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## Causality and International Redistributive Justice<sup>1</sup>

There are numerous ways to determine some obligation to compensate for the wrongful harming of a person or group of persons. Perhaps the easiest method of making this determination is a causal one: who caused the harm? In this essay, Pogge's arguments of global injustice will be examined, and the question of causation and fault will be expanded upon with the intent to make determinate whether the citizens and governments of rich western nations are at fault for the historical and continued existence of the world's absolute poor. I will begin by expanding on Pogge's goal and argument in order to set the grounds of conversation. After this, I will explicate his discussion of synergistic harm prior to offering an analysis of causal notions relating to Pogge's theory. I will argue that the low democratic credentials in western nations exculpates many or most low income citizens, but agree with Pogge's assessment of causal responsibility as pertaining to certain groups of the elite who maintain control of western institutions.

### The Argument: Rights and Duties

Pogge is particularly concerned with questions pertaining to the globally absolute poor and the infringement of their negative rights by the governments and citizens of developed nations. Pogge's focus on a narrow spectrum of negative rights is not to suggest that there are no positive duties held by the citizens of developed nations towards the global poor. Rather, Pogge is developing an argument aimed specifically at a certain brand of libertarian who posits that only negative rights are properly called rights.<sup>2</sup> These libertarians would state that nation  $x$

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<sup>1</sup> Pogge, Thomas. "Recognized and Violated by International Law: The Human Rights of the Global Poor" in *Politics as Usual: What Lies Behind the Pro-Poor Rhetoric*. (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2010). 26-56.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 27-28

possesses a negative right to not be invaded by nation *y*, but nation *y* never has any obligation to offer any sort of aid to nation *x*. To offer aid might be a morally good thing, but it is not morally *obligatory*. While Pogge is arguing for a more expansive set of negative rights, he does not presume that these negative rights are the full extent of rights/obligations. Rather, this is Pogge's attempt to respond to those theorists who would reject even the most basic of international duties. This argument is not, therefore, counter to those who hold that there are a more expansive set of rights/obligations, e.g. Shue or Nussbaum.<sup>3</sup>

Most of these libertarians who argue for negative rights argue in terms of states. If American policies harm foreign nationals, then it is a matter pertaining to state relations. This allows the libertarian or realist to develop a theory which leads to an exculpation of the states' citizens. If anybody is at fault, it is the state, which the libertarian or realist can then argue is an entity unable to be held culpable.<sup>4</sup> Pogge holds that the proper ethical relationship is actually between persons. If a western policy harms the population of third world nations, then it is not a harm inflicted by some metaphysical entity known as the state on another state. Rather, it is a harm inflicted by individuals in the west allowing or propelling the machinations of government to create policies that will harm the individuals in the third world. This is central for Pogge's argument as the causal responsibility will eventually fall on western *individuals*, operating *through* domestic and global institutions to harm the global poor.

Since individuals are the basic moral units which bear blameworthiness and moral duties, the question is *how* individuals infringe foreigners' duties. It seems that the citizens of western

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 28-29

<sup>4</sup> For example, the realist might hold that the state apparatus might have some moral duties, but that these moral duties are overridden by a fiduciary duty towards its own citizens. This duty to act for the benefit of a nation's citizens comes prior to any moral duties to foreign persons. For a treatment of this 'fiduciary duty' as relating to humanitarian intervention, see Buchanan, Allen. "The Internal Legitimacy of Humanitarian Intervention." *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 7, no 1. (1999) 71-87.

nations do not actively harm the poor, but Pogge distinguishes between two kinds of harm: interactional and institutional. Interactional harm is that which we typically think of, in which one person directly harms another, e.g. *a* punches *b*. Institutional harm might be more controversial as an institution stands *between* the harmed and the harmer, e.g. the harmers are those who support and benefit from the institution of slavery but do not own or work in the slave trade. Libertarians may doubt whether or not we have a positive duty to help those harmed by institutions, e.g. the enslaved, but only a moral skeptic would reject the proposition that one ought to refrain from participating or empowering these institutions. These institutional negative duties are therefore the subject of Pogge's argument.

The total extent of absolutely required duties might be unclear. Given an infringement of *x*'s negative rights, the infringing *y* owes *x* compensation for this infringement. Given continued infringement, nation *y* has a dual obligation: (1) to stop infringing and (2) to compensate for continued harm. Therefore, Pogge wishes to argue three sorts of obligations on the part of developed nations' citizens: (1) repair for past harms inflicted on the globally poor (2) repair ongoing harms and (3) stop harming. These duties are borne by individuals towards other individuals, and the infringement of these duties takes place institutionally through governments and the international legal order. Pogge builds his argument by attempting to refute what he sees as the three venues of objection to his theory: (1) the purely domestic thesis (2) the Panglossian view and (3) the act versus omission distinction.

### (1) Domestic Thesis

The domestic thesis holds that the capacity and duty to affect international change is minimal, as societies are self-contained. Pogge identifies Rawls as a proponent of this view.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Pogge., pp. 32

Under this view, the construction of a state is a social and historical process. Domestic actors actively engage the structure of the system throughout history using revolution, discourse, and social change. The effects of this process form the foundation of their society, and thus their government. Foreign governments might therefore be morally required to give aid in times of desperate need, but domestic poverty is the product of a historical process and does not morally necessitate response by the international community. It rather is the fault of past decisions or flawed leadership.

This idea of a domestic process of determination seems counter the reality of an international process of subjugation.<sup>6</sup> The world's geopolitical structure has been shaped by an ongoing process of global infringement of negative rights. Most of this has been done by western nations. For a small selection of the most heinous wrongs, we might point to imperialism, colonization, slavery, and resource extraction. The current global map was also drawn by western powers, so problems attributable to sectarian wars and resource concentration is at least partly the responsibility of these western powers.

Those who hold the domestic view might rebut that the divergence in the monetary capability of the developing world in modern times shows that it is domestic issues which influence poverty, not the international order. This may be true to an extent, but Pogge emphasizes that it is not the whole picture. The international order acts as one cause, alongside that of the domestic order. Processes such as taxation, trade law and the power structure of international institutions all influence domestic structures.

## (2) Panglossian View

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 32-33

If we now accept that the international order affects domestic structures to at least some degree, the next argument is that the international order is the best it can possibly be regarding poverty avoidance. This assumes that given a plethora of interests in a world of limited resources, poverty is given as high a consideration as possible. Pogge rejects this and posits that the institutional order has been constructed to agree with developed nations' interests.<sup>7</sup>

Imperialism and other historical wrongs shaped the international socioeconomic system. The nations which prop up the current world order have not only allowed this system to continue but have actually broadened its scope by building global economic structures such as the WTO. Any issues that existed previously under imperialism are in some way continued under globalization, although now under the auspice of consent. This is despite the fact that such institutions as those built in the name of globalization actually exacerbate global poverty. If we were to argue for a best possible world, the international order should instead admit certain features to minimize poverty such as offering poor nations more equal representation, or by repairing for negative externalities faced in a world with free trade by developing nations.

### (3) Act vs. Omission

Given that the international order does not maximize poverty alleviation, Pogge now needs to prove that the affluent nations are causing the harm rather than merely allowing it to happen. If the international order is merely failing to benefit the poor, any duties will be to assist rather than to repair. This will severely curtail the scope of obligation held by developed nations.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 32-36

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 36-50

Rich nations both support and fund institutions such as the Bretton Woods system. These institutions regularly coerce nations into making structural changes when they are in need of financial rescue. This may or may not be legitimate coercion. Nations voluntarily enter agreements for loan programs. If the coercion is consented to, it seemingly cannot be illegitimate or wrongful. However, the nature of this coercion takes a turn for the worse due to the lack of viable alternatives.<sup>9</sup> Rather than supporting healthy domestic economies which would minimize absolute poverty, these institutions prioritize other goals, e.g. paying down international debt accrued during the transition period from colony to sovereign.<sup>10</sup> As absolute poverty is of the utmost importance given its death toll and effect on human flourishing, it ought to be of a higher priority (if not the highest). Therefore, by taking advantage of in-need nations faced with an even worse alternative, the Bretton Woods system does not do all it ought to do in order to reduce poverty. It may indeed worsen the plight of the impoverished.<sup>11</sup>

Tariffs are seemingly amoral, yet provide the grounds for Pogge clarifying the active harm committed by affluent nations.<sup>12</sup> Nations bilaterally or multilaterally (e.g. WTO) agree to treaties which establish a tariff, or are free to unilaterally set tariffs with the understanding that other nations are entitled to do the same. Yet the comparative economic power of rich nations means that this is, once again, a choice between a bad option and an even worse alternative. Given an economic hegemon, any smaller economics will suffer given a lack of trade relations. These conditions are conducive to the continuation of hegemony as the dominant bargaining position entitles a nation to setting market conditions. In this case, developed nations argue for a

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 41

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 35; for example of international priority on debt rather than economic restructuring, see *Life and Debt*.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 36

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 40

decrease in tariffs and the spread of customs unions. This paralyzes the ability of less-developed nations to develop industry and domestic economies through protectionist policies. While nation *x* might indeed refuse to join an institution like the WTO which mandates certain harmonized tariffs, the effect would be disastrous. On the other hand, to join such institutions will paralyze domestic development and further the existence of absolute poverty.

This disparity between viable options plays a prominent role in Pogge's work.<sup>13</sup> The act vs. omission distinction used in these discussions rest on the idea that consenting people cannot be harmed. While this already seems a tenuous proposition (does a slaver really discharge any moral fault if a person consents to being enslaved?), the lack of options makes the moral fault clearer. Developing nations are entering a global order already constructed prior to their entry, and they are being given the choices dictated by nations that did not face these same choices in their period of development.

The resource privilege is a right given to the sovereign power of any given nation-state to sell the resources within the states' border on the international market. Given an undeveloped nation rich in resources but suffering from a democracy deficit, are western nations causing an active harm by purchasing these resources? Given the authoritarian rule of many governments and their dependence on resource profits in order to maintain their rule, western nations are harming the populace by assuming the undemocratic government possesses the right to sell these resources. Without the profits from these resources, democracy might take hold and a more equitable distribution of the benefits created. The resource privilege is not merely transactional, but actively perpetuating authoritarian rule through funding their purchase of arms and propaganda/violence.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 41

The severity of this situation might be easy to miss. Rather than merely purchasing goods on the open market, affluent nations and the international order they have structured empowers and encourages the continued depravity of developed nations' governments. This relationship benefits the affluent nations. Authoritarian regimes often maintain low labor standards and can be conducive for investment. Democratic regimes might allow the discontent with low wages, e.g. from bananas or from sweat shops, to boil over into electoral and policy changes. The relationship between the affluent nations and these autocratic regimes therefore amounts to shopping in a store which you are fully aware uses slave labor. Affluent nations and the shopper might speak empty words pointing to a desire for fairness, equality or improved standards, but the fact that the buyer continues to purchase goods proves the worth of the spoken word.

It is now clear that there exists some sort of harm. This depends on two independent premises: that of *viable alternatives* and that of *causal fault*. The first I have mentioned previously. Pogge holds that given an array of unfair choices offered by the international system, the consenting party will be wronged regardless of the consent. So if I give you the choice between falling off a cliff (and dying) or being saved at the cost of enslavement, you have not really been given a choice. Internationally, a choice between acceding to the conditions for global aid/trade and isolating yourself at the cost of development is not properly a choice. I wrong you regardless of your consent to the enslavement.

### Causal Fault: Synergistic Harm

There are two major causal issues in relation to global poverty: the causal issues of synergistic harm and that of a causal chain. Pogge discusses synergistic harm extensively, especially by referring to his tribe example. This is especially pertinent to the harms relating to the resource privilege. How is it that the international structure is at fault for harming the



absolutely poor given the fact that domestic governments cause a preponderance of the harm? Further, most of the harm caused by the international system harms indirectly vis-à-vis domestic governments, e.g. if we accept that the IMF/WB are harming residents of nation *x*, it's only because the domestic government agreed to that harm. Pogge responds to this concern with the tribe example.<sup>14</sup> In the tribe example, two groups of people are independently polluting a river with rather harmless chemicals. These two chemicals combine in the river to create a lethal poison which promptly kills the residents of a third village downstream. When confronted with questions of fault, both tribes upstream argue that they are absolved of all moral culpability. Both argue that their chemical is relatively harmless; therefore, they can't be held responsible for what happens afterwards. There are two reasons why this might be: either there is a diffusion of guilt among participants based on their degree of fault and/or harm, or one must be fully at fault to be held morally culpable. If we accept this, however, neither party polluting the river bears any responsibility. The result is that nobody is responsible for the harm that both are actively producing. Pogge rejects this and posits that both parties might be fully responsible for the harm. There is, therefore, an increase in fault rather than a diffusion of responsibility. As applied to states, then, even if there are two mutually independent harms done to the people of a state (domestic government harms the people and international institutions harm people), neither is therefore absolved of their responsibility. All parties involved are obligated to stop harming, and until they do, both are fully responsible for the harms done to the impoverished citizens. Pogge further contends that there is an asymmetry of power. The international stage has a strong and direct influence on domestic governments, but domestic governments exert little influence on the

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 44-45

international structure. Therefore, the international structure might have an even larger portion of the fault and responsibility.

### Causal Fault: Harm Conduit

The second causal notion that I wish to examine is that of causal fault. In the case of synergistic harm, we found that Pogge argues for all parties to a direct harm being blameworthy for that harm. This touched on the idea of a “harm conduit,” i.e. the domestic government channels any harm that the international system causes, thus taking on the burden of fault. Now we will explicate those parties which are causally at fault for harming the world’s absolutely poor. If we accept Pogge’s view, all parties to a harm are responsible for that harm. If we trace the harm of the international system back far enough, we end with the governments which authorize the international system’s power. Specifically, developed nations and their governments form and authorize the power of the international system whether directly (e.g. bilateral trade agreements) or indirectly (nation-state power exercised through international institutions such as the IMF, World Bank and WTO). If we accept Pogge’s argument thus far, we now find that those who are at fault for the persistence of global poverty are the governments of at least some developed and/or powerful nations. For countries such as China where authoritarian rule guides foreign policy, this might be the end of the causal chain. However, the nations which exert the most influence over the international system are the western, developed nations. These nations generally share one very causally important similarity: they are largely democracies.

### Citizens’ Share

We are now faced with a simplified causal chain which links those at fault with those who are absolutely poor: *undemocratic regimes* enforce what one may call illegitimate/unjust rule which repress the capabilities of the poor to rise in their socioeconomic status; *international*

*institutions* contribute to this repression either directly or indirectly; *powerful nations* contribute to the international institution's mission and goals. All three are at fault, and each is progressed by the one following it. However, the *voters* are what empower and authorize the governments of those powerful nations which are democratic. The citizens of the United States contribute to the decisions made by the United States government. The government supplies resources and influence to the international repression of the global poor. Are the citizens at fault?

Pogge argues that the citizens are indeed at fault unless they move so as to discharge their blameworthiness.<sup>15</sup> Rather than passive benefactors of an unfair system, they have a direct stake in its formation through the voting process. Citizens of these nations might vote for candidates who pursue systemic change or they might donate a large portion of their income. This may discharge their obligations to the global poor. However, citizens who do not discharge these obligations are directly complicit in a line of causal harm which infringes the rights of the globally impoverished. This causal chain begins with their authorization of governments which create these harms. This causal chain and its nature will be the focus for the remainder of this paper.

### Objection 1: Causal Responsibility: Intermediaries

I believe there are several objections to this. I shall confront each one in turn, but each presupposes the previous: (1) causal responsibility drawn from A.M. Honoré and H.L.A. Hart, (2) the democracy argument, and (3) the priority argument. If we draw from Hart and Honoré's ideas of Causation and Responsibility (they were writing in relation to tort law),<sup>16</sup> then a causal intermediary takes the blame even if another party instigated the original cause which began a

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 52

<sup>16</sup> H.L.A. Hart and A.M. Honoré. "Causation and Responsibility" in *Philosophy of Law: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. Ed. Larry May and Jeff Brown. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010). 307-314.

process of wronging. This is shown through a person who is driving and drops a cigarette out of their car window. If the cigarette alights on a pile of leaves and starts a forest fire, then it is the driver's fault. However, if the cigarette falls on the leaves and another individual decides to pour gasoline on the leaves, then it is the intermediaries fault. The cigarette may or may not have begun a forest fire, but the intermediary ensured or furthered the chances that it would. The fact that a contingent future became a certain future due to the intermediary exculpates the origin of the cause.

Western individuals may instigate the beginnings of harm by voting for representatives who then form institutions, but there are multiple levels of causative agents between the citizens and the harmed populations, e.g. domestic governments of corrupt nations, global institutions, and western governments themselves. These absolve the citizens of their blameworthiness, or reduce it to such an extent as to not require reparation, but only cessation.<sup>17</sup> Pogge might disagree and suggest that even a reduction of moral culpability does not actually eliminate any moral requirements given some moral fault (similar to synergistic harm). This is the position taken by Ashford.<sup>18</sup> Drawing once again on Hart and Honoré, we might rebut this using the cone of causation.<sup>19</sup> The cone of causation states that the farther you go back from the harm, the more causative events you will find. It seems intuitively implausible to maintain that all possible past-harms can be constituted as fault. If we accept this cone of causation as applying throughout all of human history and judge communities as being responsible for past events, it seems we might all be morally culpable for all wrongs. This might be direct, or it might be through some version

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<sup>17</sup> So if person A places an object in a precarious position that may lead to injury for third parties, they may be understood as being at fault. On the other hand, if person B interrupts the normal causative process and pushes the object onto a third party, person A is absolved of fault.

<sup>18</sup> Insert citation

<sup>19</sup> Hart and Honoré, Pp. 309

of the butterfly effect. The threshold of causative fault<sup>20</sup> seems to be either indeterminate or infinite. Either may prove to be insufficient to deliberate on fault or so all-encompassing as to exculpate all possible instigators. Pogge might suggest the key here is the degree of fault or harm that inheres in the actions of the developed citizenry. Insofar as the institutions and governments are founded on democratic legitimacy, all of their acts of fault or harm directly transfer to those who hold democratic powers, i.e. the voters. This relationship is essentially separate from your typical causal interruption.

### Objection 2: Democracy Argument

This retort brings up the second possible critique of Pogge. Pogge's argument for western citizens bearing responsibility for their votes which, through a complex causal nexus, cause and perpetuate the existence of global absolute poverty, presupposes democracy. While western governments often pay homage to the *idea* or the ideology of the democracy, the actualization of democracy as relevant to causal fault is an empirical question: do the desires/preferences/etc. of individuals come to bear in policy decisions? Some might point to independent variables as proof against the democratic process, e.g. low voter turnout, low approval ratings (both of individual laws and the legislative bodies generally), etc. These would not necessarily settle the question. More conclusively, I think, is a recent study which measured the actual influence of different groups on policy decisions in the United States.<sup>21</sup> This study came to a rather surprising conclusion for those who believe that ideological or constitutional statements of democracy are enough to determine democratic credentials. The study found that "Not only do ordinary citizens not have uniquely substantial power over policy decisions; they have little or no independent

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<sup>20</sup> This threshold might be temporally-based, geographically-based, causatively incremental steps between source and harm, etc.

<sup>21</sup> Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page. "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens." *Perspectives on Politics*. (December, 3 2014): 564-581.

influence on policy at all.”<sup>22</sup> This is a causal argument – while American citizens get many of the policies they support, the causal process that leads to the passing of policy finds its source in economic elites and interest groups. For Pogge’s causal fault argument to be valid there would seemingly necessarily be an active governmental response to the desires of the majority. Otherwise, there is no causal connection between the citizens of wealthy democratic nations and the global poor. On the other hand, the study finds that in cases “with 80 percent of the public favoring a policy change, got that change only about 43 percent of the time.”<sup>23</sup> In this case, the culpability would seem to fall on those who wield influence, e.g. the economic and power elite who determine governmental policy. Even if it expands beyond this small subgroup of the population, it would seem necessary to exculpate citizenry who are impoverished, poorly educated, etc. Your typical voter may now no longer be subject to fault. On the other hand, we might suggest that any return of these states to a “proper” democratic state would immediately place a burden of responsibility on the citizens. Therefore, it seems that an unjust democratic system might exculpate its citizens of fault but only so long as the system is unjust.

### Objection 3: Priority Argument

I will put this argument aside for now. The democratic credentials of these powers are subject to empirical data, but of more interest to this paper are the philosophical implications of fault. If we are now willing to assume that at least *a portion* of the population wields *some* power over the democratic process and that this population is at least *partially* responsible for the global system which perpetuates the existence of global absolute poverty, we can more narrowly tailor the causal argument to pertain to this select group of persons. This therefore brings me to my

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 572

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 573

third argument: the priority argument. Assuming we agree with the causal chain thus far, do developed nations need to take into consideration the priority of remediation? Given a perfectly just and fair society, we might argue that there is a requirement to repair the wrongs done to the globally poor. However, this society does not exist. Developed nations have poverty, unemployment, non-universal access to health care, etc. within their borders. If we undertake a certain line of argument that sees states as possessing a certain special obligation to its citizenry, e.g. a degree of difference due to local populations, this might lend a required bias to pursuing an internally just/fair society prior to remediating international wrongs.<sup>24</sup> Put more strongly, developed nations may not only be innocent of harming the internationally absolute poor,<sup>25</sup> but may have a moral requirement to do so insofar as their societies are *not* utopian. I would like to offer several rebuttals to this claim.

First, this may be dismissed if we take a Beitzian understanding of sovereignty and cosmopolitanism – that the state is not an ontologically significant enough institution to require special moral consideration. States are collections of individuals and these individuals are the basic moral units of the international system. The freedom to associate or whatever else is claimed to be the morally significant feature of sovereignty is not strong enough to overcome moral imperatives to other individuals. Just because person *A* joins a club does not mean that he is now entitled to stealing from the supermarket in order to feed his club members. This approach feels that our ethical considerations ought to be impartial as to the actors with which we are engaging. This is especially true of the negative rights/duties which Pogge is discussing.

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<sup>24</sup> There are several approaches we might suggest here. First, the ‘nation’ (‘a common people’ as defined by Luban) might be a metaphysical entity which admits special moral consideration. Second, we might have concentric circles of obligation that expand outwards, e.g. degrees in difference as argued by Mencius. Modern discussions surrounding ethics of care are also relevant.

<sup>25</sup> Innocent insofar as innocence is understood as admitting consequentialist considerations. This would be unlikely to sway anybody who understands innocence/duty as deontological.

Some arguments against this might be to suggest that it is impossible for humans to set aside familial or local relations, so those who argue for an impartial approach to ethics are setting us up for failure.

Second, we may set aside cosmopolitanism and rather concentrate on degree of harm. If the state is indeed a metaphysically significant feature of the international system and morality, then does the degree of harm committed to individuals and groups become a relevant fact? For example, if we take a developed nation with sub-standard health care (e.g. the health care system does not provide universal care, only near-universal), does its duty to a citizen in need outweigh that of the globally absolute poor? Citizen *A* of a developed nation may have adequate nutrition, education and is not the subject of active negative harm, but has to wait an inordinate amount of time prior to receiving health care. On the other hand, citizen *B* of a developing nation lacks adequate nutrition, education, health care and is the subject of an active infringement of their negative rights by said developed nation. Does the government of the developed nation have a higher priority to its own citizen, or to the person more greatly harmed? The answer to this depends on how morally significant you find the obligations of a state to its citizen. One consequentialist response would be to admit the diminishing marginal utility factor in which the degree of need is an important input into the consideration of who should be helped first. Those who have less benefit more from smaller investments. This does not dismiss arguments made by those who see a special obligation between nation/state and its citizens, or even more localized obligations, e.g. Nel Nodding's distinction between ethical care and natural care.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Tong, Rosemarie and Williams, Nancy, "Feminist Ethics", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/feminism-ethics/>>.



The question of priority might end in a question of ideal versus realistic. Ideally, we at the very least owe ethical consideration to all rational agents. Realistically, it might be impossible to pay such consideration to people out of sight of our everyday interactions. Ethically and as pertaining to Pogge's argument, I find the latter unpersuasive. It seems that at a minimum, we must stop harming and repair the harms done to the globally poor because we are *actively* harming them. If the problem at hand was a natural one that had no causal fault outside of the local region, this problem of priority becomes more imperative. For example, if nation *A* pollutes a river whose source and effluence all remain within nation *A*'s borders, we might claim that any duties held by nation *B* are merely positive. It might make nation *B* more moral to offer aid, but it isn't obligatory. On the other hand, if nation *B* is the source of the carcinogenic pollutants, it would seem odd that nation *B* has no moral duty to repair the harm it caused to *A*. Nation *B* might be using the proceeds gained from their polluting-factory to supply much needed pharmaceuticals for its own citizens, but it still owes a duty to repair the wrongs committed against *A*.

## Conclusion

I agree with Pogge in his assessment of a global requirement of repair. While I have touched on several objections that we might levy against his characterization, I find it unlikely that we can totally absolve developed nations of their culpability. More at question is whether the citizens of these nations are culpable. This answer is less clear, but I would argue that we have shown that at least the elites who do hold some power over the machinations of government have a responsibility to repair and compensate those wronged globally. The addition of a second layer of fault, i.e. the democracy deficit in some western nations, does not absolve those in power from their fault but creates more faults which they have an ethical requirement to repair.

The question of global poverty is a serious one in the contemporary age, and seems likely to increase in scope and severity. With the introduction of a world struggling with the effects of climate change, poverty might not only increase in severity due to drought and increases in natural disaster, but available resources will be curtailed. Problems of priority are especially at issue here, as already burdened ecosystems will face the onslaught of a warming planet. The problems of global poverty are largely self-inflicted in today's world, whether due to a historical, political or economic process. As Pogge discusses at the end of this chapter, there are sufficient resources to give the world recourse to alleviating global poverty. If we now accept Pogge's argument, it is less an ethical issue than one of admitting moral culpability and righting wrongs. When the cone of causation expands in the next 50 years to all of those factors which contributed to global warming, how will the world respond? This seems to require an expansion of the discussion in our third objection. Will future-Americans, Europeans, Chinese, Indians, etc. be held responsible for repairing the woes that our current generation is inflicting? If we hold that those of us living in the current world are responsible for the wrongs our ancestors committed, it seems likely that we are now committing a similar degree of harm on future generations. If this is true, anybody in the western world currently engaging in acts that contribute a considerable amount to global warming might be culpable for the ensuing chaos bound to follow in a world of restricted resources, and the deaths that are likely to follow.