

Global Justice: Redistribution, Reparation, and Reformation

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Abstract

Most cosmopolitans who are concerned about world poverty assume that for citizens of affluent societies, distributive justice in a global scale is a matter of their positive duty to provide aid to distant people suffering from severe poverty. This assumption is challenged by some authors, notably Tomas Pogge, who maintains that these citizens are actively involved in the incidence of poverty abroad and therefore neglect their negative duty to refrain from harming others. The present article examines the extent to which it is pertinent to contend that citizens in economically advanced countries are morally liable for the impoverishment of a sizable population of the developing world. The contention in question can be interpreted in two nonexclusive ways: First, it might imply that historical injustices, including colonialism and slavery, contributed to both contemporary affluence in some parts of the world and poverty in others. Second, it could imply that the present global economic system, instituted and implemented by the governments of rich and powerful countries acting in the name of their citizens, is benefiting these citizens while harming the world's disadvantaged. The author argues that the idea of reparations for historical injustices suffers from serious philosophical difficulties, including the non-identity problem presented by Derek Parfit, and thus fails to provide a satisfactory approach to the existing problem of poverty. This article then examines the alleged liability of citizens in affluent countries, with a special reference to empirical observations on the policy process. The article concludes by suggesting a twofold theory of global justice, which suggests material, managerial, and moral assistances for a society lacking a competent government and proposes institutional reforms in the global order in order to achieve poverty reduction.

Keywords: global order, historical injustices, international aid, redistribution, world poverty