Thomas Pogge
*World Poverty and Human Rights*

What is the moral responsibility of the rich part of the world for global poverty?

**TWO CONVENTIONAL VIEWS**

- A weak moral obligation to help the poor. We should help but are not causing harm if we don’t.

  Uses distinction between positive and negative duties. This is a positive (thus weak) duty.

- A strong moral obligation to help the poor. It doesn’t matter if we cause their suffering or not. The very fact that they suffer puts a strong obligation upon us to help.

  Refutes the distinction between negative and positive duties.
POGGE’S VIEW

We in the rich part of the world contribute to global poverty.

We cause it by upholding a global economic order that keeps people in poverty.

By doing nothing we violate their negative right not to be harmed by us.

We have a strong moral duty to eradicate poverty. It is a negative duty to stop causing harm.
POGGE ON HUMAN RIGHTS:

• A human right is a claim on the design of institutions

• Rights are limited to basic goods necessary for living a decent human life: food, shelter, health care, education, political participation.

• A right is a claim to reasonably secure access to these basic necessities.

• A right corresponds with an obligation but in a dynamic, context dependent way.

• Access to X can be secured by a law or by other measures, like a strong culture of community support. The means matters less.
WHAT SHOULD WE FOCUS ON?

• Individual conduct, for example consumer choices?

• The foreign policy of our governments, e.g. foreign aid schemes?

• The role our governments play in designing and upholding the global institutional and economic order. Here is the root cause.
IS IT TRUE THAT THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC ORDER CAUSES POVERTY?

COMMON ANSWER A:
No. The causes of poverty are domestic.

Pogge: This is “explanatory nationalism”. In fact global factors shape domestic circumstances.

Example: The international “resource and borrowing privileges”.

COMMON ANSWER B:
No. The global order has a good effect. We see that since poverty is declining.

Pogge: It is not true that poverty is declining. Even if it were true, it does not follow that the global order does not harm the poor.
ARTICLE 28 OF THE UDHR

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

If the international order is as an obstacle to the realization of human rights, then that is in itself a human rights violation.

WHY ARE LEVELS OF INEQUALITY AND ABSOLUTE POVERTY THAT WE FIND UNACCEPTABLE WITHIN ONE COUNTRY ACCEPTABLE GLOBALLY?

UNIVERSALISM requires of us to come up with an argument for why that is justified.

Popular argument: Poverty eradication puts an unacceptably high burden on the developed world.

Pogge: Appr. 1% of the GNP in the 14 wealthiest countries would be enough to raise everyone above the 2 dollar a day line.
Reform proposals should be aimed at building good institutions.

Reforms within the existing global institutional order
• Conditions on the borrowing and resource privileges.
• The Global Resources Dividend (GRD).

Reforms of the existing global institutional order
• Vertical dispersal of sovereignty with global responsibility for economic justice.