Severe Poverty as a Human Rights Violation

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Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25) —

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 28, cf. Article 22).

There is no doubt that freedom from severe poverty is among the most important human interests. We are physical beings who need access to safe food and water, clothing, shelter, and basic medical care in order to live well — indeed, in order to live at all.

People living in severe poverty lack secure access to sufficient quantities of these basic necessities. This sentence presupposes a narrow, absolute, and somewhat vague definition of severe poverty which, I think, suffices for the purposes of this essay. Even on such a narrow definition, which corresponds very roughly to the World Bank’s “$2/day” international poverty line, nearly half of all human beings alive today are living in severe poverty, with many of them falling far below the threshold. The effects of such widespread severe poverty are staggering: “Two out of five children in the developing world are stunted, one in three is underweight and one in ten is wasted.” Some 250 million children between 5 and 14 do wage work outside their household — often under harsh or cruel conditions: as soldiers, prostitutes, or domestic servants, or in agriculture, construction, textile or carpet

1 In 2001, out of a total of 6,160 million human beings (www.census.gov/ipc/www/worldpop.html) some 2,736 million are reported to have lived below $2/day, and nearly 1,100 million of these below the $1/day international poverty line (www.worldbank.org/research/povmonitor). These two poverty lines are defined in terms of a monthly income with the same purchasing power as $65.48 and $32.74 had in the US in 1993 (Chen and Ravallion 2001, 285) and correspond today (2004) to $1028 and $514 per person per year in the US (www.bls.gov/cpi/home.htm). Those below the higher line are said to fall 42 percent below it on average, and those below the lower line fall 28.4 percent below it on average (Chen and Ravallion 2004, Tables 3 and 6, dividing the poverty gap index by the headcount index). The former have about 1.3 percent of global income, the latter 0.32 percent. By contrast, the gross national incomes of the most affluent countries containing 15.6 percent of the world’s population sum to 80.6 percent of the global product (World Bank 2004, 253).

It is likely that the World Bank significantly understates the extent of global poverty when it uses general-consumption purchasing power parities (PPPs) to translate its international poverty lines into other currencies and national price indices to translate the resulting national poverty lines into other years. The mistake is, in both cases, that a poor household’s purchasing power vis-à-vis consumption goods in general tends to overstate this household’s purchasing power vis-à-vis basic necessities. See www.socialanalysis.org for detailed discussion and estimation of the errors involved.

2 FAO 1999, 11.
production.³ Some 799 million human beings are undernourished, 1,000 million lack access to safe water, 2,400 million lack access to basic sanitation, and 876 million adults are illiterate.⁴ More than 880 million lack access to basic health services.⁵ Approximately 1,000 million have no adequate shelter and 2,000 million no electricity.⁶ Roughly one third of all human deaths, some 50,000 daily or 18 million per year, are due to poverty-related causes, easily preventable through better nutrition, safe drinking water, drugs and vaccines, cheap re-hydration packs and antibiotics.⁷ “Worldwide 34,000 children under age five die daily from hunger and preventable diseases.”⁸

Despite the undisputed great importance of such basic necessities for human life, there is no agreement on whether human beings have a right, or human right, to the necessities of life. To address this disagreement, one must distinguish between the legal and the moral question. Supranational, national, and subnational systems of law create various human rights. The content of these rights and of any corresponding legal obligations and burdens depends on the legislative, judicial, and executive bodies that maintain and interpret the laws in question. In the aftermath of World War II, it has come to be widely acknowledged that there are also moral human rights, whose validity is independent of any and all governmental bodies. In their case, in fact, the dependence is thought to run the other way: Only if they respect moral human rights do any governmental bodies have legitimacy, that is, the capacity to create moral obligations to comply with, and the moral authority to enforce, their laws and orders.

Human rights of both kinds can coexist in harmony. Whoever cares about moral human rights will grant that laws can greatly facilitate their realization. And human rights lawyers can acknowledge that the legal rights and obligations they draft and interpret are meant to give effect to pre-existing moral rights. In fact, this acknowledgement seems implicit in the common phrase ‘internationally recognized human rights’. It is clearly expressed in the Preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which presents this Declaration as stating moral human rights that exist independently of itself. This acknowledgement bears stressing because the distinction between moral and legal human rights is rarely drawn clearly. Many are therefore inclined to believe that our human rights are whatever governments declare them to be. This may be true of legal human rights. But it is false, as these governments have themselves acknowledged, of moral human rights. Governments may have views on what moral human rights there are — their (legally non-

³ The UN International Labor Organization (ILO) reports that “some 250 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 are working in developing countries — 120 million full time, 130 million part time” (www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/simpoc/stats/4stt.htm). Of these, 170.5 million children are involved in hazardous work and 8.4 million in the “unconditionally worst” forms of child labor, which involve slavery, forced or bonded labor, forced recruitment for use in armed conflict, forced prostitution or pornography, or the production or trafficking of illegal drugs (ILO 2002, 9, 11, 17, 18).

⁴ UNDP 2003, 87, 9, 6. Most of those suffering these deprivations are female (ibid. 310-30).

⁵ UNDP 1999, 22.

⁶ UNDP 1998, 49.

⁷ Cf. FAO 1999 and UNICEF 2002. Two thirds of these are deaths of children. For the frequency of specific causes of deaths see WHO 2004, Annex Table 2.

⁸ USDA 1999, iii. The US government mentions this fact whilst arguing that the developed countries should not follow the FAO proposal to increase development assistance for agriculture by $6 billion annually, that $2.6 billion is ample (ibid., Appendix A).
binding) endorsement of the UDHR expresses one such view. But even all governments together cannot legislate such rights out of existence.

In this essay, I am exclusively concerned with whether and under what conditions severe poverty violates human rights in the moral sense. For this to be possible at all, there must be some human right(s) to basic necessities. The fundamental importance of basic necessities for any human life supports the claim that there are such human rights. But this claim is controversial nonetheless.

Those who contest it often argue as follows: Because rights entail duties, a right to basic necessities can be plausible only if the duties correlative to this right are plausible as well. But it is not plausible to postulate such correlative duties. It is not plausible to hold everyone responsible for supplying basic necessities to all other human beings who need them. Nearly all of us do much less than we might do toward helping persons in life-threatening poverty. Perhaps some of us do too little. But it is not seriously wrong, morally, to spend some of one’s income on movie tickets and birthday presents, even when this money could be used to protect people elsewhere from starvation. It is surely unacceptable to describe people who do this as human rights violators. Hence there is no human right to basic necessities.

Arguments of this sort make two valid points: that a right is plausible only if the duties correlative to it are plausible as well; and that an open-ended duty to supply basic necessities to any other human beings who need them is not plausible. The argument fails nonetheless because of two interrelated mistakes.

The first mistake is to assume that we already know what the right in question is a right to. We know, of course, that we are discussing a right to basic necessities. But rights are addressed to agents and, in the final analysis, are rights to particular conduct (actions and/or omissions). And the brief description — “right to basic necessities” — does not specify what claims the holder of this right has on the conduct of which other agents. This lack of specificity is shared by other human rights. Thus, consider an uncontroversial human right, such as the right to freedom from torture. Again, its brief description does not tell us what this right binds other agents to do or not to do. Presumably it obligates them not to practice torture. But does it also obligate them to prevent torture by others (domestically, and also worldwide) or to help make torture illegal (under domestic and/or international law)?

The second, related mistake involves a false inference. It is true that a human right to basic necessities, on some specifications of it, entails implausible duties. It follows that we should reject a human right to basic necessities so understood. But the argument draws a stronger conclusion, namely that there is no (plausible specification of a) human right to basic necessities. This stronger conclusion is unwarranted, because there may be other formulations of such a human right which do not entail the duties shown to be implausible.

This is not a merely theoretical possibility. We can surely think of real-world cases where severe poverty is caused by the violation of a stringent moral duty. Think of a brutal monarch or dictator who, in order to improve his finances, issues a decree that requires farmers to surrender half their produce to the state for export. As he could easily foresee, many of his subjects starve to death as a consequence of reduced food supply and increased food prices. It is perfectly plausible to say that his conduct violates a stringent moral duty to these people. And we can then specify the human right to basic necessities correlatively: as a right not to be treated in ways that will foreseeably and avoidably deprive
one of one’s livelihood. So specified, the right does not entail the implausible duties considered earlier.

The main lesson from these introductory remarks is that it is inadvisable to begin with a debate about the pros and cons of accepting a human right to basic necessities. This question is too crude by assuming we already understand what the content of this right would be. Instead, we should first think about the various dimensions in which such a right can be differently specified. Diverse specifications of a human right to basic necessities differ in what claims the right-holder has on the conduct of others. By examining which such claims and correlative duties are plausible, we can try to specify the right so that it protects human beings from severe poverty as far as possible without making unreasonable demands on other agents.

The debate about subsistence rights is often conceived and conducted as one that is about whether any such rights exist at all. But this is a misconception. Even conservatives and libertarians, who typically present themselves as rejecting subsistence rights, will recognize as human rights violations state policies that foreseeably and avoidably produce life-threatening poverty — Stalin’s policies during 1930-33, for example, which deliberately caused some 7-10 million famine deaths among peasants (mostly in the Ukraine) whom he considered enemies of his regime.

The debate is better framed, then, as one about the range of a human right to basic necessities. What claims does this right give its holders against other agents? What correlative duties does it impose upon others? Under what conditions does severe poverty manifest a human rights violation, and which agents are then responsible for such violation? In response to these questions, conservatives and libertarians advocate a tight range. They hold that severe poverty rarely manifests a human rights violation, that in human history very few agents have violated the human right to basic necessities (as they want to specify it). Others assert a broader range for the right in question. Let us see how one can make progress toward resolving such disagreement.

1. Factors in the Causal Explanation of Severe Poverty

It is hard to imagine a case of torture which does not involve a violation of the human right not to be tortured. When human beings are tortured, there are torturers as well as, often, additional agents who order, authorize, monitor, or allow the ordeal. Clearly, severe poverty is different. A person or group may encounter life-threatening poverty that other agents have not causally contributed to and cannot even alleviate. The relevant analogue to torture is then not poverty, but rather a certain kind of impoverishment that other agents are causally and morally responsible for. To clarify this idea, we must discuss the possible causes of poverty and then identify the cases in which agents culpably play a causal role. There are various ways in which agents may be causally related to the severe poverty of others. Let me paradigmatically examine three types of such relations.

1.1 Causes of Type One: Acts (Interactional Harms)

A straightforward case of interactional harm is one where persons act in such a way that they foreseeably and avoidably deprive others of their livelihood. People living upstream pollute the river, thereby poisoning the fish on which people downstream depend for nourishment or income. One might deem this a clear-cut human right violation, provided the
people upstream understand the likely effects of their conduct and also have a reasonable alternative (so that their own survival does not require their pollution of the river).

Straightforward cases of this sort are rare in the modern age. Severe poverty in our world typically involves many cooperating causes. This complicates the picture. For, even if it can be shown that some particular act caused starvation, the agent can point to other causally relevant factors without which her act would not have had this terrible effect. Thus, malnutrition caused by UN sanctions against Iraq can be excused by pointing out that they had this effect only because of Saddam Hussein’s policies. These policies (expending state resources on palaces and the military) can likewise be excused by saying that they would not have caused malnutrition but for the sanctions.

Often the cooperating causes include not merely acts by other agents, but also the rules under which these agents operate. A bank repossesses a bankrupt farm, leaving the family who owned it destitute and homeless. The bank officials might excuse their conduct by blaming the resulting poverty on the bankruptcy laws, which permit the creditors to take everything. If we do not take full advantage of the law, they might add, we cannot compete with other banks and thus would eventually go bankrupt ourselves.

The presence of many cooperating causes makes it harder to assign responsibility in another way as well: by reducing visibility, that is, the ability of agents to foresee the remoter effects of what they do. It is a commonplace that we now live in a heavily interdependent world in which the effects of one agent’s conduct can reverberate around the globe. This is not true merely of the conduct of a few influential governments, corporations, agencies, and individuals. It holds for all those affluent enough significantly to participate in market transactions: as shoppers or investors, for example, or as employers or employees. Many of our daily economic decisions affect the livelihoods of other people: of salespeople, waiters, store owners, or of managers and shareholders of corporations whose products we buy. These effects may be negligible, for the most part. But the impact of our economic transactions does not stop there, because these transactions also influence the decisions of store owners, managers, etc., in ways that affect the livelihoods of yet further people. Our tastes and preferences as consumers influence which coffees, fruits, flowers, toys, T-shirts, or computers are imported in what quantities and where tourist destinations are developed abroad. Such decisions in turn affect employment opportunities in poor countries and thus can have a profound impact on the livelihoods of families there. Given the extreme vulnerability of many poor people abroad, a change in fashions in an affluent country can easily save hundreds of lives by providing desperately needed employment and can just as easily kill hundreds of children prematurely by throwing their parents out of work. In fact, it can have both effects simultaneously by shifting demand from one factory in the developing world to another.

It is quite impossible to know which of our decisions have such effects on people in the poor countries, and what their effects are exactly. This is unknowable because, as they reverberate around the globe, the effects of my economic decision intermingle with the effects of billions of decisions made by others, and it is quite impossible to try to disentangle, even ex post, the impact of my decision from this vast traffic by trying to figure out how things would have gone had I acted differently. This is impossible, because my decisions have their impact, in very large part, by affecting the later situations of other agents and the decisions they will then make (which in turn influence the situations and decisions of yet further agents, and so on). These indirect effects are not only too numerous to trace. They are also, in most cases, impossible to estimate, because one cannot deduce
from what persons did in the situations they actually encountered what they would have
done in the different situations they would have encountered had I acted differently.

It is highly likely that any affluent person has been involved in ordinary market transactions
that have caused deaths or saved lives. This is not a comfortable reflection. We may be
tempted to banish it quickly with the thought that, over time, the numbers of deaths caused
and lives saved by one’s ordinary market transactions probably tend to net out to zero: It
comes out in the wash, as they say. But this thought cannot give comfort when we think of
those we affect as individual human beings rather than as some vast homogeneous mass.
Insofar as we understand it and feel it, the reflection remains disturbing and gives us moral
reason to work for a world in which there are not hundreds of millions living on the brink of
an early death from starvation or easily curable diseases.

But this reflection cannot give us moral reason to make our ordinary economic decisions in
such a way as to avoid aggravating anyone’s severe poverty. It makes no sense to endorse
this aim because we cannot possibly live up to it. In the present world it is completely
beyond the capacity of affluent individuals to shape their economic conduct so as to avoid
causing any poverty deaths in the poor countries. Adopting this aim could produce feelings
of guilt and anxiety in such agents, but it could not possibly achieve its point: It could not
ensure that our ordinary economic transactions cause no severe harm in the poor
countries.

In the present world, even the most important remoter effects of the conduct of typical
citizens of the affluent countries cannot be known — even afterwards, let alone in advance.
This pervasive feature of modern economic systems shifts attention from the
responsibilities of individual agents to that of other causal factors affording sufficient
visibility. Among these may be larger, collective agents who have superior informational
capacities and often make decisions closer to the impact of harm — multinational
corporations, for instance, who operate production or resource extraction facilities in poor
countries. The executives of such a corporation can easily find out about whether pollution
from their plants is causing disease, for example, or whether the wages paid to those
making its products are inadequate or how vulnerable they would be in the event of
dismissal. The fact that such executives often do not bother to find out does not render the
impact of their decisions any less foreseeable.

Suppose a corporation running a mining operation in a poor country pipes its toxic wastes
into a nearby river, causing predictable severe harms downstream where people depend on
this river for water and food. This would seem to be a clear-cut violation of the human right
to basic necessities. Somewhat less clear-cut is the case of a corporate decision that
foreseeably causes unemployment, with dire consequences, among very poor people.
Thus, a corporation may close a factory to shift production to an even cheaper location, for
instance, or it may buy up land while evicting existing sharecroppers. These cases are
more difficult, because the corporate decision may seem like a mere omission: The
corporation is not harming people, it is merely withdrawing a benefit. And the same may be
said about a corporation that pays its workers so little as to render them vulnerable to even
minor emergencies. Here too it may seem that the corporation is benefiting (or surely not
harming) these workers by giving them an employment option they would not otherwise
have.

Yet, the larger context in which the fired workers, the evicted sharecroppers, and the
underpaid workers are placed may be marred by dire scarcity or grievous injustice. And this
affects the moral assessment of corporate conduct. Even if there is nothing wrong with
employing, on extremely ungenerous terms, someone who has other reasonable options, it
may be seriously wrong so to employ someone who, because of his religion or skin color, cannot find another job. By paying such a person half of what persons of different faith or color get paid in the same area for the same work, the corporation would be taking advantage of an injustice. It is unclear whether such corporate conduct amounts to a human rights violation. But we may hope to get clearer about this question by examining how this notion is related to omissions and to social institutions.

1.2 “Causes” of Type Two: Omissions (Interactional Failures to Alleviate)

Cases of this type have already been briefly mentioned. Here some agents can act so as to alleviate the severe poverty of others which they had no role in creating or maintaining.

Many reject a moral duty to help in such cases as absurd. If there were such a duty, would not affluent persons be required to give most of their incomes for poverty eradication efforts in the developing world? This requirement conflicts with moral convictions that are widely shared — among those who would be subject to the requirement. However, their special position with respect to the purported duty should cast doubt on the reliability of their moral intuitions. They may well have a far more vivid sense of the burden such a requirement would impose upon themselves than they have of the much greater burdens of hunger and disease it would relieve.

Moreover, the rejection as sketched commits the mistake exposed in the introduction by presenting the options in stark binary terms. Even if it is true that agents are not morally required to alleviate all life-threatening poverty they can alleviate, they may still be morally required to alleviate some. There are two obvious ways of limiting the demandingsness of such an alleviation duty. It may be tied to some special relationship between those in severe poverty and those in a position to alleviate their plight. The duty may, for instance, apply only to relatives, to people in the same neighborhood, to compatriots, or to those who, immediately confronted with severe poverty, are salient in comparison to all others also able to help. The demandingness of a duty of alleviation might also be limited by requiring only that one do one’s fair share toward poverty alleviation. This limit works not by limiting the class of poor people one must help, but by limiting how much one must do in total.

Obviously, limits of both kinds can be combined. Thus one might postulate, for example, a human right to basic necessities which gives each human being in severe poverty a claim against only her more affluent relatives that they should each do their fair share toward protecting her from severe poverty.

Still, even such a limited moral requirement may seem problematic. If you have relatives who are very poor through no fault of yours, and if you do nothing to alleviate their poverty even while you have the ability to do so, can you really then be condemned as a violator of their human rights? Most believe that the answer is no. They hold that one is not a human rights violator merely for failing to help or to protect someone whose human rights are unfulfilled or threatened. One violates human rights only if one deprives others of the objects of their human rights or actively renders their access to these objects insecure. Someone who merely fails to protect others’ secure access to the objects of their human rights is not, for this reason alone, a human rights violator.

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9 Shue 1996.
The issue is contested. Many — including some authors in this volume — have argued that human rights do impose such duties to protect and to aid. Henry Shue (though he uses the language of ‘basic rights’) is an important early example of this view, as is David Luban, who writes: “A human right, then, will be a right whose beneficiaries are all humans and whose obligors are all humans in a position to effect the right.”

I have considerable sympathies with both sides of this controversy. My moral sympathies lie with those who are appalled by how the vast majority of affluent people ignore the massive underfulfillment of human rights in the present world — even when they do not doubt that they can prevent grievous harm at low cost to themselves. I agree that such disregard is morally impermissible and profoundly wrong. Yet, my intellectual sympathies lie with those who hold that an agent’s failure at low cost to protect and to rescue others from extreme deprivation, however morally appalling, is not a human rights violation.

Much of this persistent disagreement can possibly be explained, and perhaps narrowed, by distinguishing clearly two different ways in which a human right may entail a duty. The first way is by correlativity: B’s duty not to participate in torturing A is correlative to, and in this way entailed by, A’s right not to be tortured. The second way is by presupposition: Any plausible rationale for a human right not to be tortured implies a moral duty to protect people from torture when one can do so at negligible risk or cost to oneself. There may well be duties that are entailed by human rights only in the second way: If torture is so horrible that one must not engage in it even when a great deal is at stake, then it is hard to deny that one ought to save a person from torture when one can do so at small cost. If this is indeed undeniable, then the human right entails the moral duty. But this does not show that any violation of the duty is also a violation of the human right.

This important point notwithstanding, I have no hope of resolving this disagreement here. In the interest of reaching widely sharable conclusions about when severe poverty decidedly is a human rights violation, I will assume without further argument that human rights impose only negative duties: Human rights require that agents not harm human beings in certain specific ways but they do not require that agents help or protect anyone whose human rights are unfulfilled or threatened.

It is instructive, I think, to examine severe poverty in the world today under this restrictive assumption. Such an examination informs us of the minimal constraints that one’s conduct in this world must uncontroversially meet if one is not to be a human rights violator. Of course, those who aim merely to satisfy these minimal constraints, merely to avoid violating the human rights of the poor, are not morally ambitious or admirable persons. In fact, they may fall far short of elementary human decency. But this essay is about the violation of human rights, and I will therefore leave aside all other kinds of moral criticism.

That human rights impose only negative duties means that they require only omission, not acts, and that they can be violated only by acts, not by omissions. Agents must refrain from (actively) causing others’ human rights to be unfulfilled. The distinction between acts and omissions is notoriously hard to make precise. An agent can behave (move her body) in many different ways, and it is quite hard to sort all these different possible courses of conduct into those that constitute passive omissions with regard to a certain situation and those that constitute active interference. Suppose Bob is in danger of drowning far out at sea. Jill is nearby with her boat. She sees Bob struggling in the water, but sails away. There

10 Shue 1996.
11 Luban 1985, 209.
are different ways of describing this case. On one description, Jill fails to rescue Bob and her conduct thus constitutes an omission. On another description, Jill did not remain passive, but rather actively caused the boat to sail away from Bob, thereby making it impossible for him to reach it. Those who find the first description morally significant can say that Jill did not harm Bob because he would have died even if Jill had not been on the scene at all. Jill need therefore not be mentioned in a causal account of Bob's death. Those who see the second description as the morally significant one can say that Jill harmed Bob because he would not have died had she not sailed her boat away from him. So Jill’s conduct does play a causal role in Bob’s death.

How can one resolve such disputes about what might be called the appropriate passivity baseline? For determining which course of conduct by one agent is to count as “remaining passive” with respect to another’s predicament, can we rely on how the latter would have fared in the absence of the former? In order for this idea to work, we must first decide how to “slice” the relevant agent’s conduct in the time dimension. Let me illustrate this point with another case. Suppose an infant is drowning in the bathtub with the babysitter looking on. One might say that the babysitter is purely passive and thus not causally involved in the infant’s death in any way because, if the babysitter had been absent from the scene, the infant would still have drowned. But this claim depends on selecting a certain short period of the babysitter’s conduct for examination. Selecting instead a larger timeframe that extends backward in time, we can say that the babysitter caused the death through a complex course of conduct in which he first accepted the job — making the infant’s parents believe that he would safeguard her welfare during their absence — and then failed to perform this job. Had he not been “on the scene” in this more expansive sense, then the parents would have stayed home or hired another babysitter and, either way, their child would have survived.  

This question of timeframe is highly relevant to severe poverty in the developing countries. Taking a very narrow timeframe, it may seem that the relation of the affluent countries and their citizens to poverty abroad is one of potential helpers who can at most be accused of failing to (do enough to) alleviate severe poverty, thereby failing to fulfill a merely positive duty. Taking a larger timeframe, it appears that the rich countries played a significant causal role in the recent perpetuation of severe poverty by working hard to persuade the political elites of the poor countries that the rather one-sided market opening required by the WTO Treaty would bring them faster economic growth. An even larger timeframe would bring colonization, slavery and genocide into the picture. Such a very large timeframe is often rejected as obviously absurd: How can we hold the present citizens of affluent countries responsible for crimes these countries committed fifty-plus years ago? But the same people who make this argument strangely see no problem in the present generation's being entitled to possess and defend the wealth their ancestors accumulated fifty-plus years ago — wealth accumulated in part through these very crimes committed against foreigners. Many societies owe the very land on which they exist to genocidal conquest.

The different ways of specifying timeframes and of distinguishing acts and omissions show, one might say, that there is a conventional element in the causal explanations we give. When a toddler drowns in a shallow pond, our reports would certainly mention in an explanatory vein the presence of adults nearby who did nothing to help. When street children starve in a poor slum, our reports (if this gets reported at all) would probably not mention that the tourists in the nearby hotel regard these children as a pest and ignore their

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12 See Bennett 1995 for much more detailed discussion of such considerations.
entreaties. Insofar as the conventional element in the causal explanations we give is thus informed by our moral expectations, there is the danger of circularity: We morally expect adults to help toddlers in trouble, therefore we regard the adult bystanders as a causally relevant factor in the toddler’s death, and therefore we hold the adults responsible for this death. We do not morally expect tourists to give anything to local street children, therefore we do not regard the tourists as a causally relevant factor in the children’s starvation, and therefore we do not hold those tourists responsible for any deaths among these children. What looked like a moral distinction based on an empirical one turns out to be self-validating moral prejudice.

We have caught a glimpse of how difficult it is to make the intuitive distinction between acts and omissions, between positive and negative duties, precise in a way that is morally unbiased and thus widely acceptable to persons with different views about human rights and correlative duties. One might conclude from this difficulty that no moral weight should be placed on the distinction. On such a view, conduct should be assessed by its relative impact alone: If you behaved in a way that foreseeably led to a person’s death even while you could have behaved in another way that would not have led to his death, then you are responsible for this death regardless of how active or passive, socially expected or unexpected, your actual and hypothetical alternative conduct may have been.

But this conclusion — defended by act-utilitarians and by act-consequentialists more generally — is very hard to accept. An affluent person who, in order to save $80, fails to respond to an invitation to sponsor a child in Mali with the predictable result that this child dies — such a person is not morally on a par with an affluent person who kills a child for a $80 benefit. As Wittgenstein remarked, “the fact that the border between two countries is in dispute does not put the citizenship of all their inhabitants in question.” Similarly, the fact that we cannot draw an exact line between acts and omissions, between positive and negative duties, does not mean that we cannot apply this distinction to any piece of human conduct. In most cases, agreement on how to apply the distinction can be achieved in a way that sustains the near-universal conviction that the detrimental relative impact of our acts is morally more significant than the (equal) detrimental relative impact of our omissions.

Given that this is so, there may yet be significant advantages to conceiving human rights narrowly so that they impose only negative duties. The advantages are that this narrower moral content is more widely acceptable and focuses attention more sharply on the kinds of misconduct it is most urgent to end. The insistence that any affluent person who disregards positive duties to feed, save, and rescue persons caught in life-threatening poverty through no fault of their own is a violator of their human rights leads many affluent people to dismiss out of hand a human right to basic necessities. — Of course, there is a corresponding disadvantage: that human rights narrowly conceived afford less protection to the poor and oppressed. However, we cannot assess how big a disadvantage this is in the real world without examining more closely to what extent the actual underfulfillment of human rights is due to violations of correlative negative duties and which conduct by which agents constitutes violations of these negative duties.

Concluding this subsection, let us consider the objection that my cautions are overdone. It is widely accepted, after all, that a person’s human rights impose positive duties on her government — and thereby, mediately, on her fellow citizens, who must give political and economic support to the governmental protection of human rights. It is widely accepted that

13 Wittgenstein 1976, section 556.
citizens’ human right to physical integrity gives them a moral claim against their government to operate an effective criminal justice system that deters and prevents assaults. Therefore, the objection concludes, by assuming that human rights impose only negative duties I am conceding a point that is not seriously contested, even by ardent libertarians.

My response will be developed throughout the remainder of this essay. But let me give a brief preview here. Human rights are indeed widely understood as giving persons a moral claim to protective action by their government; and I certainly do not want to compromise this understanding. But why is this moral claim thought to be limited to each person’s own state? What are we to make of the fact that human rights are not understood as giving persons similar moral claims against foreign governments and foreign citizens (who may be in a much better position, financially, to help underwrite a poor country’s criminal justice system)?

One response would hold that this common view is simply a mistake: Correctly understood, human rights do give their bearers moral claims against all human agents able to help fulfill the right. — This response leads right back into the persistent disagreement discussed above which I am trying to circumvent in this essay.

Another explanation would hold that we have here a conventional division of labor built into our understanding of human rights: The positive duties correlative to human rights will be discharged more efficiently if the bearers of these duties focus their efforts within their own country. — But this explanation is doubly implausible. It is plainly not true that the fulfillment of human rights is efficiently promoted when those whose human rights are most severely underfulfilled, the poor people in poor countries, are isolated from those best able to protect them. Moreover, this explanation leaves out what most would regard as highly relevant to the special claims persons have against their government: the fact that this government subjects those persons to the coercive authority of its rules.

This last point suggests what I think it the best explanation: A government’s positive obligation to protect the human rights of those it rules is best understood as entailed by a negative duty in much the same way as the babysitter’s positive obligation to protect the baby from drowning. The parents’ moral right imposes a general negative duty on all that they not accept and then fail to perform the babysitter job. Those who do not accept the job fulfill this duty trivially. But the man who accepted the job fulfills this negative duty only if he then performs as agreed. Likewise, a person’s human rights impose a general negative duty on all other human agents that they not participate in imposing upon her an institutional order under which, foreseeably and avoidably, she lacks secure access to some of the objects of her human rights. Those who do not so participate fulfill this duty trivially. But those who do participate in imposing an institutional order upon her fulfill this negative duty only if they see to it that the rules they help impose afford those on whom they are imposed secure access to the objects of their human rights (insofar as this is reasonably possible).

One may think that there is a significant difference between the two cases: The babysitter consents to a job description and thus to a set of specific positive obligations. But those who participate in imposing an institutional order may not want, nor believe that they ought, to safeguard the human rights of those subjected to this order. — In response, this difference is less deep than it appears. For the babysitter too may not want, nor believe that he ought, to live up to his verbal commitment. Thus, to explain that his commitment binds him, we must invoke a moral principle whose authority and content are independent of his consent.
To dispel the doubt fully, let me present another parallel case where the feature of explicit consent is lacking. We believe that your ownership rights impose a general negative duty on all others not to use your property without your permission. However, we also recognize certain emergency exceptions: I may use your car when I need it to rush someone to the hospital and I may break into your hut to save myself from a blizzard. But, when I use your property without permission in such emergency situations, I have a positive moral obligation fully to compensate you (for your gasoline and taxi expenses, or for any damage I caused to your hut). Fully spelled out, your ownership rights thus impose a general negative duty on all others not to use your property without your permission except in emergency situations with full compensation. Those who never use your property without your permission fulfill this duty trivially. But for those who, in an emergency, do use your property without your permission, the negative duty entails a positive obligation whose content is independent of their consent: They must do their best to ensure that you are fully compensated.

I believe that, in analogy to such compensation, human rights should be understood as giving rise to minimal moral claims against those who participate in imposing social institutions. Human agents are permitted to participate in imposing social institutions only if they are also willing to help ensure that the human rights of those subjected to these institutions are fulfilled insofar as this is reasonably possible.  

1.3 Cases of Type Three: Institutional Effects

The preceding two subsections both point to the great and increasing importance of social institutions. Our discussion of omissions suggests that a very important source of positive obligations with regard to severe poverty in the modern world is our negative duty not to participate in the imposition of social institutions under which some lack secure access to the objects of their economic human rights. Our discussion of acts suggests that among the causal factors that are relevant to the incidence of severe poverty and afford good visibility, institutional factors are the most important. The visibility afforded by institutional factors — by the rules governing economic interaction, most notably — is different, however, from the visibility enjoyed by corporations (as discussed above). When a government raises tax rates, for instance, the relative impact of this decision on the incidence of poverty and unemployment one or two quarters later may be predictable, at least roughly. (‘Relative impact’ here means the difference between what the incidence of unemployment will be at $t$ and what it would have been at $t$ had the government not raised tax rates.) But it is not predictable which particular persons will suffer unemployment at $t$ while they would have been employed at $t$ if tax rates had been left unchanged. Even at $t$ and thereafter it will still be unknowable who among the unemployed at $t$ would be employed at $t$ if tax rates had been left unchanged.

This kind of ignorance is problematic in the court room. We may know that the people living around a polluting factory have a five times greater chance of dying prematurely from cancer than people in general. But we cannot demonstrate that any particular cancer death was caused by the pollution — after all, this death might be among the 20 percent of cancer deaths that would have happened even in the absence of the pollution.

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14 See Pogge 2002a, chapter 2, and 2002b for more detail. While I see human rights as the weightiest moral constraints on the imposition of an institutional order, I leave open here whether there are other such constraints and, if so, what they are. Different conceptions of social justice will differ on these points.
From a moral standpoint, however, this ignorance is not problematic. Even if we do not know which deaths were caused by the polluting factory, we do know (at least roughly) how many. And this is quite sufficient input for moral assessment. Recall the rules Stalin imposed on the USSR economy in 1930-33, which caused some 10 million famine deaths among peasants. Even if we cannot say with certainty of any of the men, women, and children who died during this period that he or she would have survived had Stalin not imposed his noxious economic structure, we can nonetheless be quite sure that there would have been about 10 million fewer deaths under more reasonable economic institutions. We know that Stalin’s policies caused excess poverty and excess mortality from poverty-related causes, and we can quantify these excesses — albeit roughly, to be sure. This is all we need to know in order to judge that Stalin’s policies killed about 10 million people.

In the modern world, the rules governing economic transactions — both nationally and internationally — are the most important causal determinants of the incidence and depth of poverty. They are most important because of their great impact on the economic distribution within the jurisdiction to which they apply. Thus, even relatively minor variations in a country’s laws governing tax rates, labor relations, social security, and access to health care and education can have a much greater impact on poverty than even large changes in the policies of a major corporation or in the habits of individual economic behavior. Because global economic inequality is vastly greater than economic inequality within any country, this point applies even more strongly to the rules of the global economic order. Even small changes in the rules governing international trade, lending, investment, resource use, or intellectual property can have a huge impact on the global incidence of life-threatening poverty.

A second reason why rules governing economic transactions are the most important causal determinants of the incidence and depth of poverty in the modern world derives from their greater visibility. To be sure, like the conduct of individual and collective agents, rule changes can have unintended and even unforeseeable effects. But with rules it is much easier to diagnose such effects and to make corrections. Assessing adjustments of the rules within some particular jurisdiction is relatively straightforward: One can try to estimate how a rise in the minimum wage, say, has affected the unemployment rate and per capita income in the bottom quintile. (Of course, there are other things happening in the economy besides the change in the minimum wage, so the exercise is complex and imprecise. Still, exercises of this sort can be done, and are done, sufficiently well in many countries.) It is more difficult, by contrast, to assess the relative impact of variations in the conduct of individual or collective agents. Such an assessment can be confined to the persons immediately affected — for example, to the employees of a corporation or to the inhabitants of a town in which an aid agency is running a project. But such a confined assessment is vulnerable to the charge of ignoring indirect effects upon outsiders. For example, when an aid agency distributes food in an impoverished town, dramatically improving the health of the townspeople, it can be claimed that the importation of free food reduced food prices in the larger region, thereby impoverishing peasants and reducing the incentives to grow food. In response to such a charge, one can try to assess the impact of the aid project upon the nutritional situation of the whole country within a timeframe of five years, say. But within this larger space, the aid project is a small factor whose effects are extremely hard to discern against the background noise of many other causal factors.

A third reason why rules governing economic transactions are the most important causal determinants of the incidence and depth of poverty in the modern world is because morally
successful rules are so much easier to sustain than morally successful conduct. This is so, because individual and collective agents are under continuous counter-moral pressures not merely from their ordinary self-interested concerns, but also from their competitive situation as well as from considerations of fairness. These phenomena are illustrated by the case of competing corporations, each of which may judge that it cannot afford to pass up immoral opportunities to take advantage of its employees and customers because such unilateral self-restraint would place it at an unfair competitive disadvantage vis-à-vis its less scrupulous competitors. Domestically, this sort of problem can be solved through changes in the legal rules that require all corporations, on pains of substantial penalties, to observe common standards in their treatment of customers and employees. Corporations are often quite willing to support such legislation (to improve the image of their industry, perhaps) even while they are quite unwilling to risk their competitive position through voluntary unilateral good behavior. Similar considerations apply in the international arena, where corporations and governments compete economically. Given their concern not to fall behind in this competition and not to be unfairly handicapped through unilateral moral efforts and restraints, it is perhaps not surprising that individuals, corporations, and governments are reluctant to make even tiny efforts toward eradicating global poverty. (Individuals and corporations in the affluent countries donate about $7 billion annually for this purpose,\textsuperscript{15} roughly 0.028 percent of the aggregate gross national incomes of these countries.\textsuperscript{16} An additional $4.31 billion annually, 0.017 percent of aggregate GNI, are provided by rich-country governments in official development assistance for basic social services.\textsuperscript{17}) Again, it is possible that governments and corporations could be brought to do a lot more by accepting and complying with legal rules that apply to their competitors as well and thereby relieve the relevant agents of the fear that their compliance will unfairly disadvantage them and cause them to lose ground against their competitors.

To be sure, this thought is not new, and governments have been very reluctant to commit themselves, even in joint mutuality, to serious global anti-poverty measures. Their solemn promise to halve global poverty by 2015 has been reiterated — in ever weaker formulations\textsuperscript{18} — but has yet to result in serious implementation efforts. Official

\textsuperscript{15} UNDP 2003, 290.
\textsuperscript{16} World Bank 2004, 253.
\textsuperscript{17} See http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/mi/mi_series_results.asp?rowId=592. This is about 7.4 percent of all “official development assistance” (2002). The remainder is spent to benefit agents more capable of reciprocation — domestic firms, for example, or strategically important governments. Thus, the US government, for instance, proclaims with disarming frankness: “The principal beneficiary of America's foreign assistance programs has always been the United States. Close to 80 percent of the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID's) contracts and grants go directly to American firms. Foreign assistance programs have helped create major markets for agricultural goods, created new markets for American industrial exports and meant hundreds of thousands of jobs for Americans” (recently removed from the USAID website). These priorities are evident when one looks where ODA goes: India, with more poor people than any other country, receives ODA of $1.50 annually for each of its citizens; the corresponding figures are $42.70 for the Czech Republic, $54.50 for Malta, $69.50 for Cyprus, $76.60 for Bahrain, and $132.40 for Israel (UNDP 2002, 203-5), whose gross national incomes \textit{per capita} are 11 to 36 times that of India (World Bank 2003, 234-5, 242). Cyprus, Bahrain, and Israel are officially rated as high-income countries (\textit{ibid.}, 243). Still even their citizens get much less international aid than the 21 million European cows, who receive EU subsidies of about $1000 each per year (www.guardian.co.uk/country/article/0,2763,798597,00.html) to the detriment of poor countries.

\textsuperscript{18} At the World Food Summit in Rome, organized by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in November 1996, the 186 participating governments agreed to “pledge our political will and our common and

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development assistance (ODA) from the affluent countries, once supposed to reach one percent, then 0.7 percent of their combined GNPs, has actually shrunk throughout the 1990’s, from 0.33 percent in 1990 to 0.22 percent in 2001.\(^1\) The commitment made at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development to allocate 20 percent of ODA to basic social services\(^2\) has also been ignored by the affluent countries which, on average, devote only 7.4 percent of their ODA ($4.31 billion in 2002) to basic social services.\(^2\)

This rather discouraging historical evidence suggests that improvements in the global economic order are difficult to achieve and difficult to sustain. However, this fact does not undermine my hypothesis that such structural improvements are easier to achieve and easier to sustain than equally significant unilateral improvements in the conduct of individual and collective agents. We know how much money individuals, corporations, and the governments of the affluent countries are now willing to set aside for global poverty eradication: about $11 billion annually. This amount is very small in comparison to the harms inflicted on the global poor by evident injustices in the existing global economic order (to be discussed in the next section). It is very small also in comparison to what would be required for substantial progress: The amount needed in the first few years of a serious offensive against poverty is closer to $300 billion annually.\(^2\) It is not realistic to hope that

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\(^1\) Cf. UNDP 2003, 290, where aggregate ODA for 2001 is given as $52.3 billion, down from $53.7 billion in 2000 (UNDP 2002, 202) and $56.4 billion in 1999 (UNDP 2001, 190). The US has led the decline by reducing ODA from 0.21 to 0.10 percent of GNP (1990-2000) in a time of great prosperity culminating in enormous budget surpluses (UNDP 2002, 202). After the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, ODA is now growing rapidly through disbursements to these and neighboring states (esp. Pakistan). ODA is reported to have been $58.3 billion for 2002 (www.oecd.org/dataoecd/3/2/22460411.pdf) and $68.5 billion for 2003 (www.oecd.org/document/22/0,2340,en_2649_37413_31504022_1_1_1_37413,00.html).

\(^2\) Programme of Action, Chapter 5, Article 88(c) (www.un.org/esa/socdev/wssd/agreements/poach5.htm): “88. Implementation of the Declaration and the Programme of Action in developing countries, in particular in Africa and the least developed countries, will need additional financial resources and more effective development cooperation and assistance. This will require: ... (c) Agreeing on a mutual commitment between interested developed and developing country partners to allocate, on average, 20 per cent of ODA and 20 per cent of the national budget, respectively, to basic social programmes.”


\(^2\) Cf. Pogge 2002a, chapter 8, basing this ballpark figure of $300 billion on the aggregate poverty gap relative to the World Bank’s higher $2/day poverty line. In other words, $300 billion is the additional income all those 2,736 million now living below $2/day would need in order to reach this threshold. Consistent with this ballpark figure, the WHO Commission on Macroeconomics and Health (chaired by Jeffrey Sachs) has estimated the cost of providing basic medical care in the developing world at $62 billion annually. They estimate that this initiative alone would prevent about 8 million deaths from poverty-related causes each year (Economist, 22 December 2001, 82-3). Amazingly, $300 billion is less than one percent of the global product (which was $32,365 billion in 2002 — World Bank 2004, 253) or about 1.2 percent of the combined gross
we can achieve such a 27-fold increase in available funds through a moral change of heart of the relevant agents: affluent individuals, major corporations, and the governments of the rich countries. It is more realistic — though admittedly still rather unrealistic — to achieve substantial progress on the poverty front through institutional reforms that make the global economic order less burdensome on the global poor. For such a reform program to gain and maintain the support of the citizens and governments of affluent countries, it must distribute costs and opportunity costs fairly among them in a reliable and transparent way, assuring them that their competitive position is not eroded through the non-compliance of others.

Within states, successful efforts to reduce poverty mostly exemplify the same model of structural reform rather than individual moral effort. There are three obvious reasons for this. One reason is that the costs and opportunity costs each affluent citizen imposes on himself by supporting structural reform is extremely small relative to the contribution this reform makes to avoiding severe poverty. The reform lowers your family’s standard of living by $900 annually, say, while improving by $300 annually the standard of living of millions of poor families. By contrast, a unilateral donation in the same amount would lower your family’s standard of living by $900 annually while improving by $300 annually the standard of living of only three poor families. Given such pay-offs, rational agents with at least a slight moral concern for the avoidance of poverty will be far more willing to support structural reform than to sustain donations. Another reason is that structural reform assures citizens that costs and opportunity costs are fairly shared among the more affluent, as discussed. A third reason is that structural reform, once in place, need not be sustained, year after year, through painful personal decisions. Continual alleviation of poverty leads to fatigue, aversion, even contempt. It requires affluent citizens to rally to the cause again and again while knowing full well that most others similarly situated contribute nothing or very little, that their own contributions are legally optional and that, no matter how much they give, they could for just a little more always save yet further children from sickness or starvation. Today, such fatigue, aversion, and contempt are widespread attitudes among citizens and officials of affluent countries toward the “aid” they dispense and its recipients.

For these reasons, I believe that the idea of severe poverty as a human rights violation should be focused, first and foremost, on social institutions — on each country’s institutional order and also, and especially, on the global institutional order as well. Emphasizing this point is not meant to discourage efforts to work out what claims poor people have, in virtue of their social and economic human rights, directly against individual and collective agents. It is merely meant to explain why I am concentrating on the different project of working out what claims poor people have, in virtue of their social and economic human rights, on social institutions imposed upon them and thus indirectly against the individual and collective agents upholding these social institutions. In working on this project, I take inspiration from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which does not merely postulate social and economic human rights —

corporations.

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Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care (Article 25) — but also emphasizes the relevance of such social and economic human rights to the design of the national and global institutional order:

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized (Article 28, cf. Article 22).

My hypothesis is that any institutional order that foreseeably and avoidably produces an excess of severe poverty and of mortality from poverty-related causes manifests a human rights violation on the part of those who participate in imposing this order. In the present world, this hypothesis applies in particular to the global institutional order as well as to the national institutional schemes of most countries in which severe poverty occurs. In what follows, I focus on the first of these cases, on the present global institutional order. Thus I do not discuss here how some national institutional schemes foreseeably produce and aggravate severe poverty — though it would be quite interesting to analyze a few such cases in detail. 23

2. How Features of the Present Global Order Cause Massive Severe Poverty

There are good reasons for believing that, on account of the severe poverty it continuously and foreseeably produces, the present global economic order manifests an ongoing human rights violation — arguably the largest such violation ever committed in human history. It is not the graviest human rights violation, in my view, because those who commit it do not intend the death and destruction they inflict either as an end or as a means. They merely act with willful indifference to the enormous harms they cause in the course of advancing their own ends while going to great lengths to deceive the world and themselves about the impact of their conduct. But it is the largest human rights violation in human history. Since the end of the Cold War alone, some 270 million human beings — mostly children, mostly female, and mostly people of color — have died from poverty-related causes, such as starvation, diarrhea, pneumonia, tuberculosis, malaria, measles and perinatal conditions. 24

To be sure, large-scale poverty caused by human agency is certainly not unprecedented. British colonial institutions and policies are blamed for up to a million poverty deaths in the Irish Potato Famine of 1846-49 and for about three million poverty deaths in the Great Bengal Famine of 1943-44. Some 30 million poverty deaths in China during 1959-62 are traced to Mao Tse-Tung’s insistence on continuing the policies of his “Great Leap Forward” even when their disastrous effects became quite apparent. Still, these historical catastrophes were of more limited duration and even at their height did not reach the

23 There is a lot of work in this vein by development economists. Stiglitz (2002) discusses some interesting cases where IMF conditionalities required domestic institutional changes that clearly aggravated severe poverty.

24 In 2002, there were 57 million human deaths. The main causes highly correlated with poverty were (with death tolls in thousands): diarrhea (1,798) and malnutrition (485), perinatal (2,462) and maternal conditions (510), childhood diseases (1,124 — mainly measles), tuberculosis (1,566), malaria (1,272), menengitis (173), hepatitis (157), tropical diseases (129), respiratory infections (3,963 — mainly pneumonia), HIV/AIDS (2,777) and sexually transmitted diseases (180) (WHO 2004, annex table 2). Cf. also FAO 1999 and UNICEF 2002.
present and ongoing rate of 18 million poverty deaths per annum. Most of this annual death toll is easily avoidable through minor modifications in the global economic order that would entail only a slight reduction in the incomes of the affluent. Instead, the governments of the affluent countries are ruthlessly advancing their own interests, designing and imposing a global economic order that, continually and quite foreseeably, produces vast excesses of severe poverty and premature poverty deaths.

There are three main strategies for denying this charge. One can deny that variations in the design of the global economic order have any significant impact on the evolution of severe poverty worldwide. Failing this, one can claim that the present global economic order is optimal or close to optimal in terms of poverty avoidance. And, should this strategy fail as well, one can still contend that the present global economic order, insofar as it is not optimal in terms of poverty avoidance, does not cause severe poverty but merely fails to alleviate such poverty (caused by other factors) as much as it might. I will discuss these three strategies in this order.

2.1 The “Purely Domestic Poverty Thesis” (PDPT)

Those who wish to deny that variations in the design of the global economic order have a significant impact on the evolution of severe poverty explain such poverty by reference to national or local factors alone. John Rawls is a prominent example. He claims that, when societies fail to thrive, “the problem is commonly the nature of the public political culture and the religious and philosophical traditions that underlie its institutions. The great social evils in poorer societies are likely to be oppressive government and corrupt elites.”

“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 cooperative talents of its members, all supported by their political virtues. ... the political culture of a burdened society is all-important ... Crucial also is the country’s population policy.”

Accordingly, Rawls holds that our moral relation to severe poverty abroad can be exhaustively described as a “duty of assistance.”

It is well to recall briefly that existing peoples have arrived at their present levels of social, economic and cultural development through an historical process that was pervaded by enslavement, colonialism, even genocide. Though these monumental crimes are now in the past, they have left a legacy of great inequalities which would be unacceptable even if peoples were now masters of their own development. Even if the decolonized peoples of Africa had had a real opportunity, in recent decades, to achieve similar rates of economic growth as the developed countries, achieving such growth could not have helped them reduce their initial 30:1 disadvantage in per capita income. Even if, starting in 1960, African annual growth in per capita income had been a full percentage point above ours each and every year, that ratio would still be nearly 20:1 today and would not be fully erased until

25 Rawls 1993, 77 — echoing Michael Walzer: “it is not the sign for some collective derangement or radical incapacity for a political community to produce an authoritarian regime. Indeed, the history, culture, and religion of the community may be such that authoritarian regimes come, as it were, naturally, reflecting a widely shared world view or way of life” (Walzer 1980, 224-5).


27 Ibid., 37-8, 106-20.
early in the 24th century. It is unclear then whether we may simply take for granted the existing inequality as if it had come about through choices freely made within each person. Doing so, we would overlook that our enormous economic advantage is deeply tainted by how it accumulated over the course of one historical process that has devastated the societies and cultures of four continents.

But let us leave aside the continuing legacies of historical injustice and focus on the empirical view that, at least in the post-colonial era which brought impressive growth in global per capita income, the causes of the persistence of severe poverty, and hence the key to its eradication, lie within the poor countries themselves.

Many find this view compelling in light of the great variation in how the former colonies have evolved over the last forty years. Some of them have done quite well in economic growth and poverty reduction while others exhibit worsening poverty and declining per capita incomes. Is it not obvious that such strongly divergent national trajectories must be due to differing domestic causal factors in the countries concerned? And is it not clear, then, that the persistence of severe poverty has local causes?

This reasoning infers from the observed great international variations in the evolution of severe poverty first to the explanatory relevance of local (country-specific) factors and then to the irrelevance of global causal factors for explaining the evolution of severe poverty worldwide. To see the fallacy, consider this parallel: There are great variations in the performance of my students. These variations must be caused by local (student-specific) factors. These factors, together, fully explain the overall performance of my class.

Clearly, the parallel reasoning results in a falsehood: The overall performance of my class also crucially depends on the quality of my teaching and on various other “global” factors as well. This shows that the second step is invalid. To see this more precisely, one must appreciate that there are two distinct questions about the evolution of severe poverty. One question concerns observed variations in national trajectories. In the answer to this question, local factors must play a central role. Yet, however full and correct, this answer may not suffice to answer the second question, which concerns the overall evolution of poverty worldwide: Even if student-specific factors fully explain observed variations in the performance of my students, the quality of my teaching may still play a major role in explaining why they did not do much better or worse than they actually did. Likewise, even if country-specific factors fully explain the observed variations in the economic performance of the former colonies, global factors may still play a major role in explaining why they did not on the whole do much better or worse than they did in fact.

It is quite hard to doubt that this is so. In the modern world, the traffic of international and even intranational economic transactions is profoundly shaped by an elaborate system of treaties and conventions about trade, investments, loans, patents, copyrights, trademarks, double taxation, labor standards, environmental protection, use of seabed resources and much else. These different aspects of the present global economic order realize highly specific design decisions within a vast space of alternate design possibilities. It is incredible on its face that all these alternative ways of structuring the world economy would have produced the same evolution in the overall incidence and indeed in the geographical distribution of severe poverty worldwide.

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28 In fact, this ratio has increased to 40:1, showing that average annual growth in per capita income was 0.7 percent less in Africa than in the developed world.
And yet, this is the conclusion one may easily come to when one studies what the experts write about poverty. Across several academic disciplines, there is a vast literature analyzing the causal roles of the local climate, natural environment, resources, food habits, diseases, history, culture, social institutions, economic policies, leadership personalities and much else. Advice dispensed by development economists and others is also overwhelmingly focused on the design of national economic institutions and policies while taking the global institutional context as a given. Thus, libertarian economists of the “freshwater” school (so dubbed because its leading lights have taught in Chicago) argue that a country’s best way to expel human misery is economic growth and its best way to achieve economic growth is to foster free enterprise with a minimum in taxes, regulations and red tape. A competing, more left-leaning school of thought, represented by Amartya Sen, contends that poverty persists because poor countries have too little government: public schools, hospitals and infrastructure. Sen’s favorite poster child is the poor Indian state of Kerala whose socialist government has given priority to fulfilling basic needs and thereby achieved more for that population’s health, education and life expectancy than the governments of other, more affluent Indian states. These hot and worthwhile debates about appropriate economic policies and social institutions for the poor countries crowd out any inquiry into the question what causal role the rules of our globalized world economy play in the persistence of severe poverty.

This research bias among social scientists is surely partly due to bad reasons: They, and their readers, are overly impressed by dramatic international differentials in economic performance; and they, like their compatriots, feel emotionally more comfortable, and careerwise more confident, with work that traces the persistence of severe poverty abroad back to national and local causes abroad rather than to global institutional arrangements their own governments are involved in upholding. But there is also a good methodological reason for the research bias toward national and local causes: There being only this one world to observe, it is hard to obtain solid evidence about how the overall incidence of poverty would have evolved differently if this or that global factor had been different. By contrast, solid evidence about the effects of national and local factors can be gleaned from simultaneous observation of many poor countries that differ in their natural environment, history, culture, political and economic system, and government policies.

For various good and bad reasons, economists do not study how the design of the global institutional order influences the evolution of severe poverty worldwide. As a consequence, we have little evidence about the relative impact of the various features of the global order. Such lack of evidence of impact is often perceived as evidence of lack of impact. But this inference is, of course, fallacious; and, as we will see, there is enough evidence to support at least rough judgments about the causal role of global institutional factors in the persistence of severe poverty.

### 2.2 The Panglossian View of the Present Global Economic Order

Once it is accepted that different ways of structuring the world economy might well have different effects on the evolution of poverty worldwide, it becomes interesting to examine the present global economic order in respect to its relative impact on severe poverty. Here it

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30 The leftist political coalition responsible for these policies was nevertheless soundly defeated in the last assembly elections, 10 May 2001, gaining only 40 seats out of 140.
may be, and often is, claimed that we live, in this regard, in the best of all possible worlds: that the present global economic order is optimal or nearly optimal in terms of poverty avoidance.

A commonsensical way of doubting this claim might develop a counter-hypothesis in four steps: First, the interest in avoiding severe poverty is not the only interest that those who negotiate the design of particular aspects of the global economic order are sensitive to. Any such negotiators are likely to be sensitive also to the interest of their home government in its domestic political success and, partly as a consequence of this, sensitive to their compatriots’ interest in economic prosperity. Second, at least with negotiators for the more affluent states, these “nationalist” interests are not perfectly aligned with the interest in global poverty avoidance. In negotiations about the design of the global economic order, particular decisions that are best for the governments, corporations, or citizens of the affluent countries are sometimes not best in terms of poverty avoidance in the poor countries. Third, when faced with such conflicts, negotiators for the affluent states generally (are instructed to) give precedence to the interests of their own country’s government, corporations, and citizens over the interests of the global poor. Fourth, the affluent states enjoy great advantages in bargaining power and expertise. With only 13.7 percent of the world’s population, the US, EU, Japan, Canada, and Australia have over three quarters of the world’s income and can therefore exact a high price for access to their all-important markets. These advantages in bargaining power and expertise enable the affluent states and their negotiators to deflect the design of the global economic order from what would be best for poverty avoidance toward a better accommodation of the interests of the governments, corporations, and citizens of the affluent countries.

These four steps lead to the commonsensical counterhypothesis: We should expect the actual design of the global economic order to accommodate the interests of the governments, corporations, and citizens of the affluent countries at the expense of the interest in global poverty avoidance. There is a great deal of evidence that this counterhypothesis is true. Let me offer, for instance, this quote from the *Economist* magazine which — being strongly supportive of WTO globalization and having vilified, on its cover and in its editorial pages, the protesters of Seattle, Washington and Genoa as enemies of the poor — is surely not biased in my favor:

Rich countries cut their tariffs by less in the Uruguay Round than poor ones did. Since then, they have found new ways to close their markets, notably by imposing anti-dumping duties on imports they deem ‘unfairly cheap.’ Rich countries are particularly protectionist in many of the sectors where developing countries are best able to compete, such as agriculture, textiles, and clothing. As a result, according to a new study by Thomas Hertel, of Purdue University, and Will Martin, of the World Bank, rich countries’ average tariffs on manufacturing imports from poor countries are four times higher than those on imports from other rich countries. This imposes a big burden on poor countries. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimates that they could export $700 billion more a year by 2005 if rich

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countries did more to open their markets. Poor countries are also hobbled by a lack of know-how. Many had little understanding of what they signed up to in the Uruguay Round. That ignorance is now costing them dear. Michael Finger of the World Bank and Philip Schuler of the University of Maryland estimate that implementing commitments to improve trade procedures and establish technical and intellectual-property standards can cost more than a year’s development budget for the poorest countries. Moreover, in those areas where poor countries could benefit from world trade rules, they are often unable to do so. … Of the WTO’s 134 members, 29 do not even have missions at its headquarters in Geneva. Many more can barely afford to bring cases to the WTO.\(^{33}\)

The quote brings out how the present WTO rules favor the affluent countries by allowing them to protect their markets through quotas, tariffs, anti-dumping duties, export credits, and subsidies to domestic producers in ways that poor countries are not permitted, or cannot afford, to match.\(^{34}\) Other important examples include the WTO regulations of cross-border investment and intellectual property rights.\(^{35}\)

Such asymmetrical rules increase the share of global economic growth going to the affluent countries and decrease the share of global economic growth going to the poor countries relative to what these shares would be under symmetrical rules of free and open competition. The asymmetries in the rules thus reinforce the very inequality that enables the governments of the affluent countries to impose these asymmetries in the first place.\(^{36}\) This inequality has grown vast: The ratio in average income between the fifth of the world’s people living in the highest-income countries and the fifth living in the lowest income countries “was 74 to 1 in 1997, up from 60 to 1 in 1990 and 30 to 1 in 1960. [Earlier] the income gap between the top and bottom countries increased from 3 to 1 in 1820 to 7 to 1 in 1870 to 11 to 1 in 1913.”\(^{37}\) For 2001, the corresponding ratio appears to have been 71:1.\(^{38}\)

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\(^{33}\) Economist, 25 September 1999, 89. The three cited studies — Hertel and Martin, UNCTAD, Finger and Schuler — are included in the bibliography.

\(^{34}\) For some of the later developments, see Martin Wolf: ‘Broken Promises to the Poor,’ Financial Times, 21 November 2001, 13, focusing on the ever increasing subsidies the rich countries give especially to their farmers ($245 billion in 2000). Such subsidies generate enormous surpluses of agricultural products (milk power, sugar, etc.), which prevent agricultural producers of the poor countries from competing on fair terms in world markets.


\(^{36}\) In what follows, I use income inequalities to substantiate this point. Yet, inequalities in wealth are, of course, even greater, because well-off persons typically have more net worth than annual income, while the poor typically own less than one annual income. The huge fortunes of the ultra-rich have been specially highlighted in recent Human Development Reports: “the world’s 200 richest people more than doubled their net worth in the four years to 1998, to more than $1 trillion. The assets of the top three billionaires are more than the combined GNP of all least developed countries and their 600 million people” (UNDP 1999, 3). “The additional cost of achieving and maintaining universal access to basic education for all, basic health care for all, reproductive health care for all women, adequate food for all and safe water and sanitation for all is ... less than 4% of the combined wealth of the 225 richest people in the world” (UNDP 1998, 30).

\(^{37}\) UNDP 1999, 3. Other ratios are “35 to 1 in 1950, 44 to 1 in 1973, and 72 to 1 in 1992” (ibid., 38).

\(^{38}\) World Bank 2003, 234-5, my calculation.
These ratios compare national average incomes via market exchange rates. The trend picture is no more encouraging when one compares the incomes of households worldwide via purchasing power parities: For the first five years of the present globalization period, "world inequality has increased … from a Gini of 62.8 in 1988 to 66.0 in 1993. This represents an increase of 0.6 Gini points per year. This is a very fast increase, faster than the increase experienced by the US and UK in the decade of the 1980’s. … The bottom 5 percent of the world grew poorer, as their real incomes decreased between 1988 and 1993 by ¼, while the richest quintile grew richer. It gained 12 percent in real terms, that is it grew more than twice as much as mean world income (5.7 percent).”

As trend data about poverty and malnutrition also confirm, the global poor are not participating proportionately in global economic growth.

The present global economic order is thus unjust on its face and discriminatory in its effects to the advantage of the affluent countries and to the detriment of the poor. But, in order to refute the Panglossian view, we need only draw a much weaker conclusion from the evidence: The present design of the global economic order is not (and nowhere near) optimal in terms of poverty avoidance. This value would be better served, for instance, if the poorest countries received financial support toward hiring first-rate experts to advise them how to articulate their interests in WTO negotiations, toward maintaining missions at the WTO headquarters in Geneva, toward bringing cases before the WTO, and toward coping with the mountains of regulations they are required to implement. Poverty avoidance would also be better served if these countries faced lesser constraints and handicaps on their exports into the affluent countries: The $700 billion reported annual loss in export opportunities amounts to 12 percent of the aggregate gross national incomes of all developing countries combined. Poverty avoidance would also be better served if the WTO Treaty had included a global minimum wage and minimal global constraints on working hours and working conditions in order to preclude the current ‘race to the bottom’ where poor countries competing for foreign investment are outbidding one another by offering ever more exploitable and mistreatable workforces. Poverty avoidance would also be better served if the Law of the Sea Treaty guaranteed the poor countries some share of the value

39 Many economists find this misleading, claiming that the comparison should instead be made in terms of purchasing power parities (PPPs) and that the “true” quintile inequality ratio would then be found to be “only” 13:1. However, market exchange rates are the more appropriate measure for assessing the bargaining power and expertise countries can bring to bear in international negotiations. Market exchange rates are also the appropriate measure for assessing the avoidability of poverty (the fact that a mere one percent of the national incomes of the highest-income countries would suffice to raise the national incomes of the lowest-income countries by 71 percent). To compare standards of living, PPPs are indeed appropriate. But general-consumption PPPs, based as they are on the prices of all commodities weighted by their share in international consumption, substantially overstate the purchasing power of the poor relative to the basic necessities on which they are compelled to concentrate their expenditures. This is so because poor countries tend to afford the greatest price advantages for commodities (services and other “nontradables”) that their poor citizens cannot afford. By using PPPs that average out price differentials across all commodities, economists inflate the nominal incomes of the poor as if their consumption mirrored that of the world at large. See Reddy and Pogge 2003 for a detailed critique.


41 The UNDP reports annually on the number of undernourished, which is stuck around 800 million. The incidence of $1/day income poverty is reported to be down 6.7 percent and $2/day income poverty to be up 10.4 percent over the 1987-2001 period (www.worldbank.org/research/povmonitor).
of harvested seabed resources\textsuperscript{42} and if the affluent countries were required to pay for the negative externalities we impose on the poor: for the pollution we have produced over many decades and the resulting effects on their environment and climate, for the rapid depletion of natural resources, for the contribution of our sex tourists to the AIDS epidemic in Asia and for the violence caused by our demand for drugs and our war on drugs.

Perhaps the most important example for how the global rules are designed against the interests of the poor is the current regime for rewarding and encouraging medical research. Under the TRIPs regime (\textit{cf.} note 35), inventors of new drugs are rewarded by a 20-year monopoly. This regime prices most existing drugs out of the reach of the global poor. It also skews medical research toward the affluent: Medical conditions accounting for 90 percent of the global disease burden receive only 10 percent of all medical research worldwide.\textsuperscript{43} “Pneumonia, diarrhea, tuberculosis and malaria, which together account for more than 20 per cent of the disease burden in the world, receive less than one per cent of the total public and private funds devoted to health research (US$73.5 billion in 1998).”\textsuperscript{44} “Of the 1393 new drugs approved between 1975 and 1999, only 13 were for tropical diseases.”\textsuperscript{45}

When drug companies are rewarded with monopoly prices, they are put in a morally untenable position: to recover their costs, they must price life-saving medications out of the reach of vast numbers of poor patients. There are other, much better ways of encouraging medical research. An obvious alternative is a regime under which inventor firms are rewarded in proportion to the impact of their invention on the global disease burden. This solution would align the interests of inventor firms and the generic drug producers. Inventor firms would \textit{want} their patented inventions to be widely copied, mass-produced, and sold as cheaply as possible, as this would magnify the health impact of these inventions. If new drugs were sold at the competitive price (near the marginal cost of production), many poor patients would gain access to drugs they now cannot afford. And affluent patients would gain as well, by paying substantially less for drugs and medical insurance. This solution would also greatly expand research into diseases that, under the current system, attract very little research — hepatitis, meningitis, dengue fever, leprosy, trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness and Chagas disease), river blindness, leishmaniasis, Buruli ulcer, lymphatic filariasis, schistosomiasis (bilharzia), malaria, tuberculosis, and many more. In time, this one change in the global rules alone could halve the number of annual poverty deaths. Compared to such an alternative, the current TRIPs regime, which allows monopoly prices without supplying any funds for shielding the global poor from exorbitant mark-ups on drugs and seeds, kills millions of poor people each year.

Examples could be multiplied. But I think it is clear that there are feasible variations to the present global economic order that would dramatically reduce the incidence of severe poverty worldwide, far below the current quite staggering figures. This order is \textit{not} optimal in terms of poverty avoidance.

\textsuperscript{42} Such guarantees were part of the initial 1982 version of the Treaty, but the Clinton administration succeeded in renegotiating them out of the Treaty just before the latter came into force in 1996 (Pogge 2002a, 125-6).

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Cf.} Ramsey 2001 and GFHR 2004.

\textsuperscript{44} GFHR 2000, xi.

\textsuperscript{45} Médecins Sans Frontières (www.msf.org/content/page.cfm?articleid=D58A538D-879C-4569-9307BB7D86F91357).
As the first two possible lines of defense have turned out to be indefensible, attention turns to the third: Can one say that the global economic order, though clearly and greatly suboptimal in terms of poverty avoidance, is nonetheless not harmful to the global poor and therefore not a violation of their human rights? Let us turn to this last challenge to my view.

2.3 Is the Present Global Economic Order Merely Less Beneficial Than It Might Be?

This challenge arises only if we accept, as I have proposed, the narrow account of human rights violations according to which agents can be condemned as human rights violators only if they actively cause human rights to be underfulfilled, in violation of a negative duty. Appealing to this narrow account, the governments upholding the present global economic order could argue as follows: 'It is true that the incidence of severe poverty is greater under the present regime than it would be under some of the outlined variations thereof that would create or improve export opportunities into the developed world, vaccination programs and availability of drugs, basic schooling, school lunches, safe water and sewage systems, housing, power plants and networks, banks and microlending, road, rail and communication links. But it does not follow that the existing global economic order harms anyone, that it causes excess poverty or excess poverty deaths, that it violates human rights. The design of this order is merely failing to benefit people, failing to be as protective of human life as it might be. And the same should then be said about our decision to impose the existing global economic order rather than a more poverty-avoiding alternative: This decision does not cause excess poverty or excess poverty deaths, is not violating human rights by harming and killing people. It is merely failing to benefit people and failing to prevent human deaths. Collectively (just as individually), we are at most failing to do what we can to fulfill human rights.'

This defense strategy appeals to something like the distinction between acts and omissions. Its objective is to diminish the moral significance of the rich states' decision to impose the present global economic order rather than a more poverty-avoiding alternative by assigning this decision the status of a mere omission. Now the relevant governments are clearly quite active in formulating the global economic rules they want, in pressing for their acceptance, and in prosecuting their enforcement. This is undeniable. To be plausible, the defense strategy must then apply the act/omission distinction at another place: not to how the relevant governments are related to the global rules, but to how these global rules are related to the excess poverty. The idea must be that the rules governing the world economy are not actively causing excess poverty, thus harming and killing people, but are merely passively failing to prevent severe poverty, failing to protect people from harm.

The distinction between acts and omissions is difficult enough when applied to the conduct of individual and collective agents (as we have seen in subsection 1.1). The application of such a distinction to social institutions and rules is at first quite baffling. When more premature deaths occur under some system of rules than would occur under a feasible alternative, we might say that there are excess deaths under the existing regime. But how can we sort such excess deaths into those that the existing rules cause (bring about) and those these rules merely fail to prevent (let happen)? Let us examine three ideas for how this defense strategy can be made to work.

2.3.1 Invoking Baseline Comparisons
One idea is frequently suggested in public debates about the present global economic order as epitomized by the WTO treaties and the role of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the G7 (or G8) and the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development). In these debates, the apparently empirical question whether “globalization” is harming or benefiting the global poor plays a major role. Harm and benefit are comparative notions, involving the idea of people being worse off, or better off. But what is the implied baseline to which the current fate of the global poor is to be compared? What is the alternative fate in comparison to which they are either worse off (and therefore being harmed) or better off (and therefore being benefited by globalization)?

In most cases, it turns out, the popular debate is about the question whether severe poverty worldwide has been rising or falling in the period since this globalization process began in the late 1980’s. This question is hotly debated, with considerable career prizes awarded to any economists with a good story of declining poverty.

Yet, this debate is quite irrelevant to the moral assessment of this globalization process, which was pressed upon the world by the governments of the developed West. The moral charge before us is that governments, by imposing a global economic order under which great excesses of severe poverty and poverty deaths are occurring, are violating the human rights of many poor people. The plausibility of this charge is unaffected by whether severe poverty is rising or falling. To see this, consider the analogous charges that the colonial powers harmed and violated the human rights of the colonized by enslaving them or that the Nazis violated the human rights of those they confined and killed in their concentration camps. These charges can certainly not be defeated by showing that the rate of victimization declined (with fewer people being enslaved or killed each year than the year before). Of course, the words “harm” and “benefit” are sometimes appropriately used with implicit reference to an earlier state of affairs. But in the case at hand, such an historical baseline is irrelevant. For even if it were true that there is not as much severe poverty in the world today as there was 15 years ago (cf. note 41), we could not infer therefrom that the present global economic order is (in a morally significant sense) benefiting the global poor. Drawing this inference, we would beg the whole question by simply assuming the incidence of severe poverty 15 years ago as the appropriate no-harm baseline. Just as the claim that the Nazis violated the human rights of those they killed cannot be refuted by showing that the number of such killings was in decline, so the claim that the imposition of the present global economic order violates the human rights of those who live in and die from severe poverty cannot be refuted by showing that their numbers are falling.

No less inconclusive than such diachronic comparisons are subjunctive comparison with an historical baseline. Even if it is true that there is not as much severe poverty under the present WTO regime as there would now be if the preceding regime (GATT) had continued, we cannot infer therefrom that the present global economic order is (in a morally significant sense) benefiting the global poor. Drawing this inference, we would once again beg the question by simply assuming the incidence of severe poverty as it would have evolved under continued GATT rules as the appropriate no-harm baseline. By the same reasoning the military junta under Senior General Than Shwe could be said to be benefiting the Burmese people provided only that they are better off than they would now be if the predecessor junta under General Ne Win were still in power.

Sometimes subjunctive comparisons are presented with an historical baseline that is defined by reference to a much earlier time. Thus it is said that Africans today are no worse off than they would now be if there had never been any significant contacts with people outside Africa. In response, we should question how much one can really know about such
a remote alternate history. We should also, once again, question the moral relevance of this hypothetical involving continued mutual isolation: If world history had transpired without colonization and enslavement, then there would — perhaps — now be affluent people in Europe and very poor ones in Africa. But these would be persons and populations quite different from those now actually living there, who in fact are very deeply shaped and scarred by their continent’s involuntary encounter with European invaders. So we cannot tell starving Africans that they would be starving and we would be affluent even if the crimes of colonialism had never occurred. Without these crimes there would not be the actually existing radical inequality which consists in these persons being affluent and those being extremely poor.

Similar considerations also refute the moral relevance of subjunctive comparison with a hypothetical baseline — the claim, for instance, that even more people would live and die even more miserably in some fictional state of nature than in this world as we have made it. In response, there are many different ways of describing the “state of nature,” and it is quite unclear from the received literature offering and discussing such descriptions how one of them can be singled out as the morally uniquely appropriate specification. Moreover, it is quite doubtful than any coherently describable state of nature on this planet would be able to match our globalized civilization’s record of sustaining a stable death toll of 18 million premature deaths per year from poverty-related causes. If no such state of nature can be described, then it cannot be said that the present global order is benefiting the global poor by reducing severe poverty below what it would be in a state of nature. Finally, an argument still needs to be made showing how the claim that some people are being harmed now can be undermined by pointing out that people in a state of nature would be even worse off. If such an argument existed, would it not show that anything one person or group does to another counts as a harming only if it reduces the latter below the state-of-nature baseline? If we are not harming the 2.736 million human beings we are keeping in severe poverty, then slavery did not harm the slaves either, if only they were no worse off than people would be in the relevant state of nature.

Baseline comparisons do not then afford a promising ground for denying that the present global economic order involves violation of the human rights of those impoverished under it — or, indeed, for defending any other institutional schemes from the charge that they involve human rights violations. Recall, for instance, the early decades of the US, when men designed and imposed an institutional order that greatly disadvantaged women. The claim that the imposition of this order violated the human rights of women cannot be refuted by any diachronic comparison with how women had fared before, under British rule. It cannot be refuted by any subjunctive comparison with how women would have been faring under continued British rule or in a state of nature. What matters is solely whether the imposition of the institutional order in question foreseeably led to severe burdens on women which could have been avoided through a more even-handed institutional design.

2.3.2 Invoking the Consent of the Global Poor

Another common way of denying that the present global economic order is harming the poor, violating their human rights, is by appeal to the venerable precept of volenti non fit inuria — no injustice is being done to those who consent. Someone physically abusing another is not harming him in the morally relevant sense if he has given prior consent to

such treatment, for money perhaps or masochistic pleasure. Likewise, a social order under which excess poverty occurs is not harming the poor if they have previously consented to the imposition of this order. Membership in the WTO is voluntary. Since the poor themselves have signed on to the rules as they are, the imposition of these rules cannot be characterized as harming them.

This line of argument is thoroughly refuted by four mutually independent considerations. First, appeal to consent can defeat the charge of rights violation only if the rights in question are alienable and, more specifically, can be waived by consent. Yet, on the usual understanding of human rights, they cannot be so waived: Persons cannot waive their human rights to personal freedom, political participation, freedom of expression, freedom from torture. (Persons can promise, through a religious vow perhaps, to serve another, to refrain from voting, or to keep quiet. But, wherever human rights are respected, such promises are legally unenforceable and thus do not succeed in waiving the right in question.) There are various reasons for conceiving human rights in this way: Persons change over time, and their later self has a vital interest in being able to avoid truly horrific burdens her earlier self had risked or incurred. Moreover, the option of placing such burdens on one’s future self is likely to be disadvantageous even to the earlier self by encouraging predators seeking to elicit a waiver from this earlier self through manipulation of her or of her circumstances (e.g., by getting her into a life-threatening situation from which one then offers to rescue her at the price of her permanent enslavement). Finally, waivers of human rights impose considerable burdens on third parties who will be (more or less directly) confronted with the resulting suffering of people enslaved or tortured or starving.

Second, an appeal to consent blocks the complaint of those now lacking basic necessities only insofar as they have themselves consented to the global economic order that perpetuates their deprivation. Yet, most of the world’s severely impoverished people live in countries that are not meaningfully democratic, and consent to the present global economic order by their rulers thus cannot be counted as consent by their subjects. Nigeria’s accession to the WTO, on 1 January 1995, was effected by its brutal military dictator Sani Abacha, for example, Myanmar’s, on the same day, by the notorious SLORC junta (State Law and Order Restoration Council), Indonesia’s, on the same day, by kleptocrat Suharto, Zimbabwe’s, on 5 March 1995, by Robert Mugabe, and Zaire’s (since renamed the Congo), on 27 March 1997, by Mobutu Sese Seko.

Third, consent to a very burdensome global institutional order can have justificatory force only if it was not impelled by the threat of even greater burdens. Thus, your consent cannot justify your enslavement when your consent was your only escape from continued torture or indeed from an accidental drowning. An appeal to consent thus blocks a complaint by the poor against the present global economic order only if, at the time of consenting, they had an alternative option that would have given them secure access to basic necessities and to the objects of their other human rights. Yet, the populations of most poor WTO member states would have suffered even more if they had remained outside the regime. These people would still have been subject to coercively enforced global rules preventing them from offering their products in the more affluent countries or from migrating there. Thus, even the unreal case of a poor country’s population voting with full information and unanimously for WTO accession does not exemplify appropriate consent if this population

was only given a choice between the severe poverty it now endures and the even more widespread severe poverty it would have had to endure outside the WTO.48

Fourth, an appeal to consent cannot justify the severe impoverishment of children who are greatly overrepresented among those suffering severe poverty and account for about two thirds of all deaths from poverty-related causes (34,000 daily, cf. note 8 above). Insofar as the present global economic order is foreseeably and avoidably suboptimal in terms of avoiding severe poverty of children, the claim that this order violates their human rights cannot be blocked by any conceivable appeal to consent.

2.3.3 Invoking the Flaws of the Poor Countries’ Social Institutions and Rulers

A further, quite popular way of denying that the present global economic order is harming the poor points once more to the great differences among developing countries’ economic performance. The success stories — such as the Asian tigers and China — show that poor countries can defeat severe poverty under the global order as it is, hence that this order is not inhospitable to poverty eradication. Poor people in countries where severe poverty is not melting away therefore have only their own social institutions and governments to blame.

This reasoning involves a some-all fallacy. The fact that some individuals born into poverty become millionaires does not show that all such persons can do likewise.49 The reason is that the pathways to riches are sparse. They are not rigidly limited, to be sure, but even an affluent country clearly cannot achieve the kind of economic growth rates needed for everyone to become a millionaire (holding fixed the value of the currency and the real income millionaires can now enjoy). The same holds true for developing countries. The Asian tigers (Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea), which together constitute well under 2 percent of the population of the developing world, achieved impressive rates of economic growth and poverty reduction. They did so through a state-sponsored build-up of industries that mass produce low-tech consumer products. These industries were globally successful by using their considerable labor-cost advantage to beat competitors in the developed countries and by drawing on greater state support and/or a better-educated workforce to beat competitors in other developing countries.50 Building such industries was hugely profitable for the Asian tigers. But if many other poor countries had adopted this same developmental strategy, competition among them would have rendered it much less profitable. We cannot conclude then that the present global economic order, though less favorable to the poor countries than it might be, is still favorable enough for all of them to do as well as the Asian tigers have done in fact. The latest proclaimed success story in a much more populous country illustrates the same point. China’s great success in terms of growth in exports and in per capita income — its success on the domestic poverty front is harder to

48 I am not disputing that joining the WTO was better for most poor states, and even for their poor citizens, than staying out. But this claim cannot defend the current global economic order (though it is often so used): Analogously, one could defend the fascist order briefly established in Europe by pointing out that countries cooperating with Hitler and Mussolini did better than countries opposing that order.


50 It also helped that the US, eager to establish healthy capitalist economies as a counterweight to Soviet influence in the region, allowed the tigers free access to its market even while they maintained high tariffs to protect their own.
gauge — has catastrophic effects in other developing countries who are competing for access to the same heavily protected rich-country markets.

Still, could the poor countries on the whole not do much better under the present global economic order than they are doing in fact? And must the present global economic order then not be acquitted of responsibility for any excess poverty that would have been avoided if the political elites in the poor countries were less corrupt and less incompetent?

Suppose the two sets of relevant causal factors — the global economic order and the economic regimes and policies of the countries in which severe poverty persists — were symmetrically related so that each set of factors is necessary for the current reproduction of severe poverty worldwide. Then, if we insist that the global factors must be absolved on the ground that modification of national factors would suffice to eradicate world poverty, defenders of national factors could insist, symmetrically, that these national factors must be absolved on the ground that modification of global factors would suffice to eradicate world poverty. Acquitting both sets of factors on these grounds, we would place their cooperative production of huge harms beyond moral criticism.

The implausibility of such an assessment can perhaps be illustrated through a more straightforward interactional case. Suppose two upstream tribes release pollutants into a river on which people downstream depend for their survival. And suppose that each of the pollutants causes only minor harm, but that, when mixed, they react to form a lethal poison that kills many people downstream. In this case, both upstream tribes can deny responsibility, each insisting that the severe harm would not materialize if the other upstream tribe stopped its polluting activity. Such a denial is implausible. Both upstream tribes are required to stop the severe harm they cause together. They can cooperate jointly to discharge this responsibility. Failing that, each has a duty to stop its pollution and each is fully responsible for any harm that would not have materialized but for the pollutants it has released.

The persistence of severe poverty worldwide is importantly analogous to the harms suffered by the people downstream. It is true — as the defenders of the rich countries and of their globalization project point out — that there would be a substantial decline in severe poverty, despite the current unfair global economic order, if the national governments and elites of the poor countries were genuinely committed to “good governance” and poverty eradication. It is also true — as the defenders of the governments and elites in the poor countries insist — that there would be a substantial decline in severe poverty, despite the corrupt and oppressive regimes holding sway in so many developing countries, if the global economic order were shaped to be more hospitable to poverty avoidance. This mutual finger-pointing serves both sides well, convincing many affluent citizens in rich and poor countries that they and their government are innocent in the catastrophe of world poverty. But on reflection it is clear that, while each side is right in pointing to the other, neither is right in acquitting itself. Like the two upstream tribes, each side is fully responsible for its marginal contribution to the deprivations they together produce.

This response suffices to show the responsibility of the rich countries, their status as violators of the human rights of the global poor. But by assuming symmetry between the two sets of relevant causal factors, the response is too simple, failing fully to expose the responsibility of the rich countries and of their globalization project. There is one important asymmetry. While national institutional arrangements and policies in the poor countries have very little influence on the design of the global institutional order, the latter has a great deal of influence on the former. Yes, the social institutions and policies of many poor countries are far from optimal in terms of domestic poverty avoidance. But substantial
improvement in this set of causal factors is unlikely so long as global institutional arrangements remain the way they are. The global order exerts its pernicious influence on the evolution of world poverty not merely directly in the ways we have already discussed, but also indirectly through its influence on the national institutions and policies of the developing countries. Oppression and corruption, so prevalent in many poor countries today, are themselves very substantially produced and sustained by central features of the present global institutional order.

It was only in 1999, for example, that the developed countries finally agreed to curb their firms’ bribery of foreign officials by adopting the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions. Until then, most developed states did not merely legally authorize their firms to bribe foreign officials, but even allowed them to deduct such bribes from their taxable revenues, thereby providing financial inducements and moral support to the practice of bribing politicians and officials in the poor countries. This practice diverts the loyalties of officials in these countries and also makes a great difference to which persons are motivated to scramble for public office in the first place. Developing countries have suffered staggering losses as a result, most clearly in the awarding of public contracts. These losses arise in part from the fact that bribes are priced in: Bidders on contracts must raise their price in order to get paid enough to pay the bribes. Additional losses arise as bidders can afford to be non-competitive, knowing that the success of their bid will depend on their bribes more than on the substance of their offer. Even greater losses arise from the fact that officials focused on bribes pay little attention to whether the goods and services they purchase in their country’s behalf are of good quality or even needed at all. Much of what developing countries have imported over the decades has been of no use to them — or even harmful, by promoting environmental degradation or violence (bribery is especially pervasive in the arms trade). Preliminary evidence suggests that the new Convention is ineffective in curbing bribery by multinational corporations. But even if it were effective, it would be quite hard to purge the pervasive culture of corruption that is now deeply entrenched in many developing countries thanks to the extensive bribery they were subjected to during their formative years.

The issue of bribery is part of a larger problem. The political and economic elites of poor countries interact with their domestic inferiors, on the one hand, and with foreign governments and corporations, on the other. These two constituencies differ enormously in wealth and power. The former are by and large poorly educated and heavily preoccupied with the daily struggle to make ends meet. The latter, by contrast, have vastly greater rewards and penalties at their disposal. Politicians with a normal interest in their own political and economic success can thus be expected to cater to the interests of foreign governments and corporations rather than to competing interests of their much poorer

51 The convention went into effect in February 1999 and has been widely ratified since (www.oecd.org/home).

52 In the United States, the post-Watergate Congress tried to prevent the bribing of foreign officials through its 1977 Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, passed after the Lockheed Corporation was found to have paid — not a modest sum to some third-world official, but rather — a US$2 million bribe to Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka of powerful and democratic Japan. Not wanting its firms to be at a disadvantage vis-à-vis their foreign rivals, the US was a major supporter of the Convention, as was the non-governmental organization Transparency International, which helped mobilize public support in many OECD countries.

53 “Plenty of laws exist to ban bribery by companies. But big multinationals continue to sidestep them with ease” — so the current situation is summarized in ‘The Short Arm of the Law,’ Economist, 2 March 2002, 63-65, at 63.
compatriots. And this, of course, is what we find: There are plenty of poor-country governments that came to power or stay in power only thanks to foreign support. And there are plenty of poor-country politicians and bureaucrats who, induced or even bribed by foreigners, work against the interests of their people: for the development of a tourist-friendly sex industry (whose forced exploitation of children and women they tolerate and profit from), for the importation of unneeded, obsolete, or overpriced products at public expense, for the permission to import hazardous products, wastes, or factories, against laws protecting employees or the environment, and so on.

To be sure, there would not be such huge asymmetries in incentives if the poor countries were more democratic, allowing their populations a genuine political role. Why then are most of these countries so far from being genuinely democratic? This question brings further aspects of the current global institutional order into view.

It is a very central feature of this order that any group controlling a preponderance of the means of coercion within a country is internationally recognized as the legitimate government of this country’s territory and people — regardless of how this group came to power, of how it exercises power and of the extent to which it is supported or opposed by the population it rules. That such a group exercising effective power receives international recognition means not merely that we engage it in negotiations. It means also that we accept this group’s right to act for the people it rules, that we, most significantly, confer upon it the privileges freely to dispose of the country’s natural resources (international resource privilege) and freely to borrow in the country’s name (international borrowing privilege).

The resource privilege we confer upon a group in power is much more than mere acquiescence in its effective control over the natural resources of the country in question. This privilege includes the power to effect legally valid transfers of ownership rights in such resources. Thus a corporation that has purchased resources from the Saudis or Suharto, or from Mobuto or Sani Abacha, has thereby become entitled to be — and actually is — recognized anywhere in the world as the legitimate owner of these resources. This is a remarkable feature of our global order. A group that overpowers the guards and takes control of a warehouse may be able to give some of the merchandise to others, accepting money in exchange. But the fence who pays them becomes merely the possessor, not the owner, of the loot. Contrast this with a group that overpowers an elected government and takes control of a country. Such a group, too, can give away some of the country’s natural resources, accepting money in exchange. In this case, however, the purchaser acquires not merely possession, but all the rights and liberties of ownership, which are supposed to be — and actually are — protected and enforced by all other states’ courts and police forces. The international resource privilege, then, is the legal power to confer globally valid ownership rights in the country’s resources.

This international resource privilege has disastrous effects in poor but resource-rich countries, where the resource sector constitutes a large segment of the national economy. Whoever can take power in such a country by whatever means can maintain his rule, even against widespread popular opposition, by buying the arms and soldiers he needs with revenues from the export of natural resources and with funds borrowed against future resource sales. The resource privilege thus gives insiders strong incentives toward the

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54 As understood by Wesley Hohfeld (1919), a power involves the legally recognized authority to alter the distribution of first-order liberty rights, claim rights and duties. Having a power or powers in this sense is distinct from having power (i.e., control over physical force and/or means of coercion).
violent acquisition and exercise of political power, thereby causing coup attempts and civil wars. Moreover, it also gives outsiders strong incentives to corrupt the officials of such countries who, no matter how badly they rule, continue to have resources to sell and money to spend.

Nigeria is a case in point. It produces about 2 million barrels of oil per day which, depending on the oil price, fetch some $10-20 billion annually, one quarter to one half of GDP. Whoever controls this revenue stream can afford enough weapons and soldiers to keep himself in power regardless of what the population may think of him. And so long as he succeeds in doing so, his purse will be continuously replenished with new funds with which he can cement his rule and live in opulence. With such a powerful incentive, it cannot be surprising that, during 28 of the past 32 years, Nigeria has been ruled by military strongmen who took power and ruled by force.\textsuperscript{55} Nor can it be surprising that even a polished elected president fails to stop gross corruption: Olusegun Obasanjo knows full well that, if he tried to spend the oil revenues solely for the benefit of the Nigerian people, military officers could — thanks to the international resource privilege — quickly restore their customary perks.\textsuperscript{56} With such a huge price on his head, even the best-intentioned president could not end the embezzlement of oil revenues and survive in power.

The incentives arising from the international resource privilege help explain what economists have long observed and found puzzling: the significant negative correlation between resource wealth (relative to GDP) and economic performance.\textsuperscript{57} Two Yale economists confirm this explanation through a regression analysis, which shows that the causal link from resource wealth to poor economic performance is mediated through reduced chances for democracy.\textsuperscript{58} Holding the global order fixed as a given background, the authors do not consider how the causal link they analyze itself depends on global rules that grant the resource privilege to any group in power, irrespective of its domestic illegitimacy.

\textsuperscript{55} Cf. ‘Going on down,’ in Economist, 8 June 1996, 46-48. A later update says: “oil revenues [are] paid directly to the government at the highest level .... The head of state has supreme power and control of all the cash. He depends on nobody and nothing but oil. Patronage and corruption spread downwards from the top” (Economist, 12 December 1998, 19). Cf. also www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/nigeria.html.

\textsuperscript{56} Because Obasanjo was the chair of Transparency International’s Advisory Council (cf. note 52), his election in early 1999 had raised great hopes. These hopes were sorely disappointed. Nigeria still ranks at the bottom of TI’s own Corruption Perception Index (www.transparency.org/cpi/2003/dnld/framework.pdf).

\textsuperscript{57} This “resource curse” or “Dutch disease” is exemplified by many developing countries which, despite great natural wealth, have achieved little economic growth and poverty reduction over the last decades. Here are the more important resource-rich developing countries with their average annual rates of change in real GDP per capita from 1975 to 2001: Nigeria -0.7%, Congo/Zaire –5.2%, Kenya +0.3%, Angola –2.3%, Mozambique +1.8%, Senegal -0.1%, Venezuela -0.9%, Ecuador +0.2%, Saudi Arabia -2.1%, United Arab Emirates -3.7%, Oman +2.3%, Kuwait -0.7%, Bahrain +1.1%, Brunei -2.2%, Indonesia +4.3%, the Philippines +0.1% (UNDP 2003, 278-81; in some cases a somewhat different period was used due to insufficient data). Thus, with the notable exception of Indonesia, the resource-rich developing countries fell well below the annual rate in real per capita growth of their peers and of the developed countries (\textit{ibid.}, 281).

\textsuperscript{58} “All petrostates or resource-dependent countries in Africa fail to initiate meaningful political reforms. ... besides South Africa, transition to democracy has been successful only in resource-poor countries” (Lam and Wantchekon 1999, 31). “Our cross-country regression confirms our theoretical insights. We find that a one percentage increase in the size of the natural resource sector [relative to GDP] generates a decrease by half a percentage point in the probability of survival of democratic regimes” (\textit{ibid.}, 35). See also Wantchekon 1999.
The **borrowing privilege** we confer upon a group in power includes the power to impose internationally valid legal obligations upon the country at large. Any successor government that refuses to honor debts incurred by an ever so corrupt, brutal, undemocratic, unconstitutional, repressive, unpopular predecessor will be severely punished by the banks and governments of other countries. At minimum it will lose its own borrowing privilege by being excluded from the international financial markets. Such refusals are therefore quite rare, as governments, even when newly elected after a dramatic break with the past, are compelled to pay the debts of their ever so awful predecessors.

The international borrowing privilege makes three important contributions to the incidence of oppressive and corrupt elites in the developing world. First, this privilege facilitates borrowing by destructive rulers who can borrow more money and can do so more cheaply than they could do if they alone, rather than the whole country, were obliged to repay. In this way, the borrowing privilege helps such rulers maintain themselves in power even against near-universal popular discontent and opposition.59 Second, the international borrowing privilege imposes upon democratic successor regimes the often huge debts of their corrupt predecessors. It thereby saps the capacity of such democratic governments to implement structural reforms and other political programs, thus rendering such governments less successful and less stable than they would otherwise be. (It is small consolation that putschists are sometimes weakened by being held liable for the debts of their democratic predecessors.) Third, the international borrowing privilege strengthens incentives toward coup attempts: Whoever succeeds in bringing a preponderance of the means of coercion under his control gets the borrowing privilege as an additional reward.

The erstwhile official tolerance of the bribing of poor-country officials and the ongoing international resource and borrowing privileges are highly significant features of the global order which tend to benefit the governments, corporations and citizens of the rich countries and the political-military elites of the poor countries at the expense of the vast majority of ordinary people in the poor countries. Thus, while the present global order indeed makes it possible for some poor countries to achieve genuine democracy and sustained economic growth, central features of it also play a major role in explaining why most poor countries fail on both counts. These features are crucial for explaining the inability and especially the unwillingness of the poor countries’ leaders to pursue more effective strategies of poverty eradication. And they are crucial therefore for explaining why global inequality is increasing so rapidly that substantial global economic growth since the end of the Cold War has not reduced income poverty and malnutrition (cf. note 41) — despite substantial technological progress and global economic growth, despite a huge reported poverty reduction in China,60 despite the post-Cold-War “peace dividend,”61 despite a 32-percent drop in real

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59 The rulers of resource-rich developing countries have been especially adept at supplementing their income from resource sales by mortgaging their countries’ future for their own benefit. As of 1998, Nigeria’s foreign debt, run up by its succession of military dictatorships, stood at 79% of GNP. The 1998 ratios of foreign debt to GNP for other large resource-rich countries were: Kenya 61%, Angola 297%, Mozambique 223%, Venezuela 40%, Indonesia 176%, the Philippines 70% (UNDP 2000, 219-21). The 1997 ratio for the Congo/Zaire is 232% (UNDP 1999, 195). Needless to say, little of the borrowed funds were channeled into productive investments, e.g. in education and infrastructure, which would augment economic growth and thus tax revenues that could help meet interest and repayment obligations. Much was taken for personal use or expended on “internal security” and the military.

60 The number of Chinese living below $1/day is reported to have declined by 31 percent, or 97 million, between 1987 and 2001 (www.worldbank.org/research/povmonitor).
food prices since 1985, despite official development assistance, and despite the efforts of international humanitarian and development organizations.

2.4 Conclusion

In the 15 years since the end of the Cold War, some 270 million human beings have died prematurely from poverty-related causes, with some 18 million more added each year. Much larger numbers of human beings are living in conditions of life-threatening poverty that make it very difficult for them to articulate their interests and effectively to fend for themselves and their families. This catastrophe was and is happening, quite foreseeable, under a global institutional order designed for the benefit of the affluent countries' governments, corporations and citizens and of the poor countries' political and military elites. There are feasible alternative designs of the global institutional order, feasible alternative paths of globalization, under which this catastrophe would have been very largely avoided. Even now severe poverty could be quite rapidly reduced through feasible reforms that would modify the more harmful features of this global order or would mitigate the impact of these features.

Take the unconditional international resource privilege for example. It is beneficial to the affluent countries by giving us access to a larger, cheaper and more reliable supply of foreign resources, because we can acquire ownership of them from anyone who happens to exercise effective power without regard to whether the country's population either approves the sale or benefits from the proceeds. Unconditional international resource and borrowing privileges are also highly advantageous to many a putschist or tyrant in the poor countries, for whom they secure the funds he needs to maintain himself in power even against the will of a large majority of his compatriots. Such privileges are, however, an unmitigated disaster for the global poor who are being dispossessed through loan and resource agreements over which they have no say and from which they do not benefit.

The example illustrates the clear-cut injustice of the present global order. It also illustrates that this injustice does not consist in too little “aid” being dispensed to the poor. There is still so much severe poverty, and so much need for aid, only because the poor are systematically impoverished by present institutional rules and have been so impoverished for a long time during which our advantage and their disadvantage have been compounded. Of course, substantial aid is needed to eradicate severe poverty at a morally acceptable speed (cf. note 22). But such aid is not generous charity. All that is needed is compensation for the harms produced by the long-term imposition of an unjust global order, an imposition that the affluent countries effected and still greatly benefit from.

61 Thanks to the end of the Cold War, military expenditures worldwide have declined from 4.7 percent of aggregate GDP in 1985 to 2.9 percent in 1996 (UNDP 1998, 197). For the world at large, this constitutes savings of currently about $580 billion annually (1.8 percent of the $32,365 billion current global product, cf. note 22 above).


63 Cf. Pogge 2002a, chapter 6, for an elaborate proposal toward modifying the international resource and borrowing privileges.

64 Cf. Pogge 2002a, chapter 8, proposing such a compensation scheme in the form of a Global Resources Dividend.
The continuing imposition of this global order, essentially unmodified, constitutes a massive violation of the human right to basic necessities — a violation for which the governments and electorates of the more powerful countries bear primary responsibility. This charge cannot be defeated through appeal to baseline comparisons, by appeal to the consent of the global poor themselves, or by appeal to other causal factors that the present global order may merely do too little to counteract.

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UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights), approved and proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1948, as resolution 217 A (III).


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