
REVIEW ESSAY

THOMAS POGGE ON GLOBAL JUSTICE AND WORLD POVERTY: A REVIEW ESSAY

JORN SONDERHOLM

Department of Learning and Philosophy, Aalborg University, Denmark

Introduction

Gillian Brock begins a 2010 review article in the *American Philosophical Quarterly* with the assertion that there is much current and growing interest in theorizing about global justice (Brock 2010, p. 85). Brock goes on to suggest that if any text can be identified as the main cause for this relatively newly found interest among political philosophers and theorists, it is John Rawls' seminal work *The Law of Peoples* (1999). While Rawls' influence in this matter can hardly be overestimated, the work of other theorists can also reasonably be cited as important drivers of the recent, increased focus in academic circles on normative issues in global justice. Thomas Pogge's *World Poverty and Human Rights: Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms* is arguably such a work.¹ The book first came out in 2002 (Pogge 2002), and a significant number of commentary articles on it were published in the immediate years following its publication. In 2008, the book came out in a second edition (Pogge 2008), and the commentary on it has continued in recent years.²

Pogge has himself done quite a bit of work to further articulate and defend aspects of his overall position on global justice and world poverty. In 2008, Pogge, together with the economist Aidan Hollis, presented the Health Impact Fund, which is an innovative incentivizing mechanism for research and development of pharmaceutical products.³ A key feature of this proposal is that it promises to hugely increase the economic incentive for development of drugs aimed at those (neglected) diseases that predominately cause havoc among the global poor. In 2009, Pogge also published new work on indices of poverty and gender equity (Pogge 2009).

In light of these developments, it seems proper now to undertake a kind of stock-taking exercise in which the main components of Pogge's position are outlined and some important criticisms are reviewed. In this review paper,

1. Other important works include Singer (1972), Unger (1996), Shue (1980), and Cullity (2004).
2. See, for example, Jaggar (2010), Reitberger (2008), and Huseby (2008).
3. Hollis and Pogge (2008).

I try to carry out such an exercise. As pointed out by Alison Jaggar in her introduction to a recently published collection of essays on Pogge and his critics, Pogge's position on global justice and world poverty is complex in the sense that it is underpinned by a variety of conceptual, normative, and empirical assumptions (Jaggar 2010, p. 6). Because of this multifaceted nature of Pogge's position, it is no surprise that the many commentators on his position have focused on different aspects of his work. Some criticisms are conceptual in nature, whereas others deal with normative or empirical features of Pogge's position.

This paper is not meant to be a survey article of all the different criticisms that have been leveled against Pogge. Given the influence of his position, an attempt to provide such a survey would be a Herculean task. The criticisms singled out for review in section three of the paper constitute just a subset of all the criticisms of Pogge that now can be found in the literature, and they can be subsumed under the general headings of Causes of Global Poverty and Relabeling Positive Duties as Negative Duties. The selection of which criticisms to focus on necessarily involves a certain subjective element. However, I hope that my selection does not come across as idiosyncratic.

Three lines of thought can perhaps be invoked as justification for my selection. First, the majority of reviewed criticisms are authored by well-known and influential theorists. Second, criticisms that fall under the heading Relabeling Positive Duties as Negative Duties are very interesting conceptual ones that address one of the very core features of Pogge's position. Third, criticisms that fall under the heading Causes of Global Poverty are on a theme that many commentators have found interesting and worthy of discussion. In the introduction to the aforementioned collection of essays on Pogge, Jaggar writes that contributors to the collection address a few distinct themes of Pogge's work. One of these themes is exactly that of what the causes of global poverty are: "A second theme concerns the moral responsibility borne by the citizens of affluent countries for a global order marked by conspicuous inequality, poverty, and the underfulfillment of human rights. How can the weight of various causal factors be determined and who, if anyone, is culpable for establishing these factors or allowing them to continue?" (Jaggar 2010, p. 17).

In the last section of the paper, I move beyond a review of published criticisms of Pogge and offer a critical perspective on a few aspects of his position. The points made in this section are not meant to stand alone but are meant to complement the arguments of those authors, reviewed in section three, who have offered criticisms of Pogge that can be subsumed under the heading of Causes of Global Poverty.

Pogge's Position on Global Justice and World Poverty

An important distinction in contemporary political philosophy is the one between negative and positive duties. Negative duties are duties not to harm other people, whereas positive duties are duties to offer assistance to worse-off people. It is an essential feature of negative duties that in cases where a negative duty has been violated, the person who has been harmed has a right to

compensation from the person (or institution) who has done the harm. Positive duties to offer assistance are different from negative duties in the sense that it is not a necessary condition for the former duties to kick in that the duty holder has harmed someone. It is uncontroversial among contemporary theorists that we have negative duties toward other people. It is, however, much more controversial whether or not we have any positive duties.⁴

The distinction between negative and positive duties is crucial for a proper understanding of Pogge's position on world poverty and global justice. A very common argument for the view that the relatively well-off citizens of developed countries have no duty to eradicate world poverty involves two premises: one normative and one factual. The first, normative premise is the view that "while it may be seriously wrong to harm foreigners by actively causing their severe poverty, it is not seriously wrong to fail to benefit foreigners by not preventing as much severe poverty abroad as we might" (Pogge 2008, p. 14). The second, factual premise is the view that "as regards severe poverty abroad, we are not actively causing it but merely failing to prevent as much of it as we might" (Pogge 2008, p. 15).

Pogge does not dispute the first, normative premise of this argument. By accepting this premise, he sides with the libertarian tradition (Narveson 2005a,b; Nozick 1974) within contemporary political philosophy. According to Pogge, there is a morally significant distinction between actively causing poverty and failing to prevent it, and his position on world poverty and global justice involves a primary focus on negative duties which impose minimal constraints on conduct that worsens the situation of others (Pogge 2008, p. 15).

The second, factual premise of the previous argument is, however, one that Pogge objects to. In his view, it is false that we, the affluent members of developed countries, are not actively causing severe poverty in developing nations. We cause such poverty in virtue of imposing a burdensome global order on the poor that greatly diminishes the poor's earning potential and imposes unnecessary costs on them. As a result of this, the poor's access to objects of basic human rights such as shelter, water/food, and basic medical care is made insecure by the global order. If this objection to the factual premise is successful, then the conclusion of the previous argument can be rejected. The conclusion may follow from the premises, but since one of these is false, we are under no obligation to accept the conclusion.

The distinctive and exciting feature of Pogge's position is now apparent. He is of the opinion that we have a duty to eradicate severe poverty in developing nations. In holding this view, he is on par with theorists such as Singer (1972, 2009), Temkin (2005a,b), Huseby (2008), Gilibert (2005), Unger (1996), Shue (1980), and Overland (2005), but unlike these theorists, who rest their view on a 'positive duty' argument, Pogge mainly rests his view on a 'negative duty'

4. See Cruft (2005) for a careful and insightful discussion of the distinction between negative and positive duties and the issue of how this distinction might be relevant to broader issues in global justice. Lichtenberg (2010) offers a sustained and interesting argument for the view that the moral contrast between negative and positive duties is much less sharp than what has been previously thought. For a defense of the idea that negative duties are both psychologically and normatively more stringent than positive duties, see Schmidtz (2000, p. 698).

argument.⁵ Our duty to eradicate global poverty is a result *primarily* of us having harmed the poor.⁶ Pogge does not reject the idea that we have positive duties to alleviate global poverty. “We do, of course, have positive duties to rescue people from life-threatening poverty, but it can be misleading to focus on them when more stringent negative duties are also in play: duties not to expose people to life-threatening poverty and duties to shield them from harms for which we would be actively responsible” (Pogge 2005a, p. 5).⁷ As is perhaps evident from this passage, Pogge is eager to primarily rest his argument on negative duties because they are philosophically less controversial than positive ones. If his argument goes through, he will have achieved the substantial result of convincing even those (libertarians) who reject the existence of positive duties that the wealthy have a duty to eradicate global poverty. As one commentator has succinctly put it, Pogge’s argument promises to derive a fairly maximalist conclusion about our duties toward the global poor from a normative minimalist premise (Patten 2005, p. 20).⁸

It is instructive to have a more detailed look at how Pogge thinks we harm the poor. As already mentioned, the general idea here is that we do so in virtue of supporting and participating in a global order that puts in jeopardy the global poor’s access to basic objects of their human rights (Pogge 2008, p. 25).⁹ In order to understand this idea better, we can start with the question of what exactly the global order is. According to Pogge, the global order is made up by the rules and regulations set forth by global institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the United Nations (UN) system. In conjunction, these institutions set up a system that greatly advances the national interests of developed countries over those of developing ones (Pogge 2008, p. 122). This system is

5. The positive duty argument to eradicate global poverty essentially involves the claim that though we might not have harmed (or are currently harming) the global poor, we nonetheless have a duty to offer them assistance because they are so much worse off than we are and because we can offer such assistance at no great cost to our own welfare. Overland is, for example, of the opinion that morality requires a contributor to harm as well as a bystander (who has not contributed to harm) to assist a person in need if they can do so at little cost to themselves (2005, p. 301). Add to this the highly plausible empirical premise that many well-off people are in a position to assist a poor person at little cost to themselves and we arrive at the conclusion that many well-off people have a positive duty to offer assistance to the global poor though they have not contributed to the harming of the global poor.
6. Pogge characterizes the distinction between negative and positive duties in the following way: “I propose, then, to call *negative* any duty to ensure that others are not unduly harmed (or wronged) through one’s own conduct and to call *positive* the remainder: any duty to benefit persons or to shield them from other harms” (2008, p. 136).
7. See also Pogge (2008, p. 291 [note 207], 292 [note 216]) and Pogge (2005b, pp. 34, 36). In *Real World Justice* (2005b, p. 34), Pogge introduces the concept of an ‘intermediate duty’. Such a duty is a duty to avert harms that one’s own past conduct may cause in the future.
8. Hassoun (2008) has recently attempted to do something rather similar.
9. At one place, Pogge also suggests that x’s benefiting from an unjust treatment of y by z is equivalent to x harming y. This implies that x has a *negative* duty not to benefit from z’s unjust treatment of y (say, the global poor) and that in so far as x has so benefited, she owes compensation to y. In Pogge’s own words, “and we may be failing to fulfill our more stringent *negative* duty not to uphold injustice, not to contribute to or profit from the unjust impoverishment of others” (Pogge 2008, p. 203).

unfair because it does not pay enough attention to, and does not do enough to accommodate, the interests of poor citizens of developing nations.

Pogge is especially critical of the WTO. The critique of the WTO regime is primarily composed of the claim that it has opened the markets of the developed countries too little and has thereby gained for the citizens of developed countries the benefits of free trade while withholding these benefits from the citizens of developing countries. The WTO imposes barriers on poor populations' ability to export their products and thereby earn much needed income. The barriers in question are the enormous subsidies and export credits to domestic producers in developed countries, quotas on imports from developing countries, and import taxes on products from developing countries (Pogge 2008, p. 18). In addition to this, the WTO has imposed strong intellectual property rights (IPRs) on products such as essential medicines and genetically modified seeds that quite often are especially useful in a developing world setting. These IPRs have, for example, serious negative health repercussions in developing countries because access to life-saving medicine is impeded through the high prices that IP-protected goods command.

Another feature of the global institutional system of which Pogge is highly critical is the international resource and borrowing privilege that allows heads of states (including the corrupt and nondemocratically elected ones) to sell the natural resources of their country and to borrow from international donors in their country's name. This privilege benefits the developed countries immensely, but it contributes significantly to the politically unstable and economically disastrous situation in many resource-rich developing countries. The privilege functions as an incentive to seize power through military coups or other nondemocratic means, and it has as a somewhat common consequence that a country is saddled with huge debt for generations to come because a onetime head of state has been allowed to borrow money in the country's name but failed to spend any of that money on welfare improvements for anybody but himself and a small circle of collaborators (Pogge 2008, pp. 29,148).

An important topic that arises in connection with Pogge's claim that we are harming the poor has to do with the question of what the appropriate baseline is for this claim. As Pogge points out, harm and benefit are comparative notions, and it follows from the claim that x does harm to y , that x makes y worse off in some dimension (Pogge 2008, p. 19). The claim that x makes y worse off in some dimension is, however, intelligible only if it is made clear what situation/scenario it is that constitutes the baseline for the judgment that y is worse off in some dimension. In evaluating the claim that we are harming the poor, one has the option of employing a *diachronic* conception of harm. On such a conception of harm, one compares the situation of the global poor under the current global institutional order (especially the WTO regime) with the situation of the global poor *before* the implementation of this regime (Pogge 2008, p. 19). On a diachronic conception of harm, it may not be obvious, Pogge concedes, that we are harming the poor. This is so because there is some evidence to suggest that there has been a worldwide decline in the number of extremely poor people since the implementation of the WTO regime (Pogge 2008, p. 19).

Pogge rejects, however, the view that a diachronic conception of harm gives us reason to doubt that we are harming the poor. He offers three reasons for this standpoint. First, the empirical evidence in favor of the view that global poverty is declining rests on a dubious methodology for counting the poor (Ravallion 2010; Reddy and Pogge 2010). Second, even if there has been a decline in world poverty, such a decline may be due to other causes, and the decline may then have occurred not because of, but despite of, the WTO regime. Third, the WTO regime may have reduced severe poverty, but this does not in itself show that the imposition of this regime was justified and that we are not, through its imposition, harming the poor. A different and less burdensome (on developing countries) WTO regime could have been implemented that would have resulted in an even steeper decline in the number of people living in severe poverty. Perhaps this third point needs a bit of further elaboration.

The global poor constitute a large and diverse group, and many of them have experienced a deterioration in their living standards, while other historically poor groups have benefited from the imposition of the WTO regime. The governments of developed countries and the citizens that support them cannot justify the foreseeable harms that the WTO regime does to some subgroups of the global poor by appealing to the larger benefits that the agreement brings to other subgroups. Developed world governments could have avoided these harms to some subgroups while keeping the benefits to other subgroups by accepting an alternative WTO regime that was slightly more costly to them. Developed world governments could, for example, have agreed to a greater opening of their markets for textile imports from developing countries, and they could have refrained from demanding that strict protection of IPRs on essential medicines in developing country *x* is a necessary condition for *x*'s inclusion in the WTO. Developed world governments did not, however, do this due to a wish of maximizing their benefits from the regime. In light of this, it makes sense, on a diachronic conception of harm, to suggest that we are, through the imposition of the WTO regime, causing harm to the global poor even though fewer people are now radically poor as compared with the situation prior to the implementation of the WTO regime (Pogge 2008, p. 23).

Employing a diachronic conception of harm is not the only option one has when one is to evaluate the claim that we are currently harming the global poor. One can also employ a *subjunctive* conception of harm. When one employs this conception of harm, the baseline scenario to which the current situation is compared is not the one obtaining at a prior point in time but the one that *would have* obtained/arisen in the absence of some alleged causal factor (say, the current WTO regime). Pogge is of the opinion that employing a diachronic conception of harm is sometimes problematic. This is so because there are cases in which it is obvious that someone is being harmed by an institutional arrangement at time *t* though the person being harmed at *t* is better off than he or she were at a time prior to *t* under a different institutional arrangement.

The example Pogge utilizes to illustrate this point is the situation of slaves in the United States who lived through the institutional changes that took place during the first half of the 19th century. Surely, these institutional reforms

improved the situation of slaves as compared with what their situation was under the prior institutional system. Now, under a diachronic conception of harm, there is not much justification for the view that these individuals were harmed by the institutional arrangements in place around 1840. According to Pogge, this shows that a diachronic conception of harm is not always the appropriate one to employ. Surely, we want to be able to hold the view that U.S. slaves in the first half of the 19th century *were* harmed by the institutional system under which they lived. An obvious way of being able to preserve this view is to give up a diachronic conception of harm and employ a moralized subjunctive one defined in terms of a *just* regime feasible at the time (Pogge 2008, pp. 25, 130). In short, the reason why the individuals in question were harmed at that time by the institutional system under which they lived is that there was at that time an alternative, feasible, and minimally just institutional system under which they would have been much better off. Considerations like these lead Pogge to his (sometimes) preferred subjunctive conception of harm. On this conception, “an institutional order harms people when its design can be shown to be unjust by reference to a feasible alternative design” (Pogge 2008, p. 25).

This conception of harm cannot be used to underpin the suggestion that we are currently harming the global poor if it is not conjoined with at least an outline of what constitutes a minimally just global institutional order. On Pogge’s view, the current global institutional order harms the poor only if there is a minimally just, feasible alternative to it under which the global poor would fare much better than they do under the present one. However, if it is not made clear, at least in rudimentary form, what the characteristics are of a minimally just institutional order, there is no plausibility to the claim that there is such a feasible institutional alternative, and if there is no plausibility to this claim, there is no plausibility to the claim that we are currently harming the poor. So, what are, on Pogge’s view, the characteristics of a minimally just international order?

Pogge’s position on global justice rests, to a large extent, on a human rights framework: “But human rights are the core values of our moral and political discourse, central to how justice is conceived in the modern world” (Pogge 2005c, p. 195). Both at the domestic and global level, Pogge is committed to the view that an institutional order/design is unjust if it foreseeably produces an avoidable human rights deficit (Pogge 2008, p. 25). It is important to note that Pogge is of the opinion that the feature of an institutional design that it allows for its subjects to realize their standard human rights is not a *sufficient* condition for the institutional design being just. Furnishing or accommodating the realization of standard human rights is only a necessary condition for institutional justice.

With these clarifications about Pogge’s position on global justice in place, the details of Pogge’s argument in favor of his view that we are harming the poor can be properly appreciated. If not all, then at least most of the citizens of developed countries actively cooperate in designing and/or upholding the current global institutional system. This system can plausibly be said to be harming the global poor because of two things: it foreseeably produces massive

avoidable human rights deficits in many parts of the developing world; and there is a minimally just, feasible, alternative global institutional order/design that foreseeably does not produce such a human rights deficit.

It is a significant feature of Pogge's overall argument that what might be labeled 'explanatory nationalism' is false. Explanatory nationalism is the view that world poverty can be fully explained in terms of national and local factors (Pogge 2008, pp. 17, 145). If explanatory nationalism were true, then Pogge's contention that the existing global institutional order is harming the poor would lose much of its credibility. People in developing countries commonly have human rights deficits because they are poor (this is so because objects of basic human rights can usually be purchased). If the poverty of these people can be fully explained in terms of reference to the domestic/regional political institutions to which they are subject and/or the religious/cultural traditions that they embrace, it is implausible to suggest that the global institutional order harms these people in virtue of severely hindering/blocking their economic progress. If this is implausible, then there is, in turn, no credibility to the claim that the affluent citizens of the developed world are, in virtue of participating in and endorsing the global institutional system, violating a negative duty not to harm the global poor.

It is important to stress that Pogge does not deny that domestic factors such as technical incompetence, corruption, and tyranny in the political/social institutions of some developing countries play a causal role in the genesis and perseverance of global poverty (Pogge 2008, pp. 28, 117). It would, however, be mistaken to suggest that domestic features such as these can fully causally account for global poverty. So if explanatory nationalism is false, is explanatory globalism true? The latter might be defined as the claim that global poverty can be fully causally explained by reference to nondomestic, global factors. Pogge's view on this important issue is not entirely clear.

At various places in his extensive work on global poverty, he seems to be offering somewhat different answers to the previous question. At one end of the spectrum, we find the claim that "The poor do need help, of course. But they need help *only* because of the terrible injustices that we have been inflicting upon them. We should not then think of our individual efforts and of possible institutionalized poverty eradication initiatives [. . .] as helping the poor, but as protecting them from the effects of global rules whose injustice benefits us and is our responsibility" (Pogge 2008, p. 30) (author's emphasis). At the other end of the spectrum, there is the claim that "In these ways global institutional factors might *contribute substantially* to the persistence of severe poverty in particular countries and in the world at large. Section 4.9 shows that this is indeed the case" (Pogge 2008, p. 118) (author's emphasis). A somewhat intermediate position emerges from the view that "I conclude that explanatory nationalism and the moral worldview based on it do not fit the real world. Global factors are *all-important* for explaining present human misery" (Pogge 2008, p. 150) (author's emphasis). Is there a way of constructing a coherent view out of these somewhat divergent claims?

Well, at one point, Pogge suggests that an adequate explanation of global poverty is not found by *merely* drawing attention to the prevalence of flawed,

domestic social institutions and to the often corrupt and incompetent elites that rule a number of poor countries. An adequate explanation must also explain *why* these flawed social institutions and their corrupt and incompetent denizens are so common/can continue to exist (Pogge 2008, p. 118). Pogge's key point is now that any plausible explanation of this phenomenon must invoke the set of rules set up by the global institutional order. Pogge's view on explanatory globalism can therefore plausibly be reconstructed as the claim that the global institutional order contributes *significantly* to global poverty in virtue of sustaining, propping up, and encouraging flawed domestic institutions that, in turn, cause, or augment already existing, poverty.

A prime villain is here the international resource and borrowing privilege. As mentioned, this privilege provides strong incentives for coup attempts, corruption, bribery, and civil wars in resource-rich developing countries and the privilege is then a nondomestic factor that shapes and forms domestic institutions in a negative, poverty-causing direction. Pogge mentions resource-rich Nigeria as an example that in his opinion offers some empirical credibility to his line of thought on the respective causes of poverty. To a very significant degree, poverty in this country is caused by corruption and military rule that has no real zeal for poverty eradication among the masses. According to Pogge, it is, however, a blatant mistake to embrace the kind of explanatory nationalist thinking that suggests that corruption and nondemocratic military rule are phenomena entirely rooted in local tribal culture and traditions. Corruption and violent, nondemocratic military rule are encouraged and sustained by the international resource privilege, and insofar as we are active supporters of the global institutions that keep this privilege in place, we are partially causally responsible for the poverty in this country (Pogge 2008, p. 120).

If one accepts Pogge's claim that we are harming the global poor, an important question arises of how we, qua significant and continuing participants in an unjust world order, should behave in order to make amends for, or rectify, our behavior. One rather radical solution is to stop making economic contributions to whatever national economy it is that one belongs to. This solution is, however, not one that Pogge supports. He suggests that any relevant individual takes compensating action. By taking such action, one can continue to make economic contributions to the national economy of which one is part and yet steer clear of being an active collaborator in the undue harming of others. Compensating action can take either of two forms. One can work actively to protect the victims of injustice (e.g., through the transference of funds) or one can work for institutional reform of a type such that if this type of reform were replicated in other national/regional settings, enough would have been done in order to eradicate the harms perpetrated by the current global institutional order (Pogge 2008, p. 142).

Some Important Criticisms of Pogge's Position on Global Justice and World Poverty

As mentioned in the introduction, this section will focus on criticisms of Pogge that can be subsumed under the headings Causes of Global Poverty and

Relabeling Positive Duties as Negative Duties. Alan Patten (2005) has offered an extended, and widely cited, criticism of Pogge that falls under both headings. Patten thinks that Pogge makes an unconvincing case for his view about what the underlying causes of global poverty are. According to Patten, Pogge never really shows how the international factors he emphasizes in his account of the causes of global poverty actually play the role he attributes to them (Patten 2005, p. 21). Whereas Pogge establishes an important point in virtue of highlighting cases in which harm to poor populations is done through the implementation of a pernicious global institutional order, Pogge is, in Patten's mind, overemphasizing the importance of global causes of poverty.

Pogge's view gravitates toward explanatory globalism, and this view is, according to Patten, implausible. The implausibility stems from the fact that even in a fair international environment, there is no guarantee that the policies needed to fight poverty will be implemented at the domestic level (Patten 2005, p. 23). Patten elaborates on this view by calling attention to the policies that are enacted in democratic, developed countries that operate under a set of international rules and regulations that to a high extent are shaped to advance the domestic interests of these countries. Such countries routinely fail to put in place policies that will significantly help the poorest and most marginalized citizens (Patten 2005, p. 24). Patten's critique of Pogge's views about the causes of global poverty is echoed by a number of other authors who have commented on Pogge's work. Satz (2005, p. 49), Risse (2005, p. 16), Reitberger (2008, p. 381), Chandhoke (2010, p. 72), Cohen (2010), and Gilibert (2005, p. 541) all agree with Patten that explanatory globalism is false and that Pogge underplays the importance of domestic factors in the causal explanation of world poverty.

An important aspect of Patten's critique of Pogge concerns the question of how Pogge defines the subjunctive baseline that is needed in order to evaluate the claim that the current global institutional system harms the poor (Patten 2005, pp. 22–7). The definition of this subjunctive baseline involves giving a characterization of a minimally just global institutional system, and in giving this characterization, Pogge faces a choice between giving a *procedural* or a *substantive* definition of justice. A procedural definition of justice is one in which an institutional order is just if and only if it instantiates a set of fair institutions of international law, trade, and finance. A just outcome in, say, a legal context is one that is arrived at through a fair procedure involving fair judiciary institutions. Fair institutions of international law, trade, and finance could, for example, be construed as ones that disallow rich countries to maintain high import taxes on goods from developing countries and disallow rich countries to pay out huge subsidies to their domestic agricultural producers.

The problem with giving such a procedural definition of justice is that in the scenario in which such a just global institutional order is implemented, there will still be a significant amount of radically poor people in the world. On Patten's view, this is secured by the fact that explanatory globalism is false. Now, if Pogge is serious about his commitment to the libertarian principle that we only have negative duties, then the affluent citizens of developing countries

do not owe anything to that large group of people who will remain poor under a procedurally minimally just global institutional system. This group of people does *not* count as being harmed by the affluent since the latter has done everything that minimal justice requires of them.

Pogge is now in an untenable position because he has asserted that the relatively affluent in developed countries must stop thinking about world poverty in terms of *helping* the poor (Pogge 2008, p. 30). However, on a procedural definition of justice, poverty eradication requires massive levels of redistribution of resources from the rich to the poor, and insofar as we have a duty to eradicate poverty, there is no way to avoid the conclusion that the duty in question is a *positive* one to offer assistance (or help) to the poor.

Perhaps Pogge can avoid this problem by employing a substantive definition of justice. A substantive definition of justice is one according to which an institutional order is just if and only if it secures a certain distributive outcome among its subjects.¹⁰ Such a distributive outcome may be one in which nobody falls below a certain threshold in terms of having access to certain material and social goods. The problem with this proposal is, according to Patten, that the appropriate threshold that Pogge has in mind (having secure access to objects of one's basic human rights) cannot be secured for everyone merely by reforming those aspects of the global institutional system that Pogge objects to. Even if this system were just in the sense that it involved fair rules for trade and no international resource and borrowing privilege, there would still be a significant amount of poor people in the world. On a substantive definition of justice, those many people who will remain poor after the introduction of fair international laws and trade rules do count as being harmed by the affluent. The only way for the affluent to escape the judgment that they are violating a negative duty not to *harm* the poor is therefore for them to implement a global institutional system that secures the relevant distributive outcome: namely that nobody is without secure access to objects of his/her basic human rights.

But this maneuver on Pogge's part is, according to Patten, to stretch the concept of harm beyond recognition. Pogge professes to side with the libertarians on the issue of what types of duties (negative/positive) we primarily have toward the global poor, but whatever reasons the libertarians have for rejecting the view that we have positive duties of assistance toward those who are worse off than ourselves are, according to Patten, surely reasons for rejecting a negative duty that is construed as a duty not to harm in the sense of *failing to help* people who, for whatever reason, fall below a certain distributive threshold. By invoking a substantive baseline for justice, Pogge is no longer invoking a particularly minimal normative principle. He has left the camp of the libertarians and joined those who believe that we, in addition to negative duties, have positive duties to offer assistance. He has done so in virtue of relabeling what is essentially a positive duty to offer assistance to those who fall below a certain material /social threshold as a negative duty not to impose a global institutional

10. Pogge favors a substantive definition of justice at a number of places in his work (Pogge 2008, p. 16, chapter 5).

order that fails to alleviate human rights deficits/help everybody above the threshold in question (Patten 2005, p. 27).¹¹

This charge of relabeling is echoed by Reitberger. He notes that it is a consequence of Pogge's analysis that the affluent count as harming the poor insofar as they comply with, and support, an international order that fails to prevent human rights deficits (if these deficits are foreseeable and if there is an alternative global order that avoids them). Reitberger then goes on to say "If we think justice requires that we create an institutional order whereby people's basic human rights are not violated regardless of direct cause and everyone is provided with basic goods in life, we are in fact (as I aim to show later) relying on a kind of positive duty to aid the poor—something that Pogge rejected for failing to distinguish properly between harming and failing to protect" (2008, p. 387). Gilibert also objects to Pogge's concept of a negative duty. He sees this concept as being unduly inflationary because it, in effect, turns what is essentially a positive duty into a negative one. On Pogge's concept of a negative duty, one counts as violating a negative duty not to harm *x* if one fails to improve the situation of *x* as much as possible (Gilibert 2005, p. 542).¹²

Mathias Risse (2005) is another critic who is not impressed with Pogge's views about the causes of global poverty. Risse seeks to show that the global order does not harm the poor if one adopts those baselines of comparison that Pogge has suggested. Contrary to what Pogge believes, when these baselines are invoked, it turns out that the global order has caused staggering improvements over that state of general misery that human life historically has been immersed in. According to Risse, the global order is not unjust. At most, what can be said about it in this respect is that it is incompletely just (Risse 2005, p. 10).

What empirical evidence is there for this relatively optimistic outlook? Risse points to a number of statistical facts. First, in 1820, 75% of the world population lived on less than one US dollar a day. Today, only slightly more than 20% of the global population find themselves at this economic level. The average income per capita (worldwide) was in 1999 significantly more than doubled as compared with 1950, and similar spectacular improvements in terms of life expectancy has been achieved in that period (Risse 2005, p. 11). Risse concedes that the WTO regime has not benefited the global poor as much as it could have, but by and large, the WTO regime constitutes a huge

11. Cruft also makes the point that even in a scenario in which there are fair and just rules of trade, law, etc., and in which nobody is inclined to undermine the poor's access to clothing, shelter, health care and education, actions of assistance would still be required on the part of the relatively well off in order to secure everybody's access to these basic objects of human rights. Cruft continues, "On this basis, one might conclude that Pogge's human rights to minimally adequate supplies of food, drink, clothing, shelter, healthcare and education [. . .] must sometimes entail positive assistance duties that are not derived from the violation of more fundamental negative duties" (Cruft 2005, p. 35).

12. Joshua Cohen joins the choir of critics who are skeptical about Pogge's definition of a negative duty. Cohen is not convinced that it is legitimate to say that *x* is harming *y*, and thereby violating a negative duty not to harm by failing to alleviate *y*'s poverty: "We might wonder whether to count the enforcement of current [global] rules and corresponding failure to alleviate mass destitution by modifying the global order as *harming* the poor, rather than as a (culpable) failure to alleviate poverty" (2010, p. 27).

improvement over the previous General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) system and any other previous multilateral or bilateral trade agreement. This point of critique is also made by Reitberger (2008, p. 394).

One reply Pogge could make to these observations is that Risse employs a diachronic baseline for harm, and as we have seen, it is an important feature of Pogge's overall position that such a baseline is not always the appropriate one. Pogge could reply to Risse's critique by saying that the situation of the global poor today is, by and large, better than what it was two hundred, hundred or fifty years ago, but that does not show that the global institutional system has not harmed (or does not continue to harm) the poor. This is so because there is an alternative, feasible, and minimally just institutional system under which the global poor would be even better off. In short, a subjunctive baseline is the appropriate one to invoke when we are to assess the claim that the current institutional system harms the global poor. Following Pogge, we should ask what things *would* have been like had, say, the European colonial powers *not* invaded the rest of the world, had the current WTO regime *not* been implemented, and had the international resource and borrowing privilege *not* been put in place.

Risse objects to the use of such a subjunctive baseline. Of course, it is conceivable that things would be different today for the global poor had certain things in the past not occurred. It is conceivable that populations that today are poor would have developed political institutions and technical know-how that would have allowed them to prosper economically, say, through the successful exploitation of the natural resources that exist in the geographical regions that they control. It is, however, equally conceivable that these populations would have developed in a politically and economically more negative direction than the one they actually developed in. As Risse puts the point, we must plead complete ignorance with respect to the question of how things would have been for the poor had certain things in the past that did happen, not happened (Risse 2005, p. 12).

Risse considers yet another baseline that can be invoked to underpin the view that the global poor has been harmed, and continues to be harmed, by the global institutional system. This baseline is a Lockean preinstitutional state of nature in which all resources have been distributed equally among the world's inhabitants. Pogge sometimes invokes this baseline (2008, pp. 143–5).¹³ Risse, however, rejects that reference to such a baseline shows that the global institutional order has harmed the poor. Reference to such a baseline can only show that things are not today as they should be, but it cannot plausibly allocate any blame for this outcome.¹⁴ One can think of alternative causal

13. Pogge invokes this baseline in order to convince people with a broadly Lockean view of distributive justice (Pogge 2005b, p. 36).

14. How can reference to such a baseline show that things are not today as they should be? The reason cited by Pogge (and presumably accepted by Risse) is that many of today's global poor are worse-off than what the worst-off inhabitants would be in a Lockean preinstitutional state of nature. The minimal economic position that people would be at in such a state of nature, in which individual appropriation of hitherto unowned natural resources is constrained by the famous proviso to leave 'enough and as good' for others to appropriate, entails secure access to sufficient food, clean water, clothing and shelter (Pogge 2008, p. 144). Pogge argues that today's global poor do not even occupy this minimal economic position (Pogge 2005b, p. 40).

explanations of how the world came to be the way it is. One can, for example, argue that today's level of global poverty is caused by, say, meteorological, geographical, or cultural/religious features of the regions in which today's poor populations live. Reference to a state of nature situation with a completely egalitarian distribution of resources cannot settle the question of which of these competing causal explanations is the correct one. In short, Risse is of the opinion that the historical/diachronic baseline is the only plausible one to make use of when one is to evaluate the claim that the global institutional order harms the poor, and when this baseline is invoked, the conclusion must be that the global institutional system has brought tremendous advances to the world's poor (Risse 2005, p. 14).

Staying on the topic of the global institutional system, Pogge has been criticized for failing to make a distinction between the harms that the global institutional system does to the poor and the harms caused by domestic/foreign policies of individual nation states. "Many of the attributes of the global order that Pogge argues contribute to persistent poverty, such as selective trade restrictions by rich countries against imports from poor countries, agricultural subsidies, and tax deductible bribery of foreign officials, fall squarely within the domestic jurisdiction of sovereign states and are not really part of the institutional order as such, strictly defined. If these features constitute harm and are violations of negative duties, they are not directly due to what the global institutions do" (Reitberger 2008, p. 385).

According to Reitberger, Pogge fails in his analysis of who owes what to the global poor to make a distinction between the global *order* and the global *institutional order*. Reitberger has no problems with accepting the view that the former causes much poverty in today's world. He rejects, however, Pogge's view that the latter plays such a role (Reitberger 2008, p. 383). The global order is made up by more than merely international government organizations (the UN, the IMF, the WTO, and the World Bank). Importantly, this order is composed of more or less powerful individual nation states that interact with each other in a myriad of ways. These individual nation states can, moreover, through their own domestic and foreign policies make a huge impact on other countries' economic situation and development. Accordingly, it is Reitberger's view that it is a flaw in Pogge's analysis that when it counts up the possible causes for global poverty, it only offers two options: domestic features and the effects of the global institutional system. This is a fallacy of false alternatives in the sense that it overlooks the causal impact that the policies of one nation state can have, and often have, on the economic situation of other countries (Reitberger 2008, p. 386).¹⁵

Take, for instance, the WTO regime so much derided by Pogge. This regime cannot reciprocate against individual countries that fail to comply with the rules it sets down. This ability is one that is exclusive to individual nation states. So country A can reciprocate against country B by imposing import duty on B's products or heavily subsidize its domestic producers that compete for

15. Huseby (2008, p. 6) also stresses that there are numerous factors that affect country x's (or group x's) share of (economic) resources. These factors are not only restricted to the workings of the global institutional system and the domestic system in place in x.

market share with those in B. Such measures, may or may not be justified, but two points crucial to Reitberger's critique are that if these measures of reciprocity causes poverty in B, blame for this should not be put at the feet of the WTO or any other member institution of the global institutional order. Second, relatively affluent members in developed nations C and D who, we may assume, are supportive of the WTO regime cannot be held responsible for the actions of country A. From this, it follows that they cannot reasonably be said to owe compensation to those individuals in B who suffer from the actions of A. The well-off citizens of C or D have not, through their support of the WTO regime, violated any negative duties not to harm the inhabitants of B so if they owe them compensation, it must be because they have some positive duty to help the worse-off avoid human rights deficits that arise as a consequence of poverty. As already mentioned, Pogge does not, however, wish to invoke such positive duties in his master argument (Reitberger 2008, p. 383).

Another point Reitberger makes is that Pogge fails to distinguish properly between the case of a global institutional order being harmful in itself and the case of a global institutional order being harmful because it is being exploited and/or manipulated by individual nation states for harmful purposes. Powerful nation states can, and often do, exploit the global institutions of which they are members, and when they do so, there can certainly be negative repercussions for the global poor (or specific subgroups among them), but it would be mistaken to fault the system itself for these effects (Reitberger 2008, p. 385). Lisa Fuller raises a variation of this worry in her discussion of Pogge's proposal for a global resources dividend (Pogge 2008, chapter 8) as an institutional mechanism for poverty eradication. Such a mechanism would have to be administered by a large supranational institution that is "susceptible to any number of abuses by people and states behaving 'non-ideally'—that is, acting according to a sense of their interests that does not correspond with the cooperative aims of the group" (Fuller 2005, p. 292).

One last critic should be mentioned in this section. This is Joshua Cohen, who very recently has objected to Pogge's views about the causes of global poverty (2010).¹⁶ In order to be able to properly appreciate Cohen's criticism, it is useful to state three different theses that play an important role in his argument.

Strong Thesis: Most of the global poverty problem could be eliminated through minor modifications in the global order that would entail at most slight reductions in the incomes of the affluent. (Cohen 2010, p. 19)

Conventional Thesis: Some global poverty could be eliminated by changes in global rules that would not themselves result in serious moral injuries. (Cohen 2010, p. 26)

Purely Domestic Poverty Thesis: The persistence of severe poverty is due solely to domestic causes. (Cohen 2010, p. 23)

16. Cohen thereby continues a thread of commentary on Pogge's position that has been in place in the literature since *World Poverty and Human Rights: Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms* was first published.

According to Cohen, Pogge is committed to the strong thesis, but this thesis is, in Cohen's view, "entirely speculative, unwarranted by available evidence and argument" (Cohen 2010, p. 20). In particular, Cohen objects to the idea, implicit in the strong thesis, that changes to the global order will be sufficient to eliminate most of the global poverty problem, while no changes are made to domestic institutions in poor countries. Cohen accepts the conventional thesis, which is much weaker than the strong thesis and entails the falsity of the purely domestic poverty thesis (Cohen 2010, p. 27). Cohen seeks to underpin the plausibility of his suggestion that the strong thesis is unsubstantiated by critically discussing three different defenses that Pogge, according to Cohen, gives for the strong thesis (Cohen 2010, p. 31).

The first defense of the strong thesis is indirect in nature. It seeks to rebut a common misgiving one might have about the strong thesis. This misgiving has as its starting point the empirical fact that some countries that were poor prior to 1980 have, in the last 30 years, made tremendous progress in poverty eradication.¹⁷ Countries commonly mentioned in this respect are India, South Korea, Botswana, Vietnam, Brazil, and China. Given that these countries have been able to lift large proportions of their population out of poverty under the global rules that have been in place since 1980, it seems plausible to suggest that other poor countries could have achieved the same thing if only they had been willing to make changes to their domestic institutions and economic policies. In short, given that some countries have been successful in alleviating poverty under the existing global rules, it seems plausible to suggest that what keeps poor countries in poverty is not the global rules but domestic institutions and policies in poor countries. In light of this, it is implausible to suggest, as the strong thesis does, that changes to the global system will be sufficient to eliminate most of the global poverty problem. The global system simply does not play the causal role attributed to it by the strong thesis.

Pogge's reply to this line of thought consists in drawing attention to what might be labeled a 'some-all fallacy'. It is fallacious to suggest that just because *some* countries, under existing global rules, have been successful in alleviating poverty among their population, *all* countries could have done this under these rules. Cohen accepts this logical point, but he finds it of limited interest when it comes to the empirical issue, currently under debate, about the relative causal importance of global and domestic factors in a plausible explanation of poverty in a domestic setting. "But the logical point seems misguided as a response to empirical arguments about the relevance of national experiences in addressing domestic poverty" (Cohen 2010, p. 32), "To be sure, improved financial performance under existing [global] rules by some poor countries is not proof that all countries could have succeeded. But we need to understand why the evidence is irrelevant, not simply to be reminded that it might be"

17. Cohen focuses on the period since 1980 since Pogge's argument about how the global institutional order has harmed the global poor primarily depends upon what has happened in the world since 1980 (Cohen 2010, p. 32).

(Cohen 2010, p. 33).¹⁸ According to Cohen, Pogge suggests two reasons as to why it is irrelevant, for the plausibility of the strong thesis, to draw attention to the fact that some historically poor countries have done well under the current global rules.

First, if less successful countries had mimicked the successful ones and adopted an export-led macroeconomic approach, then such an export-led approach would have yielded a much more limited benefit to successful countries than what it actually did. The reason for this is that the global market for low-end consumer goods would have been flooded. This would, in turn, have resulted in lower prices for such goods, and this would have led to diminished revenue for domestic poverty eradication in the successful countries. Cohen dismisses this line of thought by drawing attention to the fact that the global market for low-end consumer goods is not fixed and that the export-led model of successful countries was not only based on the production and export of cheap consumer goods but also on production and export of products such as steel and ships (Cohen 2010, p. 33).

Second, access to affluent markets was limited by various protectionist measures, and such measures, which are allowed under current global rules, precluded any generalization of the success stories of, say, the Asian Tiger countries. In reply to this, Cohen observes that while protectionist measures by affluent countries may have limited the export and growth possibilities of some developing countries, it is also the case that trade protections have decreased significantly since 1980. Moreover, the persistence of protectionism cannot explain the extraordinary differences in economic performance between successful and unsuccessful developing countries (Cohen 2010, p. 33).

Pogge's second defense for the strong thesis starts with the assumption that all poor countries could have developed positively under the current global rules and could have made great strides in domestic poverty reduction. Pogge's point now is that even on this assumption, the strong thesis may be true because most global poverty could also have been eradicated through changes to the global system. The crucial idea here is that global poverty can be eradicated through two independent causes of action: through reform of domestic institutions in poor countries and through reform of the global order.¹⁹ According to Cohen, Pogge takes the following thesis to be true:

18. The two quotes from Cohen are illustrative of a general misgiving he has about how Pogge proceeds in some of his arguments about the causes of global poverty. Pogge is, according to Cohen, too quick to move from premises about what is possible to conclusions about what is the case. "There is a large gap between *might explain* and *does explain*: between noting that a global rule-based explanation of most extreme poverty can coexist with explanations focused on domestic conditions and showing that the current global rules do contribute substantially to variations in domestic poverty. That gap simply cannot be filled in a few pages. Social science is not that easy" (Cohen 2010, p. 25).

19. Cohen calls this idea independent effects. "Both domestic conditions and global rules may be independently and fully responsible for cross-national and intertemporal variation in poverty rates, meaning that a change in either would have been (and would now be) sufficient to alleviate the extreme poverty in a country" (Cohen 2010, p. 23).

S2 Most severe poverty would be avoided, despite the corrupt and oppressive regimes holding sway in so many poor countries, if the global institutional order were designed to achieve this purpose. (Cohen 2010, p. 34)

It is important to note that the truth of S2 does not entail the truth of the strong thesis. However, if S2 is true, then reform of the global system is in itself, without any changes to domestic institutions and/or regimes, sufficient for the eradication of most severe poverty. If this is the case, then, barring considerations about the cost of such reform to affluent citizens in developed countries and the extensiveness of such reform, a quite significant step has been taken toward substantiating the strong thesis. Is S2 plausible? Cohen certainly does not think so. "I know of no evidence at all for this extraordinary claim [S2]. I am not sure how trade policies, or new patent rules, or more generous development assistance, or alternative rules on debt repayment would have a large impact in any of these countries, given current regimes, institutions and policies" (Cohen 2010, p. 35). Of course it is logically possible that S2 is true, but, as an empirical claim, S2 is extremely implausible given the importance of local factors in mediating the effects of the rules constituting the global order. Rules at the global level are, to a very large extent, filtered through domestic institutions/regimes, and if these institutions/regimes of chronically poor countries, and failed states, are held fixed, it is very difficult to see how changes at the global level with respect to health, education and employment can have the impact on the ground that is postulated by S2 (Cohen 2010, p. 35).

Pogge's third and, according to Cohen, principal defense of the strong thesis rests on the idea that even if the reduction of most global poverty requires changes to the domestic policies/regimes in poor countries, such change would have been, and will be, caused by changes to the global system. As mentioned in section two, Pogge is of the opinion that bad domestic policies/regimes in poor countries are, to a large extent, caused by the rules of the global institutional order. Any plausible explanation as to why such bad domestic policies/regimes continue to exist must, according to Pogge, involve reference to the rules of the global institutional order. So if the rules of the global institutional order are changed in a proper manner, the domestic policies/regimes in poor countries that are responsible for much poverty will undergo positive change, and it is therefore possible, as the strong thesis attests, to eliminate most of the global poverty problem through modifications of the global order.

According to Cohen, Pogge overestimates the causal impact of global rules on domestic policies/regimes. Global rules provide one element in the causal explanation of domestic policies/regimes in poor countries, but this element is not at all of the size envisaged by Pogge. "As EITI suggests, you can accept that global rule changes may constructively change incentives and opportunities that animate domestic political conflicts (by, for example, reducing the returns on predatory rule) without accepting the view, reminiscent of dependency theory, about domestic-institutional and political dependence on global

structure” (Cohen 2010, p. 37).²⁰ In addition to being skeptical about the causal impact of global rule change on domestic policies/regimes, Cohen is also skeptical about the effect that Pogge’s more detailed suggestions with respect to global rule change will have on global poverty. Consider, for example, the international borrowing privilege, discussed in section two, which Pogge is eager to see annulled. It is not at all obvious that such an annulment will have a positive impact on global poverty of the order suggested by Pogge. For one thing, a large proportion of the world’s extremely poor is found in China and in India, and neither of these countries have seen repeated coups instigated by despots/tyrants wanting to borrow money for personal use in the country’s name. As Cohen puts the point, “so much extreme poverty is untouched by issues about borrowing privileges” (Cohen 2010, p. 40).²¹

All in all, Cohen does not see Pogge as having provided any good argument for the suggestion that the strong thesis, as opposed to the conventional thesis, is true. This lack of evidence for the strong thesis does not, however, entail that global poverty is a minor moral problem that individuals in affluent countries can ignore in either their actions or deliberations. Cohen embraces the conventional thesis, and this thesis is “morally and practically speaking, of extraordinary importance, and provides sufficient reason for concerted action” (Cohen 2010, p. 27).

Complementing the Reviewed Criticisms of Pogge’s Views on the Causes of Global Poverty

Hopefully, it is evident from the preceding sections that a main issue in the debate between Pogge and his critics concerns the causes of global poverty. An important issue of contention is the plausibility of explanatory globalism with Pogge being much more congenial to this type of globalism than many of his critics. My main aim in this concluding section is to provide additional justification as compared with what has already been offered by the criticisms reviewed earlier, for the suggestion that Pogge overestimates the causal importance of global factors on the genesis and perseverance of poverty. My criticism can therefore instructively be interpreted as an attempt to complement the criticisms already reviewed.

A critique that should be made of Pogge’s treatment of the causes of global poverty, and which has been strangely absent in the literature so far, has to do with the fact that this treatment pays too little attention to what the members of the global poor *themselves* can do in order to improve their

20. ‘EITI’ denotes the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. This is a recent, voluntary initiative that aims to encourage resource-rich poor countries and the companies operating in them to ensure transparency of revenues paid by companies to governments (Cohen 2010, p. 36).

21. It should be noted that Pogge, in his response to Cohen’s criticism, suggests that Cohen does not pay sufficient enough attention to various other reforms of the global order that Pogge has suggested. Including a mechanism such as the global resources dividend in the global order is one such reform that, in Pogge’s view, would do much to reduce the scope of global poverty (Pogge 2010, p. 184).

economic situation. Nowhere in Pogge's extensive writing on global justice and world poverty is a sustained critique made of any of those dispositions/acts of the global poor that contribute to their poverty. This absence of a critical look into what role the global poor themselves play in causing poverty is a problematic feature of Pogge's overall analysis of the causes of poverty. Pogge is right to point out that the global poor constitute a large and diverse group (Pogge 2008, p. 21),²² and identifying features of the normative outlook/pattern of behavior of one group that is a cause of poverty is therefore not necessarily equivalent to identifying a feature that is possessed by *all* subgroups within the group of the global poor. With this in mind, let me suggest just a few reform proposals that at least some among the global poor could implement in order to help economic progress further along.

First, it is an unfortunate fact that a significant number of HIV/AIDS patients with no (or very limited) disposable income for the acquisition of pharmaceutical products of any kind have become infected with the virus because they for cultural/religious reasons have chosen not to conform to well-known safe sex practices that constitute a cheap and effective way of preventing the infection.²³ It is uncontroversial that it has seriously negative consequences for a developing country economy that a significant amount of the adult population is unable to work because of health-related problems.²⁴

Second, it is estimated that up to 90% of adult males in Yemen chew khat three to four hours daily. The number for females may be as high as 50% or even higher as young women take up the habit. Of children under the age of 12, 15–20% are also daily consumers (Al-Mugahed 2008, p. 741). Consumption of khat has serious health repercussions. Khat chewers typically experience euphoria followed by depression, while people who are genetically predisposed are extremely vulnerable to psychosis. Khat can also affect sleep, leading to rebound effects such as late awakening, decreased productivity, and daytime sleepiness (Al-Mugahed 2008, p. 741). The chewing of khat is not a practice restricted to Yemen. It is in varying degrees also found in the present-day territories of Somalia, Djibouti, Kenya, Madagascar, Tanzania, and down to South East Africa (Elmi 1983).

Third, perhaps better and more productive ways of resolving political/ethnic/religious conflicts could be implemented. What I mean here by 'better

22. Somewhat related to this, Cohen makes the useful observation that much contemporary discussion of global justice and poverty does not give sufficient attention to the political geography of global poverty. By 'political geography', Cohen means the location of extremely poor individuals in different places with different development trajectories and varying institutional capacities for alleviating domestic poverty. "Generalizations about 'global rules' and the 'global poor' that abstract from these contextual differences—including differences in expected growth rates—may obscure these important differences in circumstances and associated differences in possible remedies and actual prospects" (2010, p. 30).

23. See Hounton et al. (2005) for a discussion of barriers to safe sex practices in Benin.

24. According to one study, the human immunodeficiency/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) pandemic has reduced average national economic growth rates by 2–4% a year across Africa (Dixon et al. 2002).

and more productive' is, first and foremost, 'non-violent'. Ethnic and religious tensions are relatively common in certain parts of Africa, and unfortunately, they sometimes develop into violent conflict, and the participants in such conflict are sometimes members of the global poor. Some of the religious killing currently affecting Nigeria, the 1994 Rwanda genocide, the violence of Kenya's 2007 general election, the terror campaign of the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda, and the killings and forced repatriations in Sudan's Darfur province cannot, for example, solely be attributed to the workings of either the global institutional order or the domestic political regime (or a combination thereof). Ordinary men and women actively take/took part in these escapades, and in so far as an environment in which political/ethnic/religious tensions are at a relatively high risk of being solved through violent means does not constitute an economic environment in which (foreign) investors are likely to do business, ordinary men and women (as opposed to the global institutional order and the domestic political regime) must bear *some* responsibility for stagnated economic development.²⁵

Fourth, some members among the global poor could also abandon various religious/cultural views that stand in the way of complete gender equity with respect to the right to, and suitability for, formal education and full participation in working life. No household's, or group's, economic output benefits from its female (or male) population being excluded from access to formal education and/or paid work outside the domestic residence. Groups among the global poor that deny their female (or male) members these full and equal opportunities in the name of a commitment to a religious and/or cultural doctrine that they voluntarily subscribe to are actively contributing to their own poverty, and they must, as a result of this, bear some responsibility for their economic predicament.²⁶

25. According to an official United Nations (UN) investigation of the violent 2007 Kenyan election, there were three patterns of violence. First is the spontaneous burning and looting of shops, houses, and commercial outlets in the slums of Nairobi and Kisumu by youth groups. Second is the targeting of communities of small farmers and landholders perceived to be government supporters in the Rift Valley. This targeting was carried out with the aim of driving and keeping these groups away from the region. Third, violent reprisals targeted communities of migrant workers perceived to be opposition supporters. These reprisals were carried out by government supporters and militia groups. Altogether, the violence resulted in over one thousand deaths, hundreds of thousands of individuals being forced to flee and tens of thousands of homes, shops, and businesses being destroyed and looted. See <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/OHCHRKenya-report.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2012).
26. According to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), "With barely 50 percent of girls in West and Central Africa in school, gender discrimination cannot be denied. Inequality is further exacerbated by cultural beliefs and traditions, such as early marriage (see Chart at right) and female genital cutting" (UNICEF 2005, p. 23). Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, and Niger have gender parity indices (GPIs) below 0.75 (UNICEF 2005, p. 22). A GPI of 1 indicates parity between the sexes, a GPI that varies between 0 and 1 typically means a disparity in favor of males, whereas a GPI greater than 1 indicates a disparity in favor of females. The following passage is from UNICEF (2005, p. 35): "In parts of the Middle East and North Africa, poverty is pervasive. When compounded by discrimination and strict gender roles, poverty keeps girls unschooled and dependent. They are unable to escape the demands placed upon them by a society that neither values nor respects them. Frequently girls are kept home to do household chores and care for younger siblings, [. . .]. Puberty is a

I do not offer these examples as part of an original analysis of the causes of global poverty.²⁷ Any convincing analysis of the causes of global poverty must, however, mention the role that members of the global poor play in the generation of poverty. I submit that Pogge does not mention this role to a sufficient degree. In *Real World Justice* (Pogge 2005b, p. 49), Pogge explicitly says that he focuses much more on global, as opposed to national, factors in the generation of global poverty. His rationale for this focus is that it is these factors “that my readers and I are morally responsible for and because, not unrelatedly, these factors are grossly neglected by development economists of all stripes, by the media, and by the citizens of the affluent countries for whom I am writing.” One can sympathize with the line of thought expressed here by Pogge and yet criticize him, as I do, for the lack of focus on the role played by individual members of the global poor in the generation of world poverty.

Let me now, through a discussion of Pogge’s notion of ‘an economic elite’, try to underpin my general claim that Pogge’s analysis pays insufficient attention to the ways in which the global poor are themselves implicated in their poverty. In counting up the culprits of the genesis and perseverance of global poverty, Pogge points, as we have seen, to the global institutional order and flawed domestic policies in the countries in which widespread poverty exists. The responsibility for these flawed domestic policies is, on Pogge’s view, a shared matter between the global institutional system and what Pogge calls local ‘economic elites’ or ‘ruling cliques’.

In *Real World Justice* (2005b), Pogge mentions these entities at least four times (2005b, pp. 37, 42, 45, 48). In *World Poverty and Human Rights: Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms* (Pogge 2008), there are numerous references to them (Pogge 2008, pp. 6, 8, 28, 29, 30, 31, 116, 117, 118, 121, 147, 234). Nowhere in these works (or, to my knowledge, anywhere else) does Pogge explain exactly ‘who’ or ‘what’ these elites or cliques are composed of.²⁸ This is problematic given the very prominent role that Pogge attributes to these entities in his preferred explanation of the causes of global poverty. How many members do

marker for girls, a demarcation in societies that prescribe early marriage, and often ends their education.” In 2008, Afghanistan had a GPI of 0.7 (gross enrollment ratio in primary education). See <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTEDUCATION/0,contentMDK:20573961~menuPK:282404~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:282386,00.html> (accessed February 21, 2012).

27. Consider, for example, the following two passages. “I believe that the causes of the wealth of a people and the forms it takes lie in their political culture and in the religious, philosophical, and moral traditions that support the basic structure of their political and social institutions, as well as in the industriousness and corporate talents of its members, all supported by their political virtues” (Rawls 1999, p. 108). “Most very poor communities have abysmal levels of sanitation, and many nowadays are subject to diseases such as AIDS that have virtually nothing to do with any of the preceding. Unfortunately, helping people out who have those problems is not mostly a technical matter, and is not very easily helped much, at least at the outset, by sheer freedom of trade. Teaching such people the basics of sanitation (or in the case of AIDS, of sexual precautions or restraints) is enormously difficult, not technically but culturally; and it is a major challenge to try to cope with the problems that human obstacles to progress present” (Narveson 2005b, p. 407).
28. Pogge is not alone in making use of an unspecified notion of economic/societal elite. In an article defending the proposition that the political pursuit of global justice is not a worthy goal, Kukathas uses such a notion numerous times (Kukathas 2006, pp. 8, 10, 11, 12, 20, 27).

these 'elites' or 'cliques' have? Is the ruling economic elite of, say, Nigeria (or any other developing country Pogge wishes to invoke as empirical support for his analysis) made up by a handful of people, 1000 people, 1%, 5%, or 10% of the overall adult (over 18) population?

Assume that Pogge offers a narrow definition of what the ruling elite of country *x* is (say, a definition to the effect that this entity is composed of less than 1% of the overall adult population). The problem with this suggestion is that it is implausible that a group of this size can control a whole country and single-handedly cause all the ills that Pogge attributes to the ruling elite (together with the global institutional system). Effective control over a country requires control over at least a significant part of the country's judiciary system, legislative body, central bank system, armed forces, and police force. I suggest that in so far as judges, members of the legislative body, central bankers, officers, and privates in the police and armed forces are under the control of, and actively cooperate with, a single strongman and/or family/clan, these individuals are, in a relevant sense, members of the ruling elite. Such people cannot be said to be part of those victimized masses over which the ruling elite holds sway.

Moreover, many of these people have wives/husbands and adult offspring that explicitly accept (or at least implicitly accept in the sense of not actively opposing) the activities and/or political/economic goals of their husband/wife/parent. The people in this third tier are also members, in a relevant sense, of the ruling elite. The same is true of business owners and entrepreneurs (and cooperating, adult family members) that actively cooperate with, and benefit economically from business transactions with, institutions (e.g., the army and the police force) that are controlled by the nefarious dictator/clan/family. By now, members of the ruling elite are so legion that they are likely to constitute more than 1% of *x*'s overall, adult population.²⁹

Assume that Pogge offers a broad definition of what a ruling elite of country *x* is (say, a definition to the effect that this entity is composed of 10% of the overall adult population). From Pogge's perspective, the problem with such a definition is that whatever blame for material involvement in the generation of poverty that Pogge wants to lay at the feet of this entity is a blame that has to be distributed on so many people that it is no longer reasonable to talk (as Pogge does), sans phrase, about the general population of *x* simply being victim of the actions of the global institutional system and a small group of (evil) domestically located people that somehow hovers over the general population and performs its poverty-causing tricks. On a broad definition of a ruling elite,

29. Consider, for example, Nigeria. The adult population of Nigeria is 76,693 million (http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nigeria_statistics.html#68, accessed February 21, 2012). Active duty personnel in the three Nigerian armed services total approximately 76,000 (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2836.htm>, accessed February 21, 2012). As of 2007, the Nigerian police force had 371,800 members (<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/48d2237ac.html>, accessed February 21, 2012]. In combination, the Nigerian armed forces and police force have 447,800 members. Assuming that 75% of these members have a spouse that do not actively oppose the political and/or economic goals of their husband/wife, the ruling elite of Nigeria is (without taking into account members of the other aforementioned groups that are part of the country's ruling elite) made up by more than 1% of the overall adult population (more precisely, it has 783,650 members).

it becomes reasonable to say that a very significant part of the general adult population of *x* plays an active role in the causing of *x*'s poverty.³⁰

It is, of course, open to Pogge to suggest some other definition of a country's ruling elite. The general, theoretical point should, however, be clear by now. The smaller Pogge wants to make the ruling elite, the less likely it is that this entity can accomplish the poverty-generating feats that Pogge attributes to it. The bigger Pogge wants to make the ruling elite, the more substance there is to the claim that the global poor are implicated in their own poverty to an extent that is not properly reflected in Pogge's analysis.

The critique of Pogge suggested in this section does not entail, and should not be taken to be a sign that I endorse or seek to revive, explanatory nationalism. I join Pogge and Cohen in rejecting this type of nationalism and the associated purely domestic poverty thesis.³¹ One reason as to why explanatory nationalism is false has to do with the various protectionist measures that are allowed to exist under the current global trade system. Let me end this paper by mentioning an aspect of Pogge's overall analysis of global justice and world poverty that is correct, is to the point, and provides ample justification for the rejection of explanatory nationalism. Pogge is right to criticize those political institutions, be it individual country governments or groups of country governments such as the European Union (EU) or the WTO, that implement and uphold trade policies that restrict free trade between developed and developing countries. Echoing a number of writers who have commented on Pogge's work, much more than what is currently being done by the relevant institutions could and *should* be done in terms of eradicating agricultural subsidies to developed world produces and developed world import tariffs on goods and services commonly produced in developing countries (Jamieson 2005, p. 168; Kukathas 2006, p. 26; Narveson 2005a, p. 337). Pogge suggests correctly that in upholding trade policies that allow for these phenomena, the relevant political institutions are actively preventing members of the global poor from reaping the important economic benefits that follow in the wake of doing trade with relatively affluent countries.³²

30. For example, 10% of Nigeria's adult population is a group of people numbering more than 7.6 million.

31. There is ample logical space to occupy between the rejection of explanatory nationalism and rejection of Pogge's position on the causes of global poverty. The conventional thesis expresses one such position.

32. In 2010, farm subsidies under the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy amounted to €43.8 billion (<http://www.civitas.org.uk/eufacts/FSPOL/AG3.htm>, accessed February 21, 2012). US government payments on overall trading-distorting support amounted to US \$18.9 billion in 2005 (<http://ictsd.org/i/news/bridgesweekly/6567/>, accessed February 21, 2012). In 2010 (183), Pogge cites a report from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development stating that reform of the international trade system with its various trade distortive features (domestic subsidies, tariffs, etc.) could result in an annual extra earning to developing countries of US \$700 billion. The report Pogge cites is available here: http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/trd1999_en.pdf (accessed February 21, 2012). There is significant disagreement between Pogge and Cohen with respect to how big of an advantage to the developing world a comprehensive liberalization of world trade will yield. Cohen suggests that a complete elimination of all trade barriers in agriculture and manufacturing will produce a US \$22 billion gain (Cohen 2010, p. 27). I am in no position to evaluate which of these claims is closest to the truth.

Leaving to one side the important issue raised by Reitberger (2008, p. 386) of whether or not, say, the US government can rightfully be said to (partly) constitute the global *institutional* order, it is quite hard to see how this government and the EU (and those individuals who actively support these political institutions and do not work for changes in relevant trade policy) in any strong sense can be said to be friends of the global poor.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Varun Gauri, Judith Lichtenberg, David Schmidtz, and two anonymous referees from *Analytic Philosophy* for very helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper.

References

- Al-Mugahed, Leen, *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, October 2008, 86 (10).
- G. Brock, "Recent Work on Rawls's Law of Peoples: Critics Versus Defenders," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 47 (2010), pp. 85–101.
- N. Chandhoke, "How Much Is Enough, Mr Thomas? How Much Will Ever Be Enough?," in A. Jaggard (ed.), *Thomas Pogge and His Critics* (Polity Press, 2010), pp. 66–83.
- J. Cohen, "Philosophy, Social Science, Global Poverty," in A. Jaggard (ed.), *Thomas Pogge and His Critics* (Polity Press, 2010), pp. 18–45.
- R. Cruft, "Human Rights and Positive Duties," *Ethics and International Affairs*, 19 (2005), pp. 29–37.
- G. Cullity, *The Moral Demands of Affluence* (Clarendon Press and Oxford University Press, 2004).
- S. Dixon, S. McDonald, and J. Roberts, "The Impact of HIV and AIDS on Africa's Economic Development," *BMJ*, 324 (2002), pp. 232–234.
- A.S. Elmi, *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, 8 (1983), pp. 163–176.
- L. Fuller, "Poverty Relief, Global Institutions, and the Problem of Compliance," *Journal of Moral Philosophy*, 2 (2005), pp. 285–97.
- P. Gilabert, "The Duty to Eradicate Global Poverty: Positive or Negative?," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 7 (2005), pp. 537–50.
- N. Hassoun, "World Poverty and Individual Freedom," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 45 (2008), pp. 191–8.
- A. Hollis and T. Pogge, *The Health Impact Fund: Making New Medicines Accessible to All* (Incentives for Global Health, 2008).
- S.H. Hounton, H. Carabin, and N.J. Henderson, "Towards an Understanding of Barriers to Condom Use in Rural Benin Using the Health Belief Model: A Cross Sectional Survey," *BMC Public Health*, 5 (2005), pp. 1471–2458.
- R. Huseby, "Duties and Responsibilities towards the Poor," *Res Publica*, 14 (2008), pp. 1–18.
- A. Jaggard (ed.), *Thomas Pogge and His Critics* (Polity Press, 2010).
- D. Jamieson, "Duties to the Distant: Aid, Assistance, and Intervention in the Developing World," *Journal of Ethics*, 9 (2005), pp. 151–70.
- C. Kukathas, "The Mirage of Global Justice," *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 23 (2006), pp. 1–28.
- J. Lichtenberg, "Negative Duties, Positive Duties, and the 'New Harms'," *Ethics*, 120 (2010), pp. 557–78.
- J. Narveson, "Welfare and Wealth, Poverty and Justice in Today's World," *Journal of Ethics*, 8 (2005a), pp. 305–48.
- , "Is World Poverty a Moral Problem for the Wealthy?," *Journal of Ethics*, 8 (2005b), pp. 397–408.
- R. Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Basic Books, 1974).
- G. Overland, "Poverty and the Moral Significance of Contribution," *Journal of Moral Philosophy*, 2 (2005), pp. 299–315.

- A. Patten, "Should We Stop Thinking about Poverty in Terms of Helping the Poor?" *Ethics and International Affairs*, 19 (2005), pp. 19–27.
- T. Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights: Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms* (Polity Press, 2002).
- , "Symposium. World Poverty and Human Rights," *Ethics and International Affairs*, 19 (2005a), pp. 1–7.
- , "Real World Justice," *Journal of Ethics*, 9 (2005b), pp. 29–53.
- , "Human Rights and Global Health: A Research Program," *Metaphilosophy*, 36 (2005c), pp. 182–209.
- , *World Poverty and Human Rights: Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms*, 2nd ed. (Polity Press, 2008).
- , "Developing Morally Plausible Indices of Poverty and Gender Equity: A Research Program," *Philosophical Topics*, 37 (2009), pp. 199–221.
- , "Responses to the Critics," in A. Jaggar (ed.), *Thomas Pogge and His Critics* (Polity Press, 2010), pp. 175–250.
- M. Ravallion, "How Not to Count the Poor: A Reply to Reddy and Pogge," in S. Anand, P. Segal, and J. Stiglitz, *Debates on the Measurement of Global Poverty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 66–101.
- J. Rawls, *The Law of Peoples: with The Idea of Public Reason Revisited* (Harvard University Press, 1999).
- S.G. Reddy and T. Pogge, "How Not to Count the Poor!—A Reply to Ravallion," in S. Anand, P. Segal and J. Stiglitz, *Debates on the Measurement of Global Poverty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 42–85.
- M. Reitberger, "Poverty, Negative Duties and the Global Institutional Order," *Politics, Philosophy and Economics*, 7 (2008), pp. 379–402.
- M. Risse, "Do We Owe the Global Poor Assistance or Rectification?" *Ethics and International Affairs*, 19 (2005), pp. 9–18.
- D. Satz, "What Do We Owe the Global Poor," *Ethics and International Affairs*, 19 (2005), pp. 47–54.
- D. Schmitz, "Islands in a Sea of Obligation: Limits of the Duty to Rescue," *Law and Philosophy*, 19 (2000), pp. 683–705.
- H. Shue, *Basic Rights: Subsistence, Affluence, and US Foreign Policy* (Princeton University Press, 1980).
- P. Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 1 (1972), pp. 229–43.
- , *The Life You Can Save* (Picador, 2009).
- L. Temkin, "Thinking about the Needy, Justice, and International Organizations," *Journal of Ethics*, 8 (2005a), pp. 349–95.
- , "Thinking about the Needy: A Reprise," *Journal of Ethics*, 8 (2005b), pp. 409–58.
- P.K. Unger, *Living High and Letting Die: Our Illusion of Innocence* (Oxford University Press, 1996).
- UNICEF, *Gender Achievements and Prospects in Education: The GAP Report (Part One)* (UNICEF, 2005).