaviors that mark castes in India—would help to
globalize our understanding. We also need to investigate the way consumption is used as a
means of oppression, not by withholding, but by forcing acceptance or compliance.

We offer here a schematic of what we think are the necessary touchpoints, which we
are calling “the Six Ss.” Most of the categories themselves will, we expect, be obvious to
readers. So we point to the complexity and inherent contradictions within these seemingly
straightforward categories—and, hence, the need for research. We have a six-point list, meant
only to be a start: subsistence, sound health, safety, sociality, sovereignty, and spirituality.

**Subsistence**—While it seems obvious to some that food and water, shelter and
clothing would come first on this list, the particulars of the package in actual fact would
present multiple problems and many manifestations of cultural difference. The form of food,
for instance, has the potential to dehumanize and to be culturally insensitive. For instance,
Americans are infamous for providing peanut butter, a nutritious food many in the rest of the
world deem inedible, to refugees and disaster victims.

**Health.** What constitutes adequate medical care varies a great deal even between the
US and the UK, which have approved different medicines for the same diseases, different
timing guidelines for tests and procedures. The difference between Western and Eastern
medicine is a veritable map for *faux pas* in health intervention. Even within relatively
homogenous societies, new technology has given rise to debates about who is to receive
heroic care, how pain and palliative treatments fit in to what is “basic health care,” and so on.
Do all preventable illnesses fall under the remit of social justice in health care?

The overfed citizens of the West should be encouraged to choose salads over
cheeseburgers, no doubt, and the poor in those societies, who are particularly prone to high-
calorie, high-fat, low-nutrition diets, would likely benefit from interventions. But should the
same food standards apply when shipments go out to refugees? How “unhealthy” can a
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foodstuff be before it should not be given to someone who is starving? How do we resolve contradictions between categories in the search for the right mix of goods?

Safety. One of the most compelling reasons to fight poverty is the higher level of violence experienced within poor societies and the threat radical inequality poses to global security. We also recognize that safety is one of the basic needs identified by Maslow (1943) without which higher levels of human realization cannot be reached. Nevertheless, what one person views as necessary to their safety (owning a handgun, for instance) can increase the potential for violence in the society at large.

Sociality. Adam Smith believed that the necessary basket of goods included anything that, in a given society, was required for a person to be creditable—that is, for them to command some minimal level of respect from others (Schudson 1985). John Rawls, too, acknowledged that the need to maintain social dignity was a basic factor in the composition of primary goods for social justice (1971). In the Western democracies, it has long been a requirement that, in order to appear creditable, a person must present themselves in a way that implied the use of grooming products: soap, toothpaste, nail clippers, and so on. Without benefit of these products, one may be viewed by others as undeserving, even of charity, and it may be difficult to obtain most forms of employment. Hence, we see that some products many condemn as frivolous would be necessary even to a list of subsistence objects, because they allow a fundamentally social creature to move with dignity within his or her locale.

Moving among and communicating with members of the community is also essential for human potential and economic viability. Restricted sociality is a common means of oppression: the cloistering of women is practiced in highly patriarchal societies, slaves are nearly always limited in their movements, curfews are typical of dictatorships. Such restrictions are often rationalized by those who impose them on the basis of safety concerns. In the developing world, for instance, the practice of purdah is said to keep women safe, but the hiding itself sometimes obscures the facts and signs of domestic violence, keeping captive
women from seeking assistance. The inability to move and communicate freely limits a woman’s ability to earn a living or start a business, thus keeping her economically at the mercy of the patriarch, even if she has material luxuries at her disposal (Kristof and WuDunn 2009). The access to information allowed by the internet (legal rights, reproductive health advice), as well as the access to services (banking, agricultural prices) and to other people (friends, but also emergency assistance) allowed by mobile phones, stand to present important breakthroughs for the freedoms of women everywhere (GSMA 2010). Yet it is typical for the ruling classes in such countries to stereotype young women’s desires for mobile phones as craven materialism, evidence of an irrational desire for the showy things of the rich world.

We can see in these examples that the prerogatives of some must sometimes be sacrificed for the potentiality of others to be realized. There is the further spectre of extreme poverty within a setting of wealth that is often the situation of women, even in the rich nations. We can imagine, as well, the way the prejudices of the powerful could be perpetuated through judgments of what is allowable as primary goods: even access to education is, for girls, not considered necessary by many in the poor nations.

Sovereignty. The freedom to develop the self through the exercise of free will, including certain consumption choices, seems crucial to a program designed to facilitate human potential. Choosing to purchase a box of artists’ paints, a calculator, or a lipstick could all be explained and justified on a self-expression or personal development basis. Where do we draw the line between necessity and luxury for items like these?

The sobering limits of the formal system that currently defines social justice can also be seen in this category. There are more slaves in the world today than ever in history, most of them young females. The phenomenal growth in this horrific practice has come about not because of the limits of law, but because market forces make humans cheap as a commodity and because a supranational trade network has grown up to prey on the poor, using violence to enforce their will over the “goods” they sell (Bales 2004). Enforcing the right to follow a
self-determined path, rather than to literally be bought and sold by others, will occur at the most challenging front for social justice in its global phase.

*Spirituality.* The freedom to pursue a vision of the transcendent—a sense of the divine, a belief in another life or higher being, a responsibility to the planet or the future, a simple sense of right and wrong—seems an essential part of human well-being and personal development. Western culture does not think of spirituality as having a material component, yet our spiritual practices are often facilitated by objects like candles or incense and transcendent beliefs often guide consumption choices, from eating meat to disposal of packaging to acceptance of medicine. In other cultures, the quest for spirituality is often expressed in the ownership of statuettes, the giving of flowers, the sacrifice and offering of valued objects. The willingness to take seriously the spiritual precepts of other cultures, including their notions of right economic behavior and good governance, would be a crucial element in building an open agenda for social justice. The concept of a well-ordered society in which some notion of God does not figure would be a contradiction in terms to many people around the world.

Recognizing spirituality would not just present large theoretical conundrums, but many hard choices over otherwise small issues. We are seeing one such conflict on a large scale right now in the controversy over banning veils, especially from schools, in France: the need to recognize the spiritual precepts and ethnic identity of Muslim minorities, the rights of citizens to be free of religious signs in public places, and the rights of women to openness and freedom of movement are all at cross-purposes. One expressed fear is that schoolgirls are being forced to wear the veil by their fathers. Whether or not this is true, the fear illustrates an element of social justice in consumption that has escaped the philosophical debate: that disadvantage is often expressed in what might be called “material bullying”—forcing the disempowered party to wear, eat, or otherwise consume something that is not of their choice, in a way that makes them vulnerable, hinders their mobility, marks them for persecution,
constrains their choices, and so on. The failure to deal with power issues, as well as the propensity to view poverty simply as the result of low income, blinkers the view of social justice in a profound way. It is essential to move beyond this limitation.

**Conclusion**

We have attempted to outline here the parameters of a research agenda aimed at the global challenge of social justice (Figure 1).

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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This agenda requires three basic components that parallel the areas of need we have outlined:

1. A rethinking and revision of social justice thought to date, so that the ethnocentric and ideological constraints can be lifted and the approach made appropriate for more diverse circumstances of application;
2. A program to identify and evaluate innovative attempts to realize justice, even on a limited pragmatic scale, through market-based means;
3. A purposive exploration of the concrete dimensions of primary goods, with special attention to conflicts of interest, cross-purposes between categories, and the negative effects of the presence, as well as the absence, of objects.

We see this program demanding a multimethods toolbox and a mix of research attitudes, from theoretical ideation to action or advocacy research. The immediate users of the research would be primarily policy-makers, but this work would also inform professionals in the private sector with projects involving Fair Trade, “bottom of the pyramid” systems and products, cause-related marketing programs, and corporate social responsibility. Ultimately, however, this research must be infused with a desire to make the oppressed its beneficiaries. Only by attempting, without self-righteous judgments, to
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devise a program that preserves dignity and identity, while feeding the body and educating the mind, can the global community move beyond poverty.
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