Phil / Pol S / Val 207
Global Justice

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JANUARY 21-24, 2014
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Taking stock

- We’ve examined two popular approaches to moral reasoning – especially moral reasoning about politics:
  - **Utilitarianism** (Peter Singer)
  - **Social contract theory** (John Rawls and Charles Beitz)
Utilitarianism

- Weak Principle: If we can eliminate something bad without giving up something of moral significance, we ought to do so.
- Stronger Principle: If we can eliminate something bad without giving up something of comparable moral significance, we ought to do so.
- Strongest Principle (Utilitarianism): We should do whatever we can to promote the happiness of others, to the point at which any further contribution would cause us more unhappiness than the amount of happiness it would produce.
Social contract approach

- **John Rawls.**
- The Original Position where the parties represent individual people is the key to his domestic theory of justice: we have to ask ourselves whether the rules we propose could be fairly accepted by everyone behind the Veil of Ignorance.
- Rawls did not apply this version of the Original Position to the international sphere.
Social contract approach: the international application, part one

- **Charles Beitz:**
- Rawls’s Original Position in which the parties represent individual persons should apply to the world as a whole.  
  
  **The Global Difference Principle:**
  - Natural resource distributions are arbitrary, so there must be some kind of Resource Dividend to make the distribution of benefits more just.
  - The world as a whole makes and distributes things, so global inequalities must be justified by the Global Difference Principle—that is, they must maximize the expectations of the least well off group.
John Rawls responds:

The parties whose agreement ought to be central are not persons, but peoples.

States may have duties to assist each other, in emergencies, but no duties to avoid inequality.

Rawls argues that wealth differences among states could simply be the result of each country’s domestic political culture and spending decisions.
Thomas Pogge

- Professor of Philosophy and International Affairs, at Yale
- Co-founder of the Health Impact Fund
- Founder, Academics Stand Against Poverty
Facts about World Poverty

Begin with some statistics from Pogge:

- 15.6% of the world has 81% of the wealth
- 84.4% of the world has the remaining 19% (World Bank Development Report 2003)
- Out of a total of 6 billion human beings, some 2.8 billion live below $2/day, and nearly 1.2 billion of them live below the $1/day international poverty line (World Bank Development Report 2000).

More Facts

“Roughly one third of all human deaths, some 50,000 daily, are due to poverty-related causes, easily preventable through better nutrition, safe drinking water, vaccines, cheap re-hydration packs and antibiotics” (Pogge page 8; from World Health Organization Report 2001).
“Rawls’s international original position is too strongly focused on safeguarding the well-orderedness of liberal and decent societies . . .”(1).

“Rawls’s duty of assistance is not demanding enough”(2).
Rawls’s main claim (PDPT): When societies fail to thrive, “the problem is commonly the nature of the public political culture and the religious and philosophical traditions that underlie its institutions. The great social evils in poorer societies are likely to be oppressive government and corrupt elites” (Rawls, quoted by Pogge on page 3).

Pogge argues that PDPT is not true. In fact, he argues, rich nations cause poor nations to be poor and to remain poor. The rich nations harm the poor.
Negative and Positive Duties

- **Negative duties** are duties to refrain from action – generally, to refrain from harming
- **Positive duties** are duties to perform actions – generally, to perform actions that will help others
The wealthy countries are violating negative duties to the world’s poor

- Not merely failing to help; actively causing poverty and death.
- Those of us who are benefitting from the system are morally in the same situation as those who benefitted from the system of slavery prior to the American Civil War.
- Four distinct ways in which the global order can be thought to be harming the poor.
One: a shared and violent history

- It is not a coincidence, says Pogge, that the most dire current poverty exists in Africa.
- We can explain much current poverty as the legacy of obvious unjust forms of colonial exploitation.

Colonialism (1914)
International rules allow whatever group is actually able to control a place to sell of the resources in it – regardless of the interests or needs of the inhabitants.

This resource privilege incentivizes those who are able to muster the military force needed to effectively control the population.
The Resource Curse

This result has been called the resource curse: There is a “significant negative correlation between resource wealth (relative to GDP) and economic performance” (Pogge 12).
Three: the Borrowing Privilege

- The rules of international trade, again, recognize any actual coercive regime as the proper spokesman of the populace.
- This entails the right of the regime to borrow on behalf of the people – and oblige them, even after the fall of that regime!
- This means that individuals have the incentive to take charge of the country, control its resources, and run up debt to be repaid by future governments and even future generations.
The WTO is formally just a treaty body, but in practice membership in it is required for trading relationships. The interests of the WTO are aligned closely with the interests of the wealthiest nations: the wealthy countries can exclude goods from poorer countries, while mandating that those poorer countries open their own markets. Pogge emphasizes that the WTO is not interested in hearing about the interests of the poorer countries. Many of these countries are not even able to send people to the WTO to argue their cases!
The wealthy countries have imposed a set of rules on the developing countries that benefit the wealthy, to the detriment of the impoverished:

- Developing countries are forced to accept rules that maximize foreign capital access, at the expense of local workers.
- Wealthy countries subsidize their agricultural products, and often dump these onto developing countries.
- Wealthy countries impose tariffs against manufactured goods from developing countries.

Oxfam emphasizes that this set of rules keeps the impoverished poor; tariffs alone cost $100B per year.
“Rich countries cut their tariffs by less in the Uruguay Round than poor ones did. Since then, they have found new ways to close their markets, notably by imposing anti-dumping duties on imports they deem ‘unfairly cheap.’ Rich countries are particularly protectionist in many of the sectors where developing countries are best able to compete, such as agriculture, textiles, and clothing. As a result, according to a new study by Thomas Hertel, of Purdue University, and Will Martin, of the World Bank, rich countries’ average tariffs on manufacturing imports from poor countries are four times higher than those on imports from other rich countries. This imposes a big burden on poor countries. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimates that they could export $700 billion more a year by 2005 if rich countries did more to open their markets” (Economist 1999; quoted by Pogge, page 4).
• The bottom half of the world’s population owns less than the richest 85 people in the world.

• The wealth of the one percent richest people in the world amounts to $110 trillion. That’s 65 times the total wealth of the bottom half.

• Almost half of the world’s wealth is now owned by just one percent of the population.

• In the US, the wealthiest one percent captured 95 percent of post-financial crisis growth since 2009, while the bottom 90 percent became poorer.

(“Working for the Few,” pp. 2-3)
What should we do?

A variety of changes Pogge thinks we ought to make:

- A global resources dividend on the use or extraction of natural resources
- Alteration in our patterns of state recognition, so that only legitimate states are able to sell natural resources and incur debts that the country is obligated to pay.
- Alteration in the content of WTO agreements, such as the WTO’s TRIPS (Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights) Agreement.
Worries about Pogge

- Pogge argues: we are harming the global poor, by perpetuating this poverty.
- There are several aspects of this claim that need unpacking:
  1. The global order causes poverty
  2. The global order could be changed and poverty would be reduced or eliminated
  3. The global order harms the poor.
1. The global order causes poverty

But: do we know that? What makes rich countries rich? Possible answers include:

- Political institutions
- Global institutions
- Geography, including access to ports
- And many other factors
2. We could make poor countries richer

- If we don’t really know what makes poor countries poor, how do we know how to make them rich?
- Economists have been hesitant to endorse Pogge’s solutions because they are unsure whether or not it will make things better or worse.

Who would decide which governments may exercise the resource and borrowing privileges?
3. The global order is harming the global poor

- This requires us to understand a bit more what constitutes *harming* someone.
- **If I harm you, I make you worse off.** A broken leg is harmful, because it makes you worse off relative to your life without the broken leg.
- So: we need a *baseline of comparison*. But what is the appropriate baseline of comparison for the situation of the global poor?
What is the baseline against which the global order harms the poor?

Three possibilities:

1. **Historical state of affairs.** The global order makes the poor worse off than they were.

2. **Counterfactual state of affairs.** The global order makes the poor worse off than they would have been.

3. **Moralized state of affairs.** The global order makes the poor worse off than they ought to be.
Historical baseline

- Does the global order make the poor worse off than they have been?
- **No:** historically, almost everybody was poor.
- In 1820, 75% of the world lived on less than $1/day PPP; now, only 17% does.
- Since 1960, the developing world has grown at a remarkable rate, averaging 2.3% GDP rise per year.
Life expectancy and literacy are rising

- Between 1950 and 2000 – the period in which the global institutions we see now were developed - the life expectancy in the developing world rose from 44 years to 64 years.
- Literacy has risen from 54% worldwide to 79% worldwide in this same period.
- Mathias Risse argues that this means that the global order – far from harming the poor relative to the absence of this order – has helped them dramatically.

![Diagram showing literacy rates for China, Malaysia, Botswana, and India for 1970 and 2000.](image)
What about a counterfactual baseline?

- What could the global poor have expected if the colonial period had not derailed their development?
- The simple answer: we have no idea.
- Counterfactual and causal claims become less tenable the less able we are to hold other things constant. Here, we are imagining an entirely different 19th century.
What about a moralized baseline?

- It is harming the poor, we might say, relative to what they are entitled to expect.
- If this is what Pogge means, then the force of his claim that we are *harming* the global poor is somewhat muted: we are, now, simply failing to do what is just – we are not the agents who are actually *causing* the poverty itself.
One Potential Reply

- If you are profiting from an economic system that predictably causes the destruction of rice farming in Haiti and devastates small farmers in many parts of the world, from a moral point of view, you are no different from someone who benefitted from the system of slavery in the South before the Civil War.

- Is this true? [Notice that there is a clear counterfactual baseline for the claim that slavery harmed the slaves.]
A. Harms the poor
B. Does not harm them but fails to treat them fairly.
C. Neither A nor B.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harms the poor</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not harm them but fails to treat them fairly</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither A nor B</td>
<td>11%</td>
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Right of Dictators to Sell Natural Resources?

A. Yes

B. No

86% Yes

14% No
Requirement That Trade Treaties Maximally Benefit the Least Well Off?

A. Yes
B. No

70%
30%
• Professor of Philosophy, University of Arizona
• Affiliated with the Center for the Study of Freedom
• Schmidtz represents one kind of Libertarianism.
Aid and responsibility

- **Peter Singer (Utilitarian):** we have a responsibility to make the world as a whole the best place it can be.

- **Charles Beitz (Social Contract Theory):** Global inequalities are only just if they satisfy the Global Difference Principle.

- **Thomas Pogge (Duty Not to Harm):** we have a responsibility to stop making the world the bad place it is.

- **David Schmidtz (One Kind of Libertarian):** we do not have any such grand responsibilities; we have a right to build our own lives, based upon our own chosen values. Schmidtz represents one kind of libertarian approach to global justice.
More Examples for Our Bottom-Up Reasoning

ACCIDENT: You come across a traffic accident. You know that one of the victims will survive if and only if you stop to help. You also know that if you stop to help, it will cost you a hundred dollars.

FAMINE: You receive a letter in the mail asking you to send a hundred dollars in support of a famine relief effort. You know that a life will be saved if and only if you contribute.

(Schmidtz, p. 684)
Problems with stronger duties

Three sorts of problem:
1. Problems related to beneficiaries
2. Problems related to the self
3. Problems related to institutions
Two Problems with Beneficiaries

We often don’t know how to help people.

Why did the sign say “SECOND HAND CLOTHING PROHIBITED”? The example of Livinstone, Zambia, where relief clothing put local producers out of business.
Second Problem with beneficiaries

What we do for people changes their behavior, in ways we might not like. This is sometimes called **moral hazard**.
Token Benefit vs. Type Benefit

Token Benefits (or Costs) = the benefits (or costs) of an individual (*token*) act.

Type Benefits (or Costs) = the benefits (or costs) of people performing the same *type* of act in other similar situations.
An Example to Illustrate the Difference

TRAGIC COMMONS: A baby is drowning in the pool beside you. You can save the baby by a process that involves giving the baby’s family a hundred dollars. If you do not save the baby, the baby will die. You save the baby. A crowd begins to gather. Seeing what you have done, two onlookers throw their babies into the pool. The babies will drown unless you give each of their families a hundred dollars. More onlookers begin to gather, waiting to see what you do. (Schmidtz, p. 686)
“In TRAGIC COMMONS, the token-benefit is a saved life, but this token benefit is wildly misleading as a characterization of your action’s real consequences. The token-result of your action is a saved life, but the type-result is an escalating catastrophe”(Schmidtz, p. 687).
What should you do in MORAL COMMONS? [This one counts.]

A. Don’t pay anyone $100.

B. Pay $100 to one family but not to any others.

C. Keep paying families $100 as long as you can afford to do so.
2. Problems with the self

We have the right to decide what to care about – without having morality tell us that there is only one permissible action for us.
“I believe in fighting injustice. Does that commit me to fighting injustice wherever I find it? Not at all. There is injustice everywhere I turn. Am I committed to fighting whichever injustice happens to be firing the imagination of Peter Singer? Not at all. That’s not what I’m here for. Like Singer, I decide for myself where to make my stand” (Schmidtz, p. 690).
The Van Gogh Examples

VAN GOGH IN THE LAKE: You find yourself in a lifeboat. Are you obliged to throw a Van Gogh painting overboard to make room for a drowning person?

VAN GOGH AT THE AUCTION: You find yourself at an auction. Are you obliged to auction off the same Van Gogh to raise money to save starving people?

(Schmidtz, p. 691)
Are you morally required to throw the Van Gogh into the lake?

A. Yes
B. No

67% Yes
33% No
Are you morally required to forward the auction proceeds to famine relief?

A. Yes
B. No

65% Yes
35% No
Problems with institutions

All the wealth we’re trying to redistribute is created by institutions focused on protecting property rights, creating regular expectations, and social trust. If people start insisting that people should be fundamentally different, these institutions won’t create wealth any more!

The most effective means of eliminating poverty is economic development through the working of free markets with competition.
Four very similar themes:

1. Transfer of money creates moral hazard.
2. We don’t know what will help.
3. We have a right to live our own lives; we are not bound to rescue a maximal number of people.
4. Rules that are set up to allow individuals to pursue self-interest are the rules that ultimately benefit everyone.
Responses to Schmidtz

There are many potential issues with Schmidtz:

1. On behalf of Pogge: Why think that the initial set of property rights we’re talking about is justifiable?

2. On behalf of Pogge (and Singer!): why think that the system of self-interest and property rights is working, when there are so many people dying?
On behalf of Beitz (and Pogge and Singer):

3. Evaluate institutions as types, not tokens. Consider all of their effects. There is not only one set of global economic institutions (the system of property rights, including contract law, and trade relations) that will generate wealth. Why not design those the institutions so that, when evaluated by their type-effects (not individual token-effects), their type-effects will maximize the expectations of the least well-off group.
A Final Question

What would be agreed to in the Global Original Position in which the parties represent individuals?
What percentage of US budget is foreign aid?

A. 25%
B. 10%
C. 5%
D. 1%
E. .1%
F. .01%
G. 0