Do We Owe the Global Poor Assistance or Rectification?*

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A central theme throughout Thomas Pogge's path-breaking *World Poverty and Human Rights* is that the global political and economic order *harms* people in developing countries, and that our duty toward the global poor is therefore not to *assist* them, but to *rectify injustice*. But does the global order *harm* the poor? I argue elsewhere that there is a sense in which this is indeed so, at least if a certain empirical thesis is accepted.[1] However, in this essay, I seek to show that the global order not only does not harm the poor, but can plausibly be credited with the considerable improvements in human well-being that have been achieved over the last 200 years. Much of what Pogge says about our duties toward developing countries is therefore false.

Let me begin by clarifying what I mean by "the global political and economic order" ("the global order"). For the first time in history, there is one continuous global society based on territorial sovereignty. This system has emerged from the spread of European control since the fifteenth century and the formation of new states through wars of independence and decolonization. Even systems that escaped Western Imperialism had to follow legal and diplomatic practices imposed by Europeans. This state system is governed by a set of rules, the most important of which are embodied in

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[1] I argue this in my forthcoming paper "How Does the Global Order Harm the Poor?" The empirical thesis mentioned is the view that economic progress turns primarily on the quality of institutions. The view that the global order harms the poor in ways delineated by the institutional thesis is consistent with the view that that order must *also* plausibly be credited with massive improvements, which is the view defended here.

the UN Charter. The Bretton Woods institutions (the World Bank, IMF, and later the GATT/WTO) were founded as a framework for economic cooperation that would prevent disasters like the Great Depression of the 1930s. These institutions, together with economically powerful states acting alone or in concert, shape the economic order. Although this order is neither monolithic nor harmonious, it makes sense to talk about a global order that includes but is not reducible to the actions of states.

In what follows, then, I argue that this global order does not harm the poor according to the benchmarks of comparison used by Pogge, but that on the contrary, according to those benchmarks, this order has caused amazing improvements over the state of misery that has characterized human life throughout the ages. The global order is not fundamentally unjust, but instead, but rather incompletely just, and it should be credited with the great advances it has brought.

Benchmarks for Harm: Historical References

One might think the present extents of poverty and inequality by themselves reveal the injustice of the global order.[2] But they do not. While indeed 1.2 billion people in 1998 lived below the poverty line of $1.08 PPP 1993 per day, it is also true that there is now less misery than ever before, at least as measured in terms of any standard development indicator. The progress made over the last 200 years is miraculous. In 1820, 75 percent of

[2] Unless otherwise noted, data are from World Bank, *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2000); available at http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/0,,contentMDK:20195989~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:336992,00.html; United Nations, "Report of the High-Level Panel on Financing for Development" ("Zedillo report"); available at www.un.org/reports/financing/full_report.pdf; and from World Bank, "World Development Indicators 2002," CD ROM; available at http://www.worldbank.org/data/wdi2002/cdrom/;Angus Maddison, *The World Economy: A Millennial Perspective* (Paris: OECD Development Center, 2001), table B 22, p. 265. See also Bjorn Lomborg, *The Skeptical Environmentalist: Measuring the Real State of the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Part II, esp. for the different approaches to measuring inequality.

the world population lived on less than $1 a day (appropriately adjusted). Today, in Europe, almost nobody does; in China, less than 20 percent do; in South Asia, around 40 percent; and globally, slightly more than 20 percent do. The share of people living on less than $1 a day fell from 42 percent in 1950 to 17 percent in 1992. Historically *almost everybody* was poor, but that is no longer true.

It is true that the high-income economies include 15 percent of the population but receive 80 percent of the income. Around 1820, per capita incomes were similar worldwide, and low, ranging from around $500 in China and South Asia to $1000–$1500 in some European countries. So the gap between rich and poor was 3 to 1, whereas, according to UNDP statistics, in 1960 it was 60 to 1, and in 1997 74 to 1. But it is also true that, between 1960 and 2000, real per-capita income in developing countries grew on average 2.3 percent (doubling living standards within thirty years). Britain's GDP grew an average of 1.3 percent during its nineteenth century economic supremacy. For developing countries, things have been better recently than they were for countries at the height of their power during any other period in history. The average income per capita in 1950 worldwide was $2,114, while in 1999 it was $5,709 (in 1990 dollars PPP); for developing countries income per capita increased from $1,093 to $3,100 (in 1990 dollars PPP)during this period. Similar improvements were achieved in life expectancy, which rose from 49 years to 66 years worldwide, and from 44 years to 64 years in developing countries and thus has increased more in the last fifty years than in the preceding 5000 years. Literacy rose from 54 percent in 1950 to 79 percent in 1999. Infant mortality fell from 156 to 54 in 1000 live births worldwide. Furthermore, while the UNDP inequality statistics quoted above used international exchange rates, things look different if one uses

the Purchasing-Power-Parity standard. According to such calculations, which account for what money buys in different countries, inequality had risen by 1960 to 7 to 1 and has since fallen to about 6 to 1 because of higher growth in the developing world.

Development aid, which has often been given for strategic reasons, has declined since the end of the Cold War, and currently makes up a tiny percentage of donor countries' GDP.[3] Nevertheless the resources transferred are substantial for those who receive them. In 1993, Sub-Saharan countries received on average 11.5 percent of **their** GNP as aid (Zambia 23.6 percent, Tanzania 40 percent).[4] The Marshall Plan, hailed as the greatest aid program ever, is estimated to have given its recipients less than 2.5 percent of their countries' GNP annually.

WTO negotiations have not yet done as much for the poor as one might have hoped, and negotiators representing rich countries possess more bargaining power and often also more expertise than those of poor countries. Indeed, the WTO has so far opened markets too little. But it is also true that the WTO, by and large, represents a significant improvement over the GATT and for that matter, any previous system (for example, ad hoc bilateral treaties or no clear rules at all) of regulating international trade. The GATT mostly aimed to reduce tariffs in OECD countries and in sectors that mattered to them, while developing countries, through "special and preferential treatment," had a second-class status: in virtue of their "special and preferential" treatment they were free

[3] Alberto Alesina and David Dollar, "Who Gives Foreign Aid to Whom and Why?" *Journal of Economic Growth* 5 (2000), pp. 33–64. According to the Zedillo report, official development aid in 2000 was $53.1 billion, down from $60.9 billion in 1992; in 1998, $12.1 billion went to the least developed countries; official development aid in 1992 averaged 0.33% of **donors'** GNP, down to 0.22% in 2000, contrasted with the 0.7% of GNP that is widely agreed.

[4] Nicolas Van de Walle and Timothy Johnston, *Improving Aid to Africa* (Washington D. C.: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 20.

riders on GATT treaties, but their concerns were not on the agenda. That agriculture and textiles became part of WTO negotiations was a tremendous change for countries with a comparative advantage in such goods. Progress has been made in both areas. While the final results of the Doha-round of WTO negotiations with regard to agriculture are not settled (as of December 2004), the WTO is committed to eliminating export subsidies and to restricting other forms of export support in agriculture. Moreover, the quota system that since the 1960s has governed the textile sector is being phased out, and, as of January 1, 2005, all quotas have been eliminated. Things are changing slowly, but despite setbacks (such as the agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), which will probably lead to a net redistribution to developed countries), great progress has arguably been made here too. Historically, negotiations exploring mutually acceptable solutions for worldwide problems are an anomaly. We are making progress.

What conclusion such statistics warrant depends on the time horizon considered (Sub-Saharan Africa has made progress over a 200-year horizon, but not for the last twenty years), whether one looks at absolute or relative quantities (the number of abysmally poor has remained unchanged for fifteen years, but their share of the world population decreased), and whether one looks at individuals or countries (the median developing country has experienced zero growth over the last twenty years; still, inequality between any two randomly chosen individuals has fallen, because of growth in India and China). Still, what is remarkable is not that so many now live in poverty, but that so many do not; not that so many die young, but that so many do not; not that so many are illiterate, but that so many are not. By and large, if one looks at the last 200, 100, or 50 years, things have improved dramatically for the poor. The 200-year and the

50-year horizon (roughly speaking) are especially significant. The former captures the period in which the industrial revolution has perfected the system of the division of labor, which has in turn led to technological advancements (originating largely in what are nowadays industrialized countries) , which have benefited everyone. The 50-year horizon captures the period in which a network of international organizations characterizing the global order has come into its own – a network whose absence would harm its weakest members the most. Historically speaking, the global order seems to have greatly benefited the poor. [5]

Other Benchmarks for Harm: Counterfactual and Fairness

My argument so far may seem philosophically naive. For while these data may be useful to get some sense of the status quo and its historical background, it may be argued (in agreement with Pogge) that such data is useless *as a benchmark of whether harm has been done*. Surely, one may say, developing countries are better off now than 200 years ago – but so were African-Americans under Jim Crow vis-à-vis the antebellum days. Even 200 years ago "we" and "they" belonged to a single global system, and "they" were already on a trajectory toward their current disadvantaged status. So it may seem cynical to say that developing countries are not being harmed because they are better off than at an earlier stage of an ongoing oppressive relationship. Should we not assess whether harm has been done by asking what things would have been like had European supremacists never invaded the rest of the globe?

[5] This, I think, is true even though the absolute (as opposed to the relative) number of people living in poverty is now higher than it was 200 years ago; while I find it hard to muster a conclusive argument for that claim, I find it intuitive that what matters here are relative, rather than absolute numbers.

The trouble with this benchmark is that it is impossible to say anything about it. It is conceivable, for example, that political structures would have emerged in Africa that would have allowed indigenous peoples to exploit the natural resource wealth of their continent, enabling them to build a culturally sophisticated and economically prosperous civilization. But it is equally conceivable that wars would have thwarted such efforts. The point is not that a certain threshold of reasonable certainty cannot be met, but that we must plead complete ignorance. The uncertainty of what people who, as it happened, were never born, would have done across centuries, how events would have turned out that, as it happened, never occurred, how lives would have been changed by innovations that, as it happened, were never made – such factors make it impossible to say what things would be like had the past been different. If we evaluate counterfactuals, we normally first assess what the world would be like were the antecedent true and then resort to cases where some claim similar to the antecedent in fact was true to evaluate whether the consequent of the counterfactual will be true in a world in which the antecedent is. Assessing the relevant counterfactuals here is impossible, especially since much turns on exercises of the will of merely possible people.

Researchers in comparative politics do engage heavily in counterfactual reasoning since causal claims depend on such speculation: they try to reduce the speculative part by *comparing*; that is, holding other factors constant, they compare countries in the World Trade Organization with similarly situated ones outside it; or, they compare a country's period of not belonging to the World Trade Organization with its period of belonging. However, when assessing the global order as such, we cannot apply this technique of holding other factors constant and judge what the world would be like had the current

global order not developed. We only have this one world to work with. So while we can make sense of claims about what the development of Poland would have been had it not joined the European Union, we cannot make sense of claims of what the world would now be like had the global order not developed.

Yet, *surely*, one may say, developing countries would be better off had they been left alone! While those counterfactuals may be hard to assess conclusively, they are *plausible*, and worrying about their verifiability violates Aristotle's advice to adjust accuracy standards to the subject matter. However, I suspect one may find this obvious because one compares developing countries to industrialized countries, observes that the latter did not face similar interference, and concludes that without such interference Africa, for example, would have prospered. We must resist such reasoning, since the reasons why such regions fell to conquerors may be the same reasons why they would have been unable to prosper without external interference. The political scientist Jeffrey Herbst has emphasized, for example, facts of physical geography in Africa that made it hard for powerful states to emerge, and this by itself makes for a big difference to Europe. And the historian Bernard Lewis has argued that the decline of Islamic societies was due to internal developments, rather than interference. While these are topics on which I cannot take a stance, we cannot simply assume that other parts of the world would have done better had they been left alone, and it is easy to see why we incline to do so.[6]

Maybe we get guidance to assessing the claim that "they" would be better off had "we" never invaded them by considering more empirically tractable claims, such as that

[6] Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); and Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East* (New York: Perennial, 2003).

developed countries are rich because they have oppressed developing countries, and that colonialism has inflicted lasting harm. The first view was defended prominently by Dependency Theorists. The dependency theory comes in different versions, the strongest claiming that "the North" became rich at the expense of "the South," and a weaker version claiming that there is some other dependency of the South on the North, for instance, that resources from "the South" become cheaper over time relative to manufactured goods from "the North." Yet Dependency Theory and related theories have become incredible to all but "a dwindling group of Marxist historians."[7] Such views have not withstood scrutiny, and even some of their strongest erstwhile defenders, like Brazil's former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso, have abandoned them. The exploitation, theft, and murder they brought upon other parts of the world notwithstanding, developed countries became rich because they industrialized, thereby benefiting from an ever more refined division of labor.

It is tempting to say that the global order must be unjust because colonialism has created disadvantaged countries. Yet this is not obvious. While it happened, colonialism disrupted people's lives, killing, mutilating, or enslaving many. But past injustice does not make the present order unjust, any more than past kindness makes it kind. We need arguments that there is persisting injustice rooted in colonialism. Historians tend to come to differentiated assessments of the colonial heritage. For instance, Braudel writes:

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[7] David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some are So Rich and Some So Poor* (New York: Norton, 1998), p. 381; see also p. 429; Paul Bairoch, in *Economics and World History* (New York: Harvester, 1993), argues that it was not because of exploitation of developing countries that developed countries did well . The classic of dependency theory is Fernando Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979). See Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, p. 510ff., for some comments on Cardoso's rise from leftist scholar to president of Brazil.

> Education and a certain level of technology, of hygiene, of medicine and of pubic administration: these were the greatest benefits left by the colonists, and some measure of compensation for the destruction which contact with Europe brought to old tribal, family, and social customs . . . . It will never be possible to gauge the full results of such novelties as employment for wages, a money economy, writing and individual ownership of land. Each was undoubtedly a blow to the former social regime. Yet these blows were surely a necessary part of the evolution taking place today. On the other hand, colonization had the real disadvantage of dividing Africa into a series of territories – French, English, German, Belgian, and Portuguese – whose fragmentation has been perpetuated today in too large a cluster of independent states, which are sometimes said to have "Balkanized" Africa.[8]

Most historians find colonial rule to have been inadequate while it lasted, but that does not mean that its legacy, all things considered, continues to impose harm that outweighs technological advances in infrastructure, medicine, and other areas that it brought. One does not need to be callous to think that, no matter how bad it was, one should not take for granted that colonialism created a world where the essence of the relationship between developed and developing countries is that the former *harm* the latter.

There is yet another way of articulating that developed countries are being harmed by the global order: a benchmark of fairness, where the reference point is a state of nature in which resources are distributed fairly. "'Worldwide 34,000 children under age five die daily from hunger and preventable diseases.' Try to conceive a state of nature that can match this amazing feat of our globalized civilization!" writes Pogge.[9] However, no such state-of-nature references can help in this context. They cannot distinguish between the view that *the global order* harms developing societies (Pogge's view), and any other view explaining how the present magnitude of global poverty could have arisen. Such references can only show that things are not as they should be, which does not reveal who is to blame for it.

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[8] Fernand Braudel, *A History of Civilizations* (New York: Penguin, 1987), p. 134.

[9] Thomas Pogge, "'Assisting' the Global Poor," in Deen K. Chatterjee, ed., *The Ethics of Assistance: Morality and the Distant Needy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

To conclude: the historical benchmark is the only benchmark among the three considered that we can make sense of, and in relation to that benchmark the global order has brought tremendous advances. Moreover, advances in medicine and food production are largely due to countries that have shaped that order. So, *as far as we can tell*, the global order has benefited the poor.

Let me briefly return to the scenario of African-Americans under Jim Crow: that, as some might argue, African-Americans were better off under Jim Crow vis-à-vis the antebellum days. About this scenario we can say more than that things were better in 1950 than in 1850. We can say that some participants in a single society sharing economic and political institutions were relegated to an inferior status. This evil can also be attributed to a group of perpetrators. By contrast, we have not yet been able to identify an ongoing evil for which the global order is responsible that is comparable to the way in which Southern whites were responsible for the plight of African-Americans long after the abolition of slavery. My reasoning does not therefore entail that Jim Crow should have inspired gratitude.

The Cosmopolitan Complaint and Explanatory Nationalism

I continue with a discussion of some of Pogge's arguments against the legitimacy of states as well as some alleged methodological biases that, according to Pogge, prevent us from seeing the harm states do (cf. chapter 7 of Pogge (2002), especially p 178 for a statement of his conception of a political system characterized by vertical dispersal of sovereignty, which is meant to replace the state system).

The existence of states entails that life prospects differ vastly, and are largely decided by birth. Yet, so one may argue, since membership in political systems is morally as arbitrary as race, life chances should not be so determined. Cosmopolitans like Pogge insist that individuals are the unit of moral concern, should be so equally, and should be so equally *to* everybody. Cosmopolitans take the existence of states, and a global order composed of them, to be wronging individuals by failing to respect their moral equality. Moreover, the global order acknowledges as governments any regime in charge of an accredited territory. This order thus provides incentives for despots to seize power by granting them what Pogge calls the resource and borrowing privilege, which enables them to sell resources or borrow money on behalf of a country's people: Both points are expressed in the

> Cosmopolitan Complaint: The global order harms individuals by sanctioning the sheer existence of states (which undermines the moral equality of individuals) as well as through an incentive system that instigates despotic regimes to seize power

A methodological concern accompanies these moral worries, to wit, that many theories in the social sciences take states for granted and cannot assess the extent to which the state system, and international structures based on it, harms the poor by influencing who shapes policy, what their options are, and what the impacts of these policies are. Pogge calls this deficiency "explanatory nationalism" – the fallacy of tracing development outcomes exclusively to domestic factors. One view to which Pogge would presumably apply this criticism is a stance on an ongoing macroeconomic debate

regarding the sources of wealth and poverty.[10] According to that view, the sources of wealth rest in institutional quality, rather than in world market integration or geography. Institutions "are the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction."[11] Yet those "humanly devised constraints" work to society's benefit only if most individuals support the "rules of the game." Moreover, while foreigners can destroy institutions, they can often do little to help build them.

The empirical support for this stance draws on data that do take states for granted.[12] Yet assessing whether the global order harms the poor while doing so, writes Pogge, is like explaining variance in student performances while ignoring teaching quality.[13] The Cosmopolitan Complaint and explanatory nationalism are related: the latter is one way of ignoring cosmopolitan concerns.

Let me begin my response with a brief comment on the resource and borrowing privilege. Pogge argues that, by acknowledging those privileges, the global order is causally involved in perpetuating poverty. While a careful treatment of this subject goes beyond what I can do here (as well as beyond what Pogge himself provides), I would like to express some skepticism about these claims. Undoubtedly the global order sets incentives that may sometimes explain why at *that* time *these* people launched *that* coup.

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[10] I have adopted this view in Mathias Risse, "What We Owe to the Global Poor," *Journal of Ethics*, forthcoming; as well as in Mathias Risse, "How Does the Global Order Harm the Poor?" forthcoming.
[11] Douglass North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 3.
[12] Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James Robinson, "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation," *American Economic Review* 91 (2002), pp. 1369–1401; and Dani Rodrik, Arvind Subramanian, and Francesco Trebbi, "Institutions Rule: The Primary of Institutions over Geography and Integration in Economic Development," forthcoming.
[13] Thomas Pogge, "'Assisting' the Global Poor," in Chatterjee, ed., *The Ethics of Assistance: Morality and the Distant Needy*, p 263.

But there has been oppression, often motivated by the sheer desire to rule, much longer than a global order has created incentives to do so. In light of this, one wonders whether the overall picture of oppression in the world would differ significantly if such privileges were only granted to regimes of impeccable moral standing. Authoritarian predators are *also* thieves, but they are mostly oppressors.

As far as the methodological worry concerning "explanatory nationalism", I agree that a society's economic and political status is shaped by a range of factors, some of which are domestic, some multilateral, and others global. For this reason, explanatory nationalism is as untenable as the view that a society's economic status is completely explained by global factors, a view Alan Patten calls "explanatory cosmopolitanism."[14] Yet although they organize data on a country-by-country basis, explanations of the causes of wealth (such as the institutional stance) can take note of nondomestic factors. The institutional view can do so by acknowledging circumstances under which, say, global factors are causally involved in the genesis of institutions. While the institutional stance explains growth in terms of institutions, it does not thereby commit itself to explaining institutions without reference to international factors. Overall, I think, explanatory nationalism in the social sciences is less of a problem than Pogge suggests.

Let us address the main point of the Cosmopolitan Complaint –the claim that the existence of states itself harms the poor. Consider the following prima facie case for states. First, individuals desire to live in peoples, groups tied together by what Rawls calls "common sympathies,"[15] that are, and for which individuals desire to be, the primary locus of social, economic, and political structures that persons belong to. Second,

[14] See Patten's contribution to this symposium.

[15] John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 24.

individuals desire that their people have the right to self-determination, and barring unacceptable effects on others this right should be granted. Third, citizenship in a self-determining people, though morally *arbitrary*, is morally *relevant*: moral equality across persons is consistent with governments giving special consideration to their citizens and citizens to each other. Fellow citizens are subject to the same body of laws that, in virtue of its impact on their autonomy, must be justifiable to each of them, but not to those not subject to them. While these views are consistent with a range of proposals about reforms of the existing state system, they are inconsistent with a principled rejection of states.[16]

This view should be developed by including an ideal of sovereignty not as complete absence of supervision, but one in which countries are independent, in a sense in which colonies were dependent on their so-called mother-countries. That qualified ideal of self-determination is, *as an ideal*, already embodied in the global order, as captured by UN documents. This prima facie case in support of states also sheds more light on Pogge's claims about the resource and borrowing privilege. The incentives that these privileges set for authoritarian predators cause harm in precisely those situations in which authoritarian predators are in charge and where self-determination of peoples is therefore *not* properly realized. To the Cosmopolitan Complaint that the global order should be denounced because it provides incentives for authoritarian predators to seize power, the response is that the circumstances under which that happens are precisely those under which one of its central ideals is not yet realized.

[16] This sketch must be extended to a full-fledged argument in support of the existence of states; I do some work toward that end in "What We Owe to the Global Poor." The distinction between "morally arbitrary" and "morally relevant," which I think is very important in this context, is due to Michael Blake, "Distributive Justice, State Coercion, and Autonomy," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 30 (2001), pp. 257–97).

This prima facie case in support of states does not yet reject Pogge's claim that the sheer existence of states harms the poor. Undoubtedly, the existence of states *harms* individuals in the sense of thwarting many people's interests (for example, the interests of those who would rather live elsewhere). Unclear, however, is whether this involves a *wrong*. To show that it does not, we need to add a justification of states *to those excluded from them*. The following ways of articulating the view that the existence of states constitutes a wrong strike me as most important, and it is these objections that must thus be refuted for it to be justified. First, one may say that such exclusion is wrongfully coercive, and second, that no group of people has the right to occupy land at the exclusion of others.

Elsewhere, I have offered responses to both of these objections, and will restrict myself here to a sketch of a response to the former.[17] States get much justification for prohibiting uncontrolled immigration if they do something morally defensible or praiseworthy, which they cannot do without having such power. What states do that justifies such protection is to provide for their members by maintaining a morally defensible legal framework and social system. Many states do not do so, and this justification fails to apply to those that do not. But there are states that pass the relevant moral tests, and hence acquire the right to maintain their existence by prohibiting uncontrolled access. It is consistent with this view that states have obligations toward people in need (refugees, asylum-seekers), or must offer support in institution building. Regulating access to states is coercive, but only in the Hobbesian sense in which any impediment is a deprivation of liberty. Such coercion, justified along the lines just

[17] Both points are addressed in "What We Owe to the Global Poor", but the concern about the original ownership of the earth is discussed most carefully in "How Does the Global Order Harm the Poor?" (where, however, the concern is not with the legitimacy of states).

sketched, is similar to coercion in domestic contexts that keeps people from seizing each other's property. As individuals within states should be allowed to have property to pursue meaningful projects, states should be as well. Such coercion does not undermine the *moral equality* of persons, and is not *wrongfully* coercive.

Much more needs to be said, but I think that states can indeed be justified in this way to those that are excluded from them. The Cosmopolitan Complaint therefore fails to show that the existence of states wrongs the poor. Moreover, the ideal of moral equality captured by Pogge's cosmopolitanism introduced above is consistent with this defense (which separates political equality from moral equality). On balance, I submit, we should not say the global order per se is *unjust*, but that it is *imperfectly developed*: it needs reform rather than a revolutionary overthrow (in the form of a replacement by a system of political units characterized by vertically dispersed sovereignty, as suggested by Pogge).

Pogge suggests that one goal of macro-explanations transcending national factors is to explain why so many countries are poor and so few are rich (as opposed to explaining the economic status of this or that country). Yet we must be careful in asking this question. If one considers suicide rates in specific countries, micro-explanations at the level of individual suicides will not capture the full story: societal factors have to be considered. There are two senses in which we can inquire about such factors. First, we may ask a non-comparative question about which societal factors matter; and second, we may ask a comparative question about why some particular country has a different suicide rate than similar countries. These two approaches are related (assessing the comparative claim is a way of ensuring that the noncomparative explanation is complete;

assessing the noncomparative claim identifies those countries to which one should draw comparisons), but they respond to different inquiries.

Now consider the question, Why are so many countries poor and so few rich? This question can only be asked noncomparatively: we have no sense of "what is to be expected" in a manner in which we do when other countries with certain characteristics have a lower suicide rate than the country we are considering. It is plausible to say that the country with a higher suicide rate "than expected" has good reason to identify and try to change the relevant factors because something is obviously going wrong in that society that does not go wrong in similarly situated societies. But this sort of reasoning does not apply if we have no clear sense of "what is to be expected," as is the case with the question of "why are so many countries poor and so few rich." Whatever is wrong with the fact that "so many countries are poor and so few are rich," it is not that there is an obvious gap between "what is to be expected" and what is the case. The perception that there is such a gap may contribute to the intuition that evils like poverty and starvation must be attributable to some entity that can be regarded as "doing the harming." This perception rests on a mistake.