Imagine a procedure (process, proceeding) that leads to various outcomes (results, states of affairs). **First question:** Is there “an independent standard for deciding which outcome is just”—i.e., is there “a criterion defined separately from and prior to the procedure which is to be followed” (John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1971], 85)?

**No.** This is pure procedural justice. Example: gambling. “[T]here is a correct or fair procedure such that the outcome is likewise correct or fair, whatever it is, provided that the procedure has been properly followed” (TJ, 86). But notice: “A fair procedure translates its fairness to the outcome only when it is actually carried out” (TJ, 86). Comment: Rawls complicates this category by introducing the notion of “quasi-pure” procedural justice: “laws and policies are just provided that they lie within the allowed range, and the legislature, in ways authorized by a just constitution, has in fact enacted them” (TJ, 201). Earlier, he had said of pure procedural justice that “the outcome is just whatever it happens to be, at least so long as it is within a certain range” (TJ, 85; italics added). Confining outcomes to a certain range introduces a substantive element, which makes it quasi-pure (not to be confused with impure).

**Yes.** This is impure procedural justice (Rawls does not use this term, but it is suggested by his use of “pure”). **Second question:** Is it “possible to devise a procedure that is sure to give the desired outcome”—i.e., that is “guaranteed to lead to it” (TJ, 85)?

**No.** This is imperfect procedural justice. Example: a criminal trial. “Even though the law is carefully followed, and the proceedings fairly and properly conducted, it may reach the wrong outcome. An innocent man may be found guilty, a guilty man may be set free” (TJ, 86). Another example is lawmaking. This explains how unjust laws can emerge from a just constitutional process, and this gives rise to the problem of civil disobedience, to wit: Under what conditions may one disobey a
valid law (i.e., a law that was enacted in accordance with just constitutional processes)? Rawls answers this question both in his 1969 essay “The Justification of Civil Disobedience” and in TJ.

Yes. This is perfect procedural justice. Example: dividing a cake, where it is assumed that “the fair division is an equal one” (TJ, 85). Rawls says that “perfect procedural justice is rare, if not impossible, in cases of much practical interest” (TJ, 85).