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Global Poverty and Responsibility: A Research on the influence of The West on Global Poverty

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Global Poverty and Responsibility

A Research on the influence of The West on Global Poverty

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1. Introduction

At this very moment, 8.6% of the world's population is living in poverty. This translates to millions of people not being able to sustain themselves and satisfy their basic needs. Generally, the countries with a high poverty rate are also referred to as the Global South¹. Dating back to times of colonialism, their populations have experienced poverty for decades. It has proven very difficult to get away from this cycle, as poverty is oftentimes ingrained in political and societal structures. Although there is a general consensus that all people should be able to fulfil their basic needs, it seems more difficult to agree on whose responsibility it is to lift the global poor out of poverty. The causality and responsibility of poverty has been a matter of debate amongst philosophers for years. As they have not been able to reach a consensus so far, this research will further delve into the discussion and critically assess the arguments presented within this field of study. Moreover, it will contribute by providing its own argument about Western responsibility towards global poverty with a specific focus on the exploitative relationship dating back to colonial times.

More specifically, I will focus on the thesis provided by Pogge (2008, 2010a, 2010b) and the subsequent criticisms of his view. According to Pogge, the affluent² have a direct responsibility to alleviate poverty because they violate their negative duties not to interfere in the lives of others by imposing the global order on the poor. This statement has led to various criticisms, amongst which one by Risse (2005a, 2005b), who argues it is simply untrue that the poor have suffered under the global order. In fact, he finds that the poor have actually benefited from the global order as we have seen an overall decrease in poverty. Further criticism levelled against Pogge is provided by Cohen (2010), Patten (2005), and Barry and Øverland (2016). Within this group of critics, the main arguments are that Pogge's thesis lacks evidence, that his explanation of the borrowing and resource privileges is incorrect, and that he adopts a wrong moral baseline of the concept of harm.

In this thesis, this academic discussion will be further elaborated on. The critical assessment of the critiques against Pogge's view and the counterarguments he provides in return, will allow for the following question to be answered: "Is The West responsible for severe poverty in the

¹ Throughout the academic debate, there are various ways of referring to the Global South. For that reason, this thesis will use "the Global South", "the global poor", "the poor", or "the underdeveloped" interchangeably

² Similar to the various ways of referring to the global poor, "the affluent" could also be referred to as "The West", or "the developed"

Global South?”. Before arriving there, however, several sub-questions need to be answered. First of all, the full scope of Pogge’s premises and subsequent arguments should be assessed. Once this has been established, we can look at the internal strength and validity of the argument through a discussion of the criticisms and counterarguments. This will provide a suitable baseline from which we can then assess whether and to what extent The West is responsible for causing global poverty.

With its specific focus on the causation and responsibility of poverty, this research has some limitations in relation to the larger debate on poverty alleviation that has arisen over the past couple of years. Taking the responsibility of The West for alleviating poverty as a given, many philosophers have moved the debate to consider various sorts of obligations the affluent might have towards the Global South. Whereas this research will focus solely on redistribution in economic terms, these new theories discuss the various social and political implications of poverty. Consequently, they argue in favor of specific initiatives by The West that go beyond material redistribution. Due to the time limit of this research and the fact that this opens up a whole new debate on poverty alleviation, this thesis will not take such considerations into account and instead focus solely on the well-being of the Global South in economic terms.

2. Negative Duties and the Interference of The West

This chapter will give a detailed assessment of one of the main theories concerning the cause of poverty. More specifically, it will focus on the arguments made by Thomas Pogge (2008, 2010a, 2010b), who claims that The West is responsible for causing and reinforcing global poverty. First, it will discuss Pogge's claim that we are violating a pre-political right of people living in poverty. From this moral baseline, an assessment of his argument on poverty causation follows. Lastly, the chapter will consider Pogge's proposition to change the global order and rectify the injustice done towards the poor.

Underlining Pogge's (2008) argument is the concept of human rights (pp. 54-55). Human rights are fundamental for the basic justice owed to all people, as they apply to everyone based on the mere fact of being human. Basic justice thus transcends borders and creates a moral responsibility to ensure human rights for all people on Earth. As part of their human rights, Pogge argues that all people should have access to minimal basic goods that enable them to provide for themselves. These goods do not only include the material resources needed in order to sustain oneself, but also the means and rights needed to develop personal values and flourish in life as one sees fit (pp. 33-34). However, as it stands, a large part of our world's population is not being provided in these basic human rights. Most commonly, it is referred to as part of a positive duty of the affluent to contribute to poverty alleviation. This positive duty goes beyond the obligations one might have in terms of justice and focusses more so on helping those in need. While he does not dismiss obligations in this positive sense, Pogge aims to underline a more stringent, justice-based obligation to help the poor based on negative duties not to interfere in the lives of others (p. 26). According to him, we are violating this negative duty by actively imposing an unjust global institutional order upon the poor. Moreover, with the harm being done under this institutional structure, the poor are experiencing deficits in the provision of their fundamental human rights. Thus, rather than arguing that the harm lies in the idea that The West is not taking initiative to alleviate poverty, Pogge claims that the human rights of the poor are not being upheld through a structural violation of negative duties embedded in the global order.

Following this, Pogge (2008) turns to the question of responsibility for this negative rights violation. Whereas some argue that individuals solely have a responsibility towards fellow citizens and others argue for a shared global responsibility, Pogge takes a more moderate, institutional approach (p. 70). According to him, the responsibility lies with all those participating in the broader institutional system under which the rights are being violated. This

is based on two premises. First, he finds that the current global institutional order is created to benefit the already affluent countries and that they have imposed it upon the poor. Secondly, he argues that, as both citizens and governments of the affluent countries participate in this structure, they are to be held accountable for not upholding the human rights of the poor. Consequently, they are the ones who have a direct responsibility to alleviate poverty in the Global South and rectify the injustices imposed upon them (p. 72).

Before discussing the specific ways in which the global institutional order is shaped to benefit The West, we should first consider the origins of the global order. For this, we will follow Pogge's (2010a) counterargument against the claim that the present global order is close to optimal in avoiding poverty, as he does not only argue this is misplaced, but also explains how the current global order came into existence (p. 419). He starts with the initial negotiations for the creation of the global order. Evidently, the various participants in these negotiations will have had differing concerns based on the interest of their own countries. Although poverty avoidance may have been high on the agenda for the developing countries, it was of no concern for the affluent ones. Moreover, the wealthy countries enjoyed an advantage in negotiations due to their economic superiority over the Global South. They were equipped with the bargaining power and expertise to shape the arrangements for the global order to their own advantage (p. 420). As a result, the interests of the global poor were not included in the design of the global institutional order and it has further disadvantaged them by the reinforcement of poverty. In his Feasible Alternative Thesis (FAT), Pogge argues that the harm of the global order lies in the fact that we could have come to a more optimal global order in terms of poverty avoidance if the affluent countries would have taken the interest of the global poor more seriously (2008, p.22, 2010b, pp. 421-422). Under this feasible alternative order, he finds that the amount of poverty could be reduced significantly and believes we are harming the poor by not adjusting it to this more optimal global order (Pogge, 2008, p. 25).

Not only has the global order been created on unfair terms towards the poor, it continues to disadvantage them in present times. Firstly, the creation of the global order has reinforced the already existing advantages in bargaining power and expertise of The West, as it was designed to increase the economic growth of wealthy countries, while decreasing that of the global poor (Pogge, 2010b, p. 420). Even today, this makes it increasingly difficult for the Global South to get out of poverty and obtain a seat at the table of world politics (pp. 420-422). Secondly, the global order prevents the poor from economic development by reinforcing corruption and increasing the likelihood of civil wars and coup attempts (Pogge, 2008, pp. 118-122). The

reason for this are the mechanisms embedded in the global order that make it attractive for illegitimate groups in poor countries to try and take governmental power. This is also referred to as the borrowing and resource privileges, and can be gained because affluent countries are willing to acknowledge any group in power as legitimate rulers, regardless of how they acquired their governmental position or whether they have the interest of the citizens at heart. The international borrowing privilege enables a government to borrow funds on behalf of its citizens. In turn, this puts the country under international obligations and potentially creates debts that they will have to pay back over time (p. 120). Thus, if a group of people were to organise a coup and violently take governmental power, they would be recognized by the international community regardless of their illegitimacy and be able to borrow large funds “in the name of the people”. Oftentimes, these corrupt governments neglect their duty to pay back the borrowed money. Not only is this a problem in and of itself, it also makes it increasingly difficult for succeeding governments to get their countries out of debt. Regardless of any good intentions they might have, if a government is unable or refusing to pay up the debt that a previous illegitimate government imposed on them, their country will be punished by affluent countries and it will prohibit them from moving forward economically (p. 120). Similarly, the resource privilege enables those in power to control, trade, and exchange their national resources (p. 119). As with the borrowing privilege, affluent countries are willing to trade these resources regardless of whether the poor country’s government is corrupt or illegitimate. Especially in resource-rich countries, it is therefore tempting to pursue coup attempts or civil wars for personal economic gains. Once again, this prevents such countries from economic growth. This is also referred to as the Dutch Disease, which shows the negative correlation between a country’s natural resources and economic growth (p. 120). All in all, the borrowing and resource privileges show that, through the global economic structure, (resource-rich) countries in the Global South are more likely to experience corruption, coupes, and civil wars and will thus experience lower rates of economic growth.

All in all, Pogge thus argues that The West is violating the negative rights of the poor by participating in a global institutional order that reinforces poverty. Not only does The West use its bargaining power and superior economic position when it comes to questions of international affairs, they also incentivise corruption, civil wars, and coupes through the borrowing and resource privileges, leading to further reinforcement of poverty.

3. Questioning Pogge's Thesis: Harm, Evidence, and Moral Baseline

This chapter will consider the various criticisms concerning the position defended by Pogge in the last chapter. Pogge argues that we are not living up to our negative duties not to harm others by participating in a global order that is harmful towards the poor. He bases this claim on the superior position of The West in international affairs and the privileges under the global order that allow for The West to increase their wealth, while holding back economic development for the global poor. The criticisms discussed in this chapter will argue that Pogge's position is incorrect in several ways, such as in his lack of evidence, his discussion of the privileges, and his moral baseline of harm. In addition, the chapter will include Pogge's responses to these criticisms.

A first argument against Pogge's view, shared by Risse (2005b), Patten (2005), and Cohen (2010), has to do with a lack of evidence. With his Feasible Alternative Thesis, Pogge (2008) argues that there is an alternative global order conceivable under which poverty would be minimised. According to Risse (2005b), however, this theory is based on mere assumptions and he asserts that Pogge does not provide specific mechanisms to show the causal relationship between the dominant role of The West in the global order and poverty in the Global South (p. 367). Similarly, Cohen (2010) argues that Pogge is not able to defend his claim about the causal mechanism with the little evidence he provides. Although Pogge does give some inclination of how the resource and borrowing privileges might play a role in causing poverty, Cohen believes this is too little of an explanation to support Pogge's strong claim that the global institutional order is causing global poverty (p. 25). Moreover, the arguments provided by Pogge are purely hypothetical. Rather than focussing on what actually causes poverty, he only argues about what institutional factors might play a role in poverty causation (p. 25). These critics thus find that the evidence Pogge provides is insufficient to establish a causal relationship that explains global poverty. In order for this to succeed, further evidence into other variables is required.

In response to this criticism, Pogge (2010a) argues that the lack of empirical evidence provides no foundation on which his theory can be discredited. First of all, Pogge states that he never intended to prove the credibility of his argument by means of empirical evidence (p. 176). Rather, he offered alternative ways to accept his thesis, as seen in his philosophical arguments about reforms that would conceivably improve the conditions of the poor. Moreover, he underlines the global trends that show how the rich reinforce their position through the global

order. For example, he explains that although inequality between countries has decreased over the past two decades, inequality within countries has actually increased. This is due to the increasing wealth gained by elites in countries of economic growth and the lack of economic advancement for the poor. According to Pogge, this inequality is made possible by the rules of the global order that are shaped to advance the position of the wealthy (pp. 188-189). Pogge finds that trends such as this one, together with his proposed institutional reforms, show the plausibility of an alternative global order under which current harms towards the poor do not take place (p. 189). Secondly, even if we were to look at empirical arguments, Pogge argues we cannot reject his thesis simply because there is no evidence for it. As long as there is no proof of it being false, he argues that it would be greatly immoral if we were to ignore the possible responsibility of The West for causing global poverty and the subsequent duties that follow (p. 181).

A second criticism is developed by Risse (2005a), who believes The West has actually brought about considerable improvements in terms of global poverty (p. 9). Due to Pogge's inadequate defence of the causal relationship between The West and global poverty, Risse argues that the comparative benchmark of the Feasible Alternative Thesis cannot tell us what the world would be like had the global order been shaped differently in the past (2005a, p. 12, 2005b, p. 367). Alternatively, there are two other comparative baselines that could allow us to assess whether harm is being done under the global order. Firstly, there is the benchmark of fairness. This benchmark compares the current situation to a state of nature under which resources are justly distributed. Following Pogge (2008), no poverty would exist under this state of nature. However, Risse (2005a) argues that this only shows that the current global order is not optimal and that it fails to stipulate where harm is apparent or how we could reach this world without global poverty (p. 14). Instead, Risse argues that the only relevant benchmark is the historical one, as it allows us to compare the current state of affairs to the past based on actual facts (p. 14). Looking at the developments over the past two hundred years, it is apparent that the amount of people living in poverty has significantly decreased (Risse, 2005b, p. 369). Risse considers this two-hundred-year timeframe to be important, as it dates back to the beginning of the technological advancements in the developed world that have shaped our current global order (p. 370). Moreover, the rise of global governance since the 1950s has brought countries closer together and successfully furthered their efforts to alleviate global poverty (p. 370). Although Risse (2005a) acknowledges that international agreements have not done as much as they could have to minimize the amount of poverty, he finds they have nevertheless made a valuable

contribution to lower the overall numbers (p. 11). For this reason, he speaks of the global order in terms of it being incompletely just (p. 10). Thus, whereas Pogge blames The West for the remaining people living in poverty under our global order, Risse argues we should applaud the global order for the amount of poverty alleviation it has realized over time.

A third criticism levelled against Pogge by Risse (2005a) and Cohen (2010) is that the little evidence Pogge does give with his explanation of the borrowing and resource privileges, is incorrect. Pogge uses these principles to show how incentives for corruption and political power explain how the global institutional order prevents the global poor from economic development. According to Risse (2005a), however, these incentives are not grounded in the global order. Rather, they are created from the desire to rule, which precedes the global order (p. 16). This desire to rule and oppress is unrelated to the borrowing and resource privileges of the global order, thus showing that they do not accelerate the amount of oppression in poor countries (p. 16). Cohen (2010) extends the argument by stating that many countries who currently experience high poverty rates do have a legitimate government (p. 39). This shows that if global rules were to change so that illegitimate and corrupt governments can make place for legitimate regimes, it would not automatically lead to poverty alleviation.

Another criticism, shared amongst Patten (2005), Barry and Øverland (2016), and Risse (2005a), is that Pogge adopts a wrong moral baseline of the concept of harm. Following the principle of negative rights, Pogge argues that the most stringent obligation of the well-off is to avoid harming the poor (Patten, 2005, p. 19). As The West interferes in the lives of the poor by imposing a global institutional structure on them, Pogge thus claims that we can speak of harm. Beyond this negative duty not to interfere, there is no further obligation to aid the poor in their wellbeing. However, the institutional reforms Pogge proposes in order to alleviate poverty seem to go beyond this negative obligation, as he stresses that affluent people share an individual responsibility to change the global institutional structure they partake in (p. 20). Rather than merely abstaining from interference, this would require people to take direct, positive action by altering the mechanisms of the global order. Therefore, we can speak of a dilemma in Pogge's approach. On the one hand, Pogge could confine to the negative duties of The West. However, this will not generate the institutional change he claims is needed to significantly eradicate poverty. His argument follows that the global order can substantially reduce poverty, but only if the institutional arrangements are fair and just towards all actors involved. As previously mentioned, negative action will not suffice in order to realize this. On the other hand, Pogge could propose more extensive obligations to eradicate poverty, but this would go against his

premise of negative duties. Regardless of which he chooses, there is an error in his approach which makes the objective and outcome contradict each other (p. 20).

Following Patten (2005), the reason behind this inconsistency has to do with Pogge's subjunctive approach to assess the causality between the global order and poverty, and the extent to which we can speak of harm. This approach enables Pogge to compare the consequences of current international institutions on global poverty with those that would arise under a global order that is morally just (Patten, 2005, p. 21). The problem with this approach, according to Patten, lies in the attempt to decide on a morally just alternative for our current institutional order. This baseline for comparison could either be procedural or substantive. Under the procedural baseline, the institutional order is considered to be just if its procedural formation has been just. Thus, if the institutional order is shaped under fair background conditions and enables all actors to keep to their negative duties not to harm others, we would live under a just global order. However, Patten argues that this just global order does not immediately translate to a significant reduction of global poverty, as it leaves out any domestic factors prohibiting poverty alleviation from succeeding. According to him, it is too simple to argue that a fair global order by itself will reduce the amount of global poverty, as it is an interconnected problem going beyond the mere international causal mechanisms (p. 23). Therefore, poverty alleviation would require further obligations of affluent countries. Yet, this would go against Pogge's approach of negative duties. On the other hand, the substantive approach aims to provide an alternative global order in which all people are provided with the minimal amount of basic goods needed in order to survive (p. 20). Under this interpretation, The West will not only have to create a just global order based on fair background conditions, but they will also have to ensure that all people live above a minimal threshold. Once again, this would be inconsistent with Pogge's motivations, as it moves the obligations of The West away from negative duties and broadens the scope under which they would harm the poor (p. 25). Whereas previous arguments thus explained how Pogge gives too little evidence to show how The West is responsible for global poverty, Patten furthers the argument by showing how Pogge is also unable to hold his claims on philosophical grounds.

In his reply to this criticism, Pogge (2010a) underlines that he does not want to extend his minimalist premise of negative duties as suggested by Patten (2005). Although he acknowledges that positive duties are a more straightforward way to plead for action of the wealthy, the problem is that people often overlook or ignore their positive responsibilities (Pogge, 2010a, p. 179, p.195). For that reason, he aims to show that his argument for

institutional reforms also holds purely on the premise of negative duties (p. 179). According to Pogge, this is much more effective, as people are more inclined to act if they realize that they themselves and their governments are actively harming the global poor by participating in an unjust global order (p. 179). However, this leaves Patten's (2005) criticism that Pogge's maximalist conclusion does not follow from the minimalist premise. To this, Pogge (2010a) responds that negative duties can give rise to positive action, due to the fact that the harm apparent under our global institutional order goes against the negative duties not to harm one another; positive action is the only way in which this can be rectified (p. 193).

Apart from the inconsistency between the premise and conclusion as argued for by Patten (2005), Barry and Øverland (2016) assert another error in Pogge's conception of harm. According to them, the dualistic distinction between harming and not harming is too simplistic. Rather, we should make the distinction of different kinds of harm based on doing, allowing, and enabling harm (p. 79). To illustrate, they use the example of a cart falling down a hill and hitting a person, referred to as Bill (p. 81). If person x were to push the cart down the hill, we can say that they are actively doing harm. Rather, if the cart is already rolling down the hill and person x witnesses it but does not act to prevent Bill from getting hurt, they would be allowing harm. These two forms of harm show the dual distinction most often used by philosophers, including Pogge. To add the third dimension of enabling harm, Barry and Øverland picture the cart rolling down a hill, into a rock, leaving Bill unharmed. However, if person x were to remove the rock and Bill is hurt as a consequence, person x would be enabling harm. This variation of harm is crucial to Barry and Øverland's theory on the kind of harm taking place under the global order. They disagree with Pogge's statement that The West is responsible for the poor's unfortunate situation and that the affluent are actively harming them. The reason for this is that the institutional agreements between rich and poor countries have not made the poor worse-off. Instead, they argue that it allowed for a great number of people to get out of poverty. For them, it is more about the move from allowing harm to enabling it, rather than to doing harm. Their argument follows that, before the global order was created, The West and Global South were living independently of each other. While The West recognized poverty in the Global South, they did not have any obligations or duties towards them as they were not connected. Once the global order was created, however, The West started to partake in an institutional mechanism together with the Global South. Although The West has not created the problem of global poverty, the global order has made them part of the institutional structure under which poverty takes place. This interconnectedness has moved The West from allowing to enabling harm and

asks for more extensive duties and obligations towards poverty alleviation. Similar to when person x became part of the process by removing the rock and letting the cart roll down the hill, The West is now taking part in an institutional mechanism with the Global South that, to some extent, reinforces poverty and therefore creates further obligations to help the poor (pp. 126-132).

Following the Feasible Alternative Theory, Barry and Øverland (2016) acknowledge that a larger amount of poverty reduction could have been achieved under more favourable institutional agreements towards the poor. However, they do not believe that this makes the affluent responsible for the remaining poverty under the current global order (p. 131). Because of their different interpretation of harm, they disagree with Pogge on the stringent contribution-based responsibilities of The West. As an alternative moral baseline, Barry and Øverland argue for assistance-based responsibilities, meaning that the affluent have a moral responsibility to help those worse-off simply because they have the means to (p. 11). This idea goes against the exploitative relationship between The West and the Global South, which is why Barry and Øverland do find the global order to be morally problematic (p. 138). This shows how, in part, they agree with Pogge about the injustice of the global order. However, they base their views on a broader conceptualization of harm and more general responsibility to help those in need.

This exploitative relationship is also touched upon by Risse (2005b). Although not in direct response to the views of Pogge, Risse explains that one of the arguments often used to show how the global order harms the poor is that of uncompensated exclusion (p. 359). This involves wealthy countries violating the rights of the poor because they benefit more from natural resources than poor countries do (p. 359). This view is based on the concept of egalitarian ownership, which states that global resources should be shared by all of humankind (p. 359). According to Risse, the unequal distribution of resources can be explained in two ways. First, resources only become valuable if they can be used for certain human activities. For example, without the invention of a motor, oil will not be useful. Secondly, it requires work to turn a raw material into a resource that is ready to use, trade, or sell. Thus, the problem of unequal distribution does not lie in the geographical distribution of the resources, but rather in the social context through which countries have the ability to make resources valuable (p. 362). Continuing his argument, Risse explains that if we were to follow egalitarian ownership, everyone would have the same amount of a certain resource. However, this would make the resource invaluable, as there will be no interplay between supply and demand of the resource at hand (p. 362). Rather, he argues for an understanding of resources in terms of common

ownership (p. 363). This view asserts that everyone is free to make use of collectively owned resources provided that they respect certain constraints to protect everyone's co-owner's status (p. 363). Although Risse does not provide a detailed explanation of what these constraints entail, their existence should assure that all actors have the opportunity to make use of a certain resource. This shows some overlap with the idea of uncompensated exclusion, as both views argue against privately owned resources. However, Risse's view differs when it comes to the idea of compensation. According to him, you do not owe another compensation for the profit you make from the use of resources simply because they make less extensive use of them. For example, if a country chooses to exploit a certain resource based on its abundance in their territory while other territories do not contain that resource, the former cannot be blamed for its endeavours simply because they are more resource-rich than others.

Nevertheless, there are two ways in which a country can make a legitimate claim to compensation. Firstly, this could be apparent when an actor is illegitimately prevented from obtaining a resource (Risse, 2005b, p. 363). Thus, if the resource-rich country were to actively block other countries from entering their territory and acquiring the resource at hand, compensation for those who miss out would be in place following the idea of common ownership. According to Risse, the global order does not prevent the poor from using commonly owned resources in any such way. Instead, most countries in the Global South prove to be rather rich in resources, which should enable them to exploit and further their economic growth (p. 364). Secondly, compensation would be in place if the interests of an actor and their status as co-owner would be disrespected through unfair unilateral acquisition of a resource by another actor (p. 363). Risse acknowledges that this condition might be correct under the concept of resource significance. This means that if some countries have a better economic standing because they possess and unilaterally exploit more valuable resources than others, the interests and ownership rights of the latter would be violated (p. 364). As resource significance is not included in the argument of uncompensated exclusion, Risse concludes that uncompensated exclusion fails to show that the global order harms the poor. Nevertheless, he does explain that the concept of resource significance would go against his proposed idea of common ownership. He states it would be unfair if some have a better economic standing than others based on the value of the resources they possess, while all should benefit equally from the resources they commonly own (p. 364). Thus, whereas Risse generally argues that the global order has greatly benefitted the position of the poor, this shows a different perspective in which

the global order could facilitate unfair arrangements between rich and poor by violating the ownership rights of the underdeveloped.

4. Harm and Exploitation through the Colonial Past

The previous chapters have given an overview of the academic debate on poverty causation. First, it presented Pogge's claim that The West is harming the poor through the imposition of an unjust global institutional order. Then, it assessed the criticisms levelled against this claim and Pogge's subsequent counterarguments. In this chapter, I will critically assess the debate and present my own standpoint in regard to poverty causation. In short, I will argue that, while the global order has generally benefited the global poor, there is still reason to speak of harm in terms of Western exploitation of the Global South.

First of all, I believe it to be unfair to dismiss Pogge's thesis entirely due to a lack of evidence. Following the reasoning of Pogge (2010a), it seems immoral for The West were to overlook any responsibilities they hold towards poverty alleviation. As long as there is no evidence either supporting or dismissing Pogge's thesis, there should at least be a moral awareness that the poor's fundamental human rights are not being upheld and that they require help in order to fulfil their basic needs. Although this is not an argument saying we should only help the poor based on positive duties, it should be empathised that we should be conscious of the way we, The West, interact with the poor. If we ignore the possible negative duties we have towards the poor and it turns out that we are in fact violating their negative rights, it would only bring more harm towards the Global South. However, Pogge does require more concrete evidence of the causal mechanisms in his thesis in order for The West to start acting on their negative duties towards the poor. While Pogge provides some evidence in the form of the borrowing and resource privileges, this does not explain the full institutional injustice that he argues for. These incentives may increase corruption, coupes, and civil wars in the Global South, yet it is too much of an indirect causal relationship within the global order to account for the whole issue of global poverty. Moreover, as previously mentioned by Cohen (2010), it does not explain why there are various legitimate regimes that still experience high rates of poverty (p. 39).

Next, we should consider the discussion between Risse (2005a, 2005b) and Pogge (2008) about the trajectory of poverty over time. Whereas the former argues that we should applaud the global order for acquiring improved conditions for the poor, the latter asserts that the global order is causing and reinforcing poverty. Although I acknowledge Risse's claim that the global order has brought about considerable improvements in terms of global poverty, I find that the amount of harm apparent under this institutional structure remains more prominent. Before explaining this in more detail, it should be noted that Risse does not argue the global order is

completely just. Rather, he finds that The West could have done more to minimize the amount of poverty in the Global South. He also underlines that the poor already found themselves in a position of poverty before the creation of the global order. Hence, the affluent cannot be held responsible for the origins of their adverse situation. Most importantly, Risse asserts that we cannot speak of harm when the affluent simply fail to alleviate the remaining poverty in the world. What this argument does not account for, however, is a long history of oppression and exploitation under the colonial rule of The West. Long before the creation of the global order, dating back to the fifteenth century, Western nations voyaged across the world to conquer lands, enslave native inhabitants, and exploit their resources. This lasted for several centuries and allowed for The West to develop on the backs of the colonized. Not surprisingly, some of the poorest regions we know today are those that were under colonial rule in the past. If The West has acquired a more favourable position in the current global order due to the economic superiority they gained through colonization, can we really say that they have no responsibility towards poverty alleviation? After all, it seems like they are the ones that have caused, or at least reinforced, underdevelopment and poverty in the Global South.

Although not explicitly mentioned by Pogge (2008), this theory about the influence of the colonial past on present international relations conforms to Pogge's claims on the procedural injustice of the global order. The bargaining power of The West in negotiations for the global order have created a system in which the affluent are able to reinforce their own wealth, while it benefits the poor to a lesser extent. Contrary to Pogge, however, I believe it should be acknowledged that the global order has also improved the overall position of the global poor. This is not to say that I consider the global order to be just. Rather, I believe the injustice lies in the origins of the global order. On the one hand, it has provided circumstances under which the poor have been able to develop. On the other hand, its creation is grounded in the unfair power relations between rich and poor stemming from colonial times. Therefore, I argue that we can speak of harm towards the global poor in terms of exploitation. This is different from the kind of harm argued for in Pogge's thesis, which focussed solely on the institutional mechanisms of the global order.

I will now illustrate the way in which The West has imposed an exploitative relationship upon the poor by means of an example:

Imagine you are swimming in the sea, when suddenly you are being pulled down by a whirlpool. Luckily, a nearby sailor sports you and makes their way over. However, rather than helping you out of the water right away, the sailor proposes an accord. In return for saving your life, they

want to take all your belongings. You feel you have no other choice but to accept the conditions and so you are saved.

What this example shows is that, even though the sailor saved you from drowning, he used his bargaining power in order to exploit the situation. He knew that you would accept any conditions he would create for saving your life, and he used it for his own gain. In a similar manner, I argue that The West has exploited the unfortunate position of the global poor by offering to help alleviate poverty through the creation of the global order in exchange for an institutional structure that benefits themselves more than it does the poor. Although this makes for a weaker conception of harm than argued for by Pogge, it still creates certain obligations and responsibilities of The West towards poverty alleviation and the provision of fair terms under which all can participate in the global order.

Moreover, when taking the colonial past into account, the harm being done by The West becomes more morally stringent. Relating this to the analogy, it means that the sailor did not only take the opportunity to benefit from saving your life, but that he also was the one to push you into the whirlpool. That way, the sailor is not only responsible for exploiting your unfortunate circumstances, but also for creating the situation in the first place. Similarly, The West first caused global poverty with their colonial endeavours, and then furthered their own interests by proposing an unjust global order towards the Global South. For this reason, my argument follows that, regardless of the improvements the global order has brought about for the Global South, we can speak of harm being done towards the poor stemming from the initial harm through colonial undertakings and the continuing exploitation of The West with the imposition of the global order. This argument differs from the discussion of exploitation by Barry and Øverland (2016), as they find that The West shares no responsibility towards the remaining amount of global poverty under the global order. However, taking into account that The West is responsible for the persisting global poverty in the first place, I argue that there is a moral obligation to help alleviate poverty going beyond mere assistance-based responsibilities.

There is, however, an important nuance in my argument about colonialism and the kind of harm that is done towards the poor. For this, I will make use of Barry and Øverland's (2016) distinction between doing, allowing, and enabling harm. It is generally accepted that most, though not all, Western countries ventured into colonial undertakings. Therefore, I argue that there are various kinds of harm based on the extent to which a country participated in colonialism. Building on the earlier swimming analogy, colonial powers such as Great Britain

or The Netherlands first pushed the poor into the water and then offered to help them out based on exploitative conditions to their own advantage. However, can the same be said for those Western countries who found the poor already drowning and offered to help them out on their own terms? These countries, such as Finland or Switzerland, did not participate in colonial endeavours. At first, I believe these Western non-colonial powers were merely allowing for harm to take place, as they witnessed the colonial practises of their neighbours and did not interfere with them. What these countries can be held accountable for, however, is their participation in the creation of an unfair global institutional order that has further reinforced the underdevelopment of the Global South. By exploiting the power relationships stemming from colonialism, I argue that these non-colonial powers have therefore moved from allowing to doing harm. Nonetheless, there is an important moral difference between the colonial and non-colonial powers, as the former have created the basis on which further exploitative practises have arisen, while the latter can only be held responsible for further exploiting the already established relationship between the Global South and The West. For this reason, I argue that there is a graver moral responsibility towards poverty alleviation for those countries who participated in colonialism than for those who did not. In turn, I find that this generates more stringent obligations for former colonial powers towards the global poor.

5. Conclusion

We have seen several standpoints concerning the debate on poverty causation and responsibility. In the first chapter, we discussed Pogge's (2008) thesis, who argues that the affluent are imposing an unjust global order on the poor and therefore violating their negative duties. According to Pogge, all Western individuals and governments have a direct responsibility to help change this institutional structure. The criticisms levelled against this thesis can be divided into five main points of critique. First, it is argued that he lacks the empirical evidence to present the causal mechanisms within the global order he claims are causing global poverty. Second, it is contended that the global order has actually improved the conditions for the poor. Third, Risse (2005a) and Cohen (2010) find that Pogge's claims about the borrowing and resource privileges are incorrect. Whereas Pogge holds the global order accountable for incentivizing corruption, coupes, and civil wars through the provision of these privileges, Risse and Cohen assert that these incentives are not grounded in the global order and do not provide a basis on which global poverty is created. This can be seen in the fact that many countries with legitimate governments still experience high poverty rates, as well as the idea that the incentives for power stem from a more general desire to rule and oppress. Fourth, Pogge's moral baseline for the concept of harm does not seem to be consistent with his conclusions. While he claims to use a negative, minimalist conception of harm, he concludes that The West has positive responsibilities towards the poor that move beyond a negative duty not to harm. Last of all, Barry and Øverland (2016) question Pogge's dualistic distinction of harm. Instead, they press for a distinction between doing, allowing, and enabling harm. Whereas Pogge claims that The West is actively doing harm towards the global poor, Barry and Øverland believe that they are merely enabling it. Moreover, they argue that The West has exploited the unfortunate situation of the poor by shaping the rules of the global order to their own advantage. This goes against their idea of assistance-based responsibilities, which holds that The West should help out those in severe poverty simply because they have the means to. In addition, Risse (2005b) argues that if we accept the ideas of common ownership and resource significance, the global order provides the circumstances under which the ownership rights of the poor are being violated.

To conclude, I have argued that The West is in fact harming the global poor. First of all, this is due to the unfair arrangements of the global order that benefit the poor to a lesser extent than it does The West. Second, and most importantly, these unfair terms were made possible in the

first place because of a long history of harm and exploitation through the colonial endeavours of The West. The colonial powers who first created poverty in the Global South then exploited the poor even further with the establishment of the global order. Any poverty alleviation the global order has contributed to is grounded in a harmful history of oppression and harm by The West. In turn, this makes for a more stringent responsibility of The West to alleviate the remaining poverty under the global order and asks to correct for past injustices still present today. However, I have also argued for a distinction in the kind of harm enforced by colonial and non-colonial powers. Whereas the former have created the situation in which harm continues to take place, the latter are responsible for exploiting an already harmful situation. This relationship could be further investigated in future research by looking at the extent to which varying countries participated in colonialism and the extent of the harm they have brought upon the Global South. More research could also be done to see how colonialism resonates with Pogge's claim about individual responsibility in the present. Can we hold the people living today accountable for past injustices done by their countries? Thus, while providing various perspectives on the debate of global poverty and the influence of the global order, this thesis has also presented a new perspective from which we can consider the injustices of the global institutional order.

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