Global Justice: From Institutional to Individual Principles

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Forthcoming in *Social Theory and Practice*.

Abstract: Thomas Pogge's (2006) framework of global justice can be adapted for individual agents or collective unilateral donations in the same way Peter Singer's framework has been. I do so by amending Pogge's institutional principles for international human rights NGOs and by adding two further principles to address challenges that arise when his framework is applied. This adapted framework enjoins donors to make principled philanthropic decisions that prioritize existing and near-term suffering, while also rectifying their part in causing this suffering. It makes Pogge's negative duty account easier to implement than his previous proposal, and provides well-off individuals with an alternative to Effective Altruism.

Keywords: global justice, global poverty, effective altruism, human rights, Pogge, Singer

Introduction

Peter Singer and Thomas Pogge offer two of the most influential ethical approaches to alleviating global injustice. They both argue that citizens of well-off states have a moral obligation to the world's poor, regardless of geographical distance (Singer 1986; Pogge 2005).[1] Singer anchors our responsibility to the poor on a positive duty, namely the fact that we can prevent the vast majority

[1] Though different in their arguments for why we have moral obligations to global poverty, both Peter Singer and Thomas Pogge agree on the premise: first, that all humans are created equal, regardless of sex, ethnicity, nationality, and place of residence; second, that no one should endure unnecessary suffering (Singer 1986; Pogge 2005). I assume my audience agrees with the two premises.

of people from living in such life-threatening poverty without incurring significant costs to ourselves. On the other hand, Pogge argues that we have violated and continue to violate a negative duty not to harm the global poor, because we contribute to an unjust distributive structure that benefits us but does not provide the poor's basic necessities. For Pogge, negative duties are more stringent than positive duties, as we have stronger moral obligations to mitigate harms that we cause than those we merely can prevent but do not cause (2006: 249–50).

Despite a more stringent account of how an average citizen is causally connected to, and thus responsible for, redressing global poverty, Pogge's approach has a major limitation. He focuses on how citizens of affluent countries can discharge their negative duty to the global poor through enacting institutional reform. This is because, according to Pogge, institutional reform is far more impactful than changes made by individual agents or collective unilateral donations. But even if he is correct about the importance of institutional reform, the fact remains that it has proven very difficult to enact in practice (see §1).

In the meantime, every year, tens of millions of people are pushed into extreme poverty and unnecessary suffering. Given the difficulty of institutional reform, many individuals—motivated by the desire to help with pressing moral needs right now—have been attracted to movements such as Singer's Effective Altruism (EA), which offer them a set of actionable principles and guidelines. But there are major concerns with this framework as well. It faces criticism for catering to affluent donors' whimsical philanthropic decisions, but lacks a strong critique of the means by which their capital is accumulated in the first place. It also treats extinction risk as humanity's overriding concern while neglecting existing suffering (Conroy 2022).

My contribution to the existing literature on this topic will be twofold. First, I will argue that Pogge's framework of global justice can be adapted for individual agents or collective

unilateral donations in the same way Singer's framework has been. I do so by amending Pogge's institutional principles for international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) focused on human rights (2006).[2] Second, this adapted framework can address the concerns faced by both Pogge's and Singer's frameworks. It makes Pogge's negative duty account easier to implement than his previous proposal, and also provides well-off individuals an alternative to EA.

In §1, I focus on why it is important to adapt Pogge's framework so that it applies to individuals, and not just institutions. In §2, I argue that Pogge's four fundamental normative principles for human rights INGOs can also apply to individuals but need to be supplemented by two further principles to address particular challenges that arise when Pogge's framework is so applied. The first new principle obliges us to respect beneficiaries' values and preferences when they differ from that of the benefactors. This is demanded by our negative duty to not violate their right to decide how to secure their basic human rights. The second additional principle requires individuals to deliberate about their participation in the global system and redress any distinct wrongs they have played a part in causing. This adapted framework enjoins donors to make principled philanthropic decisions that prioritize existing and near-term suffering, while also recognizing and rectifying their part in causing this suffering. In §3, I show that developing such principles for individuals has the additional advantage of addressing certain challenges to Pogge's framework, which he explicitly identifies in his work.

[2] According to Pogge's latest publication, the concept of institutional and structural change extends beyond the narrow scope of significant modifications to longstanding policies, systems, and institutions that are deeply codified and entrenched in society (2023: 7). Rather, it encompasses a broad range of modifications to organizational structures, norms, and customary practices. More generally, institutional change encompasses modifications made to the environment of a set of actors, which leads to a lasting impact on the distribution of power, opportunities and incentives. Under this definition, his moral principles for INGOs, which refer to the criteria that a reasonable decision procedure should meet, are considered institutional principles. This is because they have long-lasting effects on power, opportunities, and incentives within their field, based on their norms, policies, and practices. They also work to effect institutional change in the narrow definition by challenging established practices and advocating for policy changes, leading to modifications in the environment and long-term changes in power relations, opportunities, and incentives.

1. The Importance of Adapting Pogge's Institutional Principles to Individuals

The global community has made a commitment to end poverty by 2030, but current data show that there is still a long way to go. Despite some progress in the last two decades, there are still 676.5 million people living in extreme poverty on less than $1.90 per day (United Nations 2022). The world is not on track to end poverty by 2030, the number one millennium development goal that all 191 United Nations member states committed to. In fact, the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine crisis have pushed an additional 93 million people into extreme poverty (ibid). This is compounded by the fact that large segments of humanity die and suffer from treatable diseases and chronic poverty. In 2021 alone, roughly 13,800 children under five died every day from largely preventable diseases (UNICEF Data 2023).

While economic growth in Asian countries, particularly China and India, has contributed to the reduction in global poverty rates (Kharas and Dooley 2022), it has also led to increased inequality within these countries, with India now being among the most unequal nations in the world and China is at risk of following suit (Banerjee and Duflo 2022). Poverty rates in Latin America have been increasing since 2015, and Africa has seen a steady rise in poverty rates, with an 11% increase due to the pandemic (Kharas and Dooley 2022). In addition, inequality has reached unprecedented levels, with the poorest half of the global population possessing only 2% of the total wealth while the richest 10% own 76% (Chancel et al. 2022: 10).[3]

[3] Pogge distinguishes poverty and inequality as interconnected yet conceptually distinct injustices with different manifestations and implications (Pogge and Bhatt 2011). However, he identifies their shared origin in unjust global economic institutions that enable concentration of wealth and power among elites, disadvantaging the poor. Pogge underscores that persistent poverty stems not from scarce resources alone, but from an economic institutional order entrenching income disparities. The trend in recent years has been moving in the worse direction, exacerbating poverty through declines in the relative share of the most impoverished (Chancel et al. 2022: 10).

Pogge's theory of negative duties posits that individuals are complicit in an unjust distribution of resources that favors the wealthy, but fails to provide the poor with their basic needs.[4] However, a pertinent question arises: how precisely are individuals implicated in the unjust global order, given that no single person wields the power to change it?

The unjust global order is not a natural occurrence, but rather a result of citizens from wealthy countries supporting it through their elected governments.[5] Even if citizens do not support every foreign policy, they are still complicit in their state's injustice as long as the state is acting legitimately and according to basic constitutional essentials.[6] Hence, a claim of ignorance does not exonerate citizens from the responsibility of their government's unjust policies. As citizens, we bear the duty to demand accountability and transparency in our government's policies. However, citizens who actively work against unjust foreign policies may be exempt from such liability. For instance, at a minimum, when confronted with such policies, one can express one's readiness to participate in collective political efforts for change. This may manifest in various ways, such as endorsing relevant online petitions, scrutinizing political candidates' stances on global issues and their historical records on said policy, or engaging directly with elected officials to voice one's concerns. Though the individual capacity for altering global institutional orders may be limited, concerted action among likeminded individuals can exert meaningful influence over the political

[4] Pogge's argument does not suggest that the global order is the only cause of poverty, nor does it imply that other factors are blameless. Pogge acknowledges that domestic factors play a crucial role but argues that they are heavily influenced by international causes as well (2002: 23).

[5] Thanks to two anonymous reviewers for urging me to speak to the connection between institutional actions and ordinary individuals. A comprehensive exploration of the theory of individual responsibility for collective wrongdoing is beyond the scope of this paper. See Stilz 2011 for a Kantian justification of this view.

[6] I present an extension of an argument similar to the one made by Cordelli regarding domestic philanthropy in affluent democracies, to the foreign policies of legitimate democratic states (2016: 246–50). This extension is warranted because the actions of a state with regards to its foreign policies are viewed as being representative of the wishes of its citizens, just as domestic policies are. Cordelli also addresses in length other objections including why we are not released from this reparative duty even if (1) we cannot determine what exactly our fair share is, (2) when other citizens are not doing their fair share, or (3) our contributions would be completely futile (2016: 253–56).

landscape and the decisions made by governing bodies at the local, state, or even global level. Although determining what constitutes enough injustice-offsetting action can be difficult, a general guideline is to consider what individuals in specific circumstances can be reasonably expected to have known and done, thus allowing for varying degrees of responsibility based on an individual's role within the institutional order and their specific circumstances. Therefore, the claim that individuals are incapable of doing anything about unjust global orders is unfounded.

Despite a more stringent argument on how an average citizen of a well-off state is causally connected to, and thus responsible for, global poverty, Pogge's framework of global justice has not been adopted by many individuals. That's because Pogge's major recommendations primarily focus on moderate and feasible reforms of the global institutional order, leaving individuals to discharge their moral obligations through prioritizing political actions that will bring about global institutional reforms (Pogge 2002: 204–15).[7]

Pogge provides three principal reasons why global poverty is best addressed through efforts aiming at institutional factors, with an emphasis on the rules governing national and international economic transactions. First, small changes in these rules governing international trade, lending, investment, resource use, or intellectual property can have a higher impact on global poverty. Second, unintended effects of these rules are easier to diagnose and correct compared to individual or collective conduct. Third, structural reform is more sustainable in the long term and requires lower costs compared to relying on repeated personal decisions and donations (2005: 737–39).

Pogge might be correct that institutional reform is a more important and fundamental issue

[7] For example, Pogge suggests the creation of global oversight committees that would be in charge of adjusting the global income distribution and of mitigating structural injustices that perpetuate human rights deficits. He suggests a Democracy Panel to determine the authenticity of fledgling democracies, Global Resources Dividend guidelines to charge nations a dividend (tax) on any resources that they use or sell, and a Health Impact Fund whose annual budget might require $6 billion in commitments from national governments. He dedicates most of his authorship to such solutions, advising how an institution should start changing its rules ("Thomas Pogge Homepage" 2022).

to address in global justice. However, there are empirical reasons to think that institutional reforms are frustratingly difficult to enact, at least in the short term.[8] For instance, many of the world's richest countries committed to contributing 0.7% of their gross national income to Official Development Assistance (ODA), but the commitment was never fulfilled (OECD n.d.a.).[9] Instead, the percentage has decreased over the years, despite many countries repeatedly re-endorsing the target at the highest level since 1970 (OECD n.d.b.).[10]

In contrast, cross-border philanthropic funds funded by individual and organizational donations have steadily increased. According to Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, out of the United States' total foreign assistance of $85 billion in 2020, cross-border philanthropic funds contributed 58% (2023: 26). That's almost $13 billion more than ODA.[11] According to Giving USA, in 2021, 67% of global donations to charities and NGOs come from individuals, and the remaining 33% comes from bequest, corporations and foundations (2022). The fact, then, is that individual contributions are the number one source of actual money spent on the global poor. Even though institutional reform can still be more impactful, it is clear from the outpouring of donations that many individual contributors are motivated to make concrete moral

[8] Ostrom makes an even stronger argument: focusing solely on global institutional solutions to climate change may worsen the problem (2009: 27), because this approach is slow and may miss opportunities for critical adaptations and migrations. Also, global solutions alone are not guaranteed to work without efforts at the national, regional, and local levels. A polycentric approach involving multiple scales and actors may be necessary for effective climate change management (2009: 4).

[9] ODA is one of the most important ways that affluent countries promote the economic development of poorer countries and the welfare of their people. The other three main sources of cross-border giving are philanthropic outflows, remittances, and private capital investment (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy 2023). Here we attempt to compare the magnitude and change in ODA and philanthropic outflows, as ODA is donation at the institutional level, whereas philanthropic outflows are donations by individual agents.

[10] Global ODA, once 0.51% of gross national income in 1960, has shrunk from 0.32% in 1990 to 0.22% in 2000, only increased back to 0.33% in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD n.d.a.). United States never committed to the 0.7% ODA/GNI target, but experienced similar trend from starting out at 0.21% in 2009, to decreasing to 0.15%, to slightly bouncing back to 0.18% (OECD iLibrary n.d.).

[11] The data align with the statistics Pogge cited more than a decade ago: "[out of] the $13 billion the rich countries actually spend each year to protect the global poor: about $7 billion are given by the citizens of rich countries through INGOs, and about $5.7 billion…by ODA for basic social services" (2006: 219).

differences towards global justice now.

Singer's Effective Altruism (EA) movement has successfully leveraged the growing momentum of individual contribution to address global poverty, harnessing almost half a billion in donation and billions more in committed future donation (Todd 2021).[12] Despite its success, EA has faced numerous criticisms, especially since November 2022 when a major donor to EA misused billions of client funds (Mack 2022). The earn-to-give ethics of EA consider accumulating capital a positive force if donated, without a strong critique of the legitimacy of certain industries or means of accumulating that capital (Conroy 2022). In addition, longtermism championed by the EA community (Todd 2017) has led some core members to fantastical conclusions, such as the claim that "every $100 spent [on creating a friendly superintelligence] has…an impact as valuable as saving one trillion [actual human lives in the future]" (Greaves and MacAskill 2021: 15), and that "because a life in a rich country is more likely to influence the far future, it is substantially more worth saving than a life in a poor country" (Beckstead 2013: 11).[13] EA's focus on preventing future harm at the expense of rectifying existing and near-term harm overlooks the weight of our negative duty towards the world's poor and the gross injustices in which we are complicit in causing, yet remain inadequately addressed. Thus, an alternative to EA is necessary to inspire motivated affluent individuals to contribute in a more morally justifiable manner.

Given the manifest difficulties in enacting institutional reform and the ever-growing interest and willingness from individual contributors to take action, there is a compelling reason to refine Pogge's account so as to apply also to individuals, not just institutions. Considering the

[12] Between 2015 and 2021, around $420 million was donated each year to EA causes, growing at 21% per year (Todd 2021). An estimated $46 billion was committed to be donated in the future, with a growth rate of about 37% each year. Currently there are 10,000 members in the EA community, growing even faster from 2019–2021 than 2015–2017 (ibid).

[13] Singer has also cautioned against longtermist views (2021).

hundreds of millions of people enduring unnecessary suffering right now, Pogge's forceful argument could both attract new donors who are not convinced by Singer's beneficence-based reasoning, and provide existing donors an alternative framework to EA.[14] Similar to how EA rose in popularity among affluent individuals, Pogge could develop a list of principles for individual actions, guidelines on how people should act based on these principles, and a strong community to foster such actions. In the next section, I will attempt the first step—developing a set of actionable principles for individuals to discharge their negative moral obligations.[15]

2. A Preliminary Attempt: From Institutional to Personal Principles

Imagine you are an individual who is convinced by Pogge's argument and want to contribute to some of the existing human rights projects to compensate for the harm you have caused and are causing. How do you decide which projects to prioritize? If Pogge's institutional principles can be interpreted in an individualistic way, they are a good starting point for developing such a list guiding the actions of individuals.

Within the normative frameworks and principles developed by Pogge, his principles from the paper "Moral Priorities for International Human Rights NGOs" (2006: 222–28) are the most fitting for guiding the actions of individuals. As I have shown in §1, the number one source of cross-border philanthropic funds is channeled through INGOs by individual contributors. If these principles should apply to INGOs (the agents responsible for discharging their donors' moral

[14] There has been discussion around whether new forms of philanthropy erode democracy (Horvath and Powell, 2016). The philanthropic actions I promote in this paper should be contributory instead of disruptive to democracy.

[15] I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting that further research on institutional reforms that will lead to global improvements, particularly research translated into actionable guidelines for ordinary citizens, is vital. While fully exploring this issue exceeds the scope of this paper, I hope that highlighting the core claim of Pogge's negative duty account—namely, that global injustice stems from unjust global orders—will promote further research and discussion bridging the gap between citizens and democratic decision-making processes. Ultimately, this could enable affluent citizens to make well-informed judgments regarding the causes and consequences of institutional harms.

duties), then it should also be beneficial for the donors to follow these principles in choosing which project or INGO to donate to, and in holding them accountable.

The "Four Basic Counters" Pogge proposes in the abovementioned paper are:

Other things (including cost) being equal, it is more important, morally speaking, to

(A) protect a person from greater serious harm than from lesser;

(B) protect persons from harm the more such harm they would otherwise be suffering;

(C) achieve some given harm protection for more persons than for fewer; and

(D) choose cheaper candidate projects over more expensive ones.[16]

From an individual's perspective, the principles dictate that, if I could protect more people (C) from more harm (A), the more such harm they would otherwise be suffering (B) with fewer resources (D), I should certainly do so.[17]

In order to address the particular challenges that are raised when Pogge's framework applies to individuals, two further principles are required:

(E) protect persons from what *they* consider to be harmful;

(F) protect persons whose harm one is more responsible in causing.

Principle (E) addresses the conflict when beneficiaries' values and preferences differ from

[16] Principle (D) stipulates that the worthiness of a candidate project should be determined by its overall moral value (harm protection) divided by its overall cost (Pogge 2006: 228). In practice, ascertaining the precise degree of harm protection for each project, and assessing the probabilities involved, is a challenging task. Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, we should apply our most informed estimate as a benchmark.

[17] Principle (A) (C) (D) are consequentialist in nature, with the exception of Principle (B), which incorporates a prioritarian element akin to Rawls' maximin principle, emphasizing the improvement of the worst-off. Pogge presents an example to illustrate his point: Villages X and Y have equal populations and demographics, so a stove donation would benefit both equally in terms of harm reduction (2006: 224). However, Village X is extremely poor compared to Y. Pogge's Principle (B) prioritizes more vulnerable groups, so the INGO should donate the stove to Village X. The concept of "harm protection" considers the moral value of harm reductions, not just their magnitude. Although the harm reduced is equal in both villages, the moral value is greater for the more vulnerable Village X. Therefore, donating the stove to Village X provides more harm protection. This is an important addition to Singer's utilitarian principles. Though Singer might be able to figure out an alternative utilitarian formula where worse-off people's utility is differently weighted and thus be able to reach the same conclusion, this principle captures our intuition that all else being equal, we should help the more vulnerable.

that of the benefactors. Compared to institutions of a secular nation state, individual contributors have personal beliefs and specific preferences, so disagreements between individual benefactors and beneficiaries are more likely to arise. Principle (E) mandates benefactors to respect the values and preferences of beneficiaries, given that principles (A)–(D) are met to maximize harm protection and that the beneficiaries' preferences fall within the realm of basic human rights, the violation of which we are obligated to redress. This principle is especially demanded by Pogge's negative duty account, in contrast to Singer's positive duty account. That is because, according to Pogge,

> Had rich countries pursued a different path of globalization in the last fifteen years, the problem of severe poverty would be a fraction of its present size. Insofar as we citizens of rich countries (through our governments) participate in, or profit from, the imposition of this unjust order, we are materially involved in a large majority of all the harm human beings are suffering worldwide. (2006: 254)

In other words, had rich countries pursued a different path of globalization, the beneficiaries would have had enough resources *and* the agency to decide how to use those resources to secure their basic human rights. As citizens of these rich and powerful countries, we are implicated in causing the beneficiaries two types of harm: (1) their not having enough resources to fulfill their basic human rights; and (2) their not having the agency to decide how to use these resources to secure their basic human rights according to their values and preferences.[18] Since we have stronger moral obligations to mitigate harms that we cause (or are implicated in) than those we can prevent, we have stronger reasons to mitigate both types of harm based on Pogge's negative duty account than Singer's positive duty account. Thus, Pogge's account demands more from individual contributors

[18] Recent work in recognition theory also supports this claim (Schweiger 2014 and Pilapil 2020). Poverty can be classified as a social condition that involves different forms of misrecognition, including not being recognized as an autonomous agent involved in decision-making processes, as poverty limits one's freedom on many levels. Thus, a recognition-based approach to poverty alleviation requires the poor to be involved in decision-making and their agency be recognized and respected (Schweiger 2014).

to alleviate the second type of harm by respecting the beneficiaries' values and preferences and protecting them from what *they* consider to be more harmful.

Principle (F) is supported by common sense morality. It applies to both institutions and individuals, but it is worth emphasizing for the individualistic application. Pogge suggests it is much harder to know how the conducts of individual or collective agents are materially involved in causing certain harms compared to that of institutions (2005: 737–39), so we should not try to distinguish which harm we are more responsible in causing among the "large majority of all the harm humans beings are suffering worldwide" (2006: 254). Certainly it is often difficult to assess the consequences of an individual's actions within the global system, so in most situations, Principle (F) should not cause significant departures from principles (A)–(E). But that is not always the case. There are ways an individual participates in the global system which make her *distinctly* more responsible for some harms than others.

In spite of the complex ways in which we act within the global system, many of us are well aware of the broad outlines of the consequences of our actions on the poor.[19] For example, the officers of the World Bank are more responsible for mitigating the harm caused by a particular policy they have proposed, approved, or rejected, because they can be more reasonably expected to foresee and therefore try to avoid the harm. The executives from the twenty-five companies that have contributed to more than half of global industrial emissions since 1988 are more responsible for the particular effects of environmental harm caused by them, to the extent that they have the power to enact or derail an important decision leading to those harms (Riley 2017). As social media amass more influence around the globe, employees of tech companies who are aware of the

[19] See Zheng 2018 about Role-Ideal Model (RIM), which describes in details how we are each responsible for structural injustice through and in virtue of our social roles as parents, employees, employers, citizens, etc., because "roles are the site where structure meets agency" (870).

harmful programs and applications that cause large-scale disinformation and manipulation, but choose to remain silent, are more responsible for those harms. When we know certain goods are produced under inhumane conditions, but we go on buying them anyway, we are more responsible for harms caused by the unjust production. When we are aware that our choices of transportation, car purchases, and investments in home power consumption can have small yet cumulative effects on the global atmosphere, we are responsible for the environmental harm caused by our actions (Ostrom 2009: 14). When we know a certain political decision will harm the world's poor, but do not do what can be reasonably expected of us to stop it (by voting, calling a senator or congressman, or signing petitions), we are more responsible for people harmed by this decision.

An additional dimension that merits consideration is whether one benefits from a given injustice. Typically, when one derives benefit from an injustice, one is also connected to that injustice in such a way that one is contributing to it.[20] For instance, if we are aware that certain goods are produced under inhumane conditions, but we continue to purchase them, we are perpetuating the injustice of subjecting individuals to inhumane working conditions by supporting such production and creating a demand for more such goods. However, merely benefiting from global injustice that wrongfully harms others does not necessarily entail a duty of compensation, as long as they do not perpetuate the injustice themselves, even if the benefit is sought voluntarily. A case in point is that many academics intentionally benefit from writing books on global injustices, and they would not reap such benefits if those injustices did not exist (Cordelli 2020: 245).[21]

[20] For a detailed discussion on this topic, see Anwander (2005) and Pogge (2005b: 69–74).
[21] Cordelli also argues that individuals may have a duty to compensate others for an injury they negligently caused, regardless of whether they benefited or not. Even if the wealthy do not benefit from a system that under-provides basic goods and services, they may still acquire duties of reparative justice if they are causally responsible for the policies that harm the poor (2020: 246–48).

Benefiting can become an even more egregious form of contribution to injustice when it occurs at the expense of rendering the victims worse off than they would otherwise be. For instance, consider the instance when the U.S. delegation voted against breast feeding in the WHO election and threatened third-world countries to drop the resolution, in favor of the interests of the $70 billion infant formula manufacturers (Jacobs 2018). A research indicated that if breastfeeding were universally adopted, it could prevent the deaths of 800,000 children worldwide each year, while simultaneously saving $300 billion in reduced healthcare costs and improved economic outcomes (UNICEF 2016). The decision makers in formula companies who lobbied delegates to vote against breastfeeding, and the delegates who prioritized the benefits of infant formula manufacturers over the health of vulnerable children in third-world countries, not only benefitted from the injustice but also widened the competitive gap between affluent countries and more vulnerable populations.

Thus, while benefiting from a harmful practice does not always imply a duty of compensation, certain forms of benefiting can be considered as actual contributions to injustice, particularly when intentional and at the cost of rendering the victims worse off. This provides a salient rule to evaluate one's benefits and assess which harms one is more responsible for contributing to, as demanded by Principle (F): Which of my benefits reproduce further injustices? Which of my benefits knowingly makes the vulnerable worse off?

Principle (F) requires individuals to actively examine their participation in this system and redress any clear wrongs they have played a part in causing. It holds individuals responsible for what they could have done or should have known given their particular role in the global system and the particular situations they are in.

3. Resolving Challenges to Pogge's Framework

In this final section, I show that applying these principles to individuals has the additional advantage of addressing the main challenges to Pogge's framework, which he explicitly identifies in Section III of his paper "Moral Priorities for International Human Rights NGOs".

Pogge raises six additional issues which challenge these four principles as applied to institutions. The issues apply just as well to these principles when adapted to individuals, since individual contributors choose which INGO to donate to, and are ultimately responsible for holding the INGOs accountable. Pogge seems confident that the four principles can adequately answer the first two issues, but for the remaining four he seems less certain (2006: 237–41).[22] I argue in this section that once we apply the same principles to individual contributors, the third and fourth issues can be better addressed. The fifth and sixth issues, in turn, can be resolved respectively through the addition of the two further principles I have proposed.

I will first summarize and address issue (3) and (4) because they can both be addressed in the same way.

Issue (3): Fund-Raising. Project G is more cost effective but project H captures greater media attention and would attract substantially more funding. If one INGO running project G shifts to H for more funding, should another project G-running INGO also shift to H? If the INGO decides not to, it will have to accept the subsequent reduction in its funding; if all other project G-running INGOs decide to shift to H, they will all have to accept the subsequent reduction in global INGO effectiveness. Pogge's solution suggests that all INGOs should take into account the

[22] The first two issues are "Extinction and Diversity" and "Risk and Uncertainty". The former inquires whether 500 Amazonian natives, who are at a higher risk of extinction, should be prioritized over 5,000 malnourished Ethiopians. Pogge posits that, in the rare circumstance that an INGO is faced with such a decision, the loss of a nation or culture must be considered in the calculation. The latter issue examines how INGOs ought to discern between initiatives with varying degrees of risk and uncertainty. Pogge maintains that the best educated estimate of probability-weighted value must be factored into the decision-making process.

accretive new funds Project H is able to attract, but it is unclear to him what an INGO should do if all other INGOs are "defecting" to the more donor-enticing projects instead of the intrinsically more cost-effective projects.

Issue (4): Discriminating Contributors. Suppose the affluent contributors are mostly white and somewhat racist. They would like to protect white children over children of color. Pogge is unsure if the INGO should accept the donation if the racist contributors bring significant more funding for another similarly cost-effective project or combat such racism unless the trade-off between racism spurned and additional lives saved becomes too high. He does not specify what exactly the acceptable tradeoff would be.

The problem that lies behind these two cases concerns unprincipled contributors. If Pogge's principles only apply to institutions (as he intends), INGOs will always face these issues. But this adapted individualistic framework can effectively respond to affluent donors who believe that giving back according to their own preferences indemnify them from the injustice they have caused. It is common for donors to think they should decide where their money goes, as people often believe, "it is their money, after all." GiveWell, part of the EA movement that ranks charities' cost-effectiveness, recommends donors to "choose the top charity (or charities) you prefer" (GiveWell. n.d.).[23] But Pogge's negative duty account demands that what individual contributors *prefer* should not matter. The principles require that the affluent donors proactively recognize and rectify the distinct harms they have caused (F), alleviate these harms for the most vulnerable (B) as cost-effectively as possible (A, C, D), and prioritize the beneficiaries' values and preferences instead of their own (E). For donors to prefer less cost-effective or racist projects would go against that negative duty. In fact, doing so violates more negative duties, as they will be perpetuating the

[23] EA does not give donors complete freedom on how to spend their donations, but it does impose less limitation than Pogge's negative duty account.

unjust distributive structure that do not protect those who need harm protection the most.

Influencing donor beliefs and behaviors can seem difficult in practice, but people might be more receptive to Pogge's argument than we think. In a recent empirical study to test the effectiveness of Singer and Pogge's argument in motivating different beliefs and behaviors regarding poverty alleviation, Pogge's negative duty argument, in particular, had a statistically significant effect on encouraging donations (Buckland et al. 2022). It is, therefore, important to popularize Pogge's forceful argument among individuals, so that more people are motivated to take principled actions.

But unprincipled donors who believe they can dictate their donations will always exist, requiring further institutional reform to minimize such individual biases. A good case in point is the recent House of Commons Committee reports duly acknowledged by the UK government (International Development Committee 2022 and 2023). The reports recommend major funding organizations and INGOs to decentralize donation spending decisions, mandate diversity and inclusion strategies, and develop new success metrics for INGOs based on power, money, and voice devolution to the local community. These measures aim to ensure diverse input and review processes to scrutinize biased decisions. If they are diligently enforced, it may even be plausible to suggest that INGOs could retain the donations by unprincipled donors and redirect them towards addressing the social problem created or exacerbated by the donors' actions, as demanded by Principle (F). However, accountability mechanisms for the INGOs, such as a public reporting system for bias incidents, consequences for biased decision-making, and third-party oversight, are necessary for such discretion.

While issues (3) and (4) can be addressed by applying the existing principles to individuals, issues (5) and (6) require the addition of new principles.

Issue (5): Local Participation. Pogge argues that giving the beneficiary a voice and a role in the planning and execution of an INGO's work is instrumental in determining how the INGO's resources ought to be deployed, but "it is not subject to refutation or modification by [beneficiaries'] baldly stated opposing convictions or preferences…When differences about ultimate values persist in the dialogue [between the INGO and the local group], the INGO must in the end decide by itself how to proceed…" (2006: 248). Pogge is right that it is not feasible to involve all potential beneficiaries in making primary decisions such as where the INGO should operate, and that principles (A)–(D) are sufficient guidelines for these decisions. But once an INGO has decided on a primary location, say the largest refugee camp in Africa, and its ultimate ends of providing food to undernourished people, how should the INGO proceed if benefactors and beneficiaries have opposing convictions or preferences?

An example Pogge himself raises earlier in the paper illustrates this point (2006: 223). Consider a man who may believe that he would suffer greater harm by failing to fulfill an expensive religious duty than by being undernourished. The individuals donating to an INGO may disagree with these priorities. In this example, the benefactors and the beneficiary disagree about what is more harmful. Should the contributors enable him to fulfill his expensive religious duty or to buy food? Would it be paternalistic to impose our own notion of harm on those we are seeking to protect? Pogge does not provide an answer.

For argument's sake, let us modify the example slightly so that the circumstances satisfy principles (A)–(D). Imagine a large group of people who believe that they would suffer greater harm by failing to fulfill an expensive religious duty than by being undernourished. In this example, Principle (A) is satisfied as their undernourishment objectively harms their life expectancy more than not fulfilling the religious duty; (B) is satisfied because they suffer more

serious undernourishment than any other group in the refugee camp; (C) is satisfied since the aggregate harm protection is the largest if this group can be nourished; and (D) is satisfied because feeding this group has the highest cost-effectiveness, defined as its moral value divided by its cost.

Principle (E) requires that other things (including cost) being equal, it is more important, morally speaking, to protect persons from what *they* consider to be harmful. It only takes effect after principles (A)–(D) are satisfied and the beneficiaries' preferences fall within the realm of basic human rights. Article 18 of "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" states that everyone has "the right…to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance" (OHCHR n.d.).[24]

If the group insists that fulfilling their religious duty requires an extravagant amount of resources, which the INGO either does not have or that could significantly undermine the INGO's ability to provide nourishment to the group, then the INGO should have a respectful conversation with the beneficiaries in an attempt to reach an agreement. There might be common ground for a conclusion: depending on the group's religion, the INGO might be able to draw passages from the scripture and show them why one's faith, not expensive rituals, is more important to their religious beliefs. If they continue to live a long life with better health and strength, they would be able to perform more religious duties and contribute to their faith. The INGO might even propose a middle ground where the resources are divided between providing nourishment and fulfilling the religious duty, as long as principles (A)–(D) are still satisfied.

If the group only requires a modest amount of resources that the INGO is capable of providing, then Principle (E) demands that the donors respect the beneficiaries' values and

[24] We will not get into the debate of what if benefactors and beneficiaries disagree on the articles of UDHR, but assume they are *prima facie* accepted as a general guideline of human rights.

preferences, even if the donors of the INGO disagree with such a belief.[25] Had the affluent citizens not violated the beneficiaries' basic human rights by the imposition of the unjust global order (through our government), the beneficiaries would have had enough resources to secure both the right to sufficient nourishment and the right to manifest their religion in practice. They would also be able to decide to fulfill their religious practice first, before obtaining nourishment. As we are implicated in the harm of depriving them of such an agency to choose between the two, we have the obligation to restore this right by respecting their choice.

One key objection to Principle (E) and its conditions might be that the cost needed to understand beneficiaries' perspectives, and what they consider to be more harmful, is too high. Such cost needs to be factored in, as demanded by Principle (D). But it might cost less than we think and also bring additional benefits. First, the cost will be diminishing—understanding each other will become easier as we accumulate more experience doing so. It will also likely yield long-term results since changes affirmed from within are more likely to be long-lasting and sustainable.

Another benefit of Principle (E) is that it will hold INGOs accountable in taking beneficiaries' perspectives into account.[26] INGOs can act paternalistically: many western INGOs are accused of having the "white savior complex" or being neo-colonialist, and there are many programs that harm the recipients' prospects and wellbeing because they are based, intentionally or unintentionally, on the interests of the donors, not the recipients. For example, the "One Laptop Per Child" (OLPC) initiative is widely recognized as a failure and exemplifies the negligent

[25] An exception we need to consider here is that in some rare cases, some people might not have an adequate mental capacity to understand or be a position to make sound decisions for themselves, i.e. children, persons with severe mental health issues, like someone experiencing an episode of psychosis and refuses help. In this case, after having consulted the relevant stakeholders like the person's guardians, the INGO can override the person's endorsement.

[26] Some argues that Pogge too readily assigns institutions from affluent countries the role to direct poverty alleviation initiatives (Deveaux 2015). The same objection applies to individuals and collective unilateral donations. Principle (E) partially addresses this objection by recognizing the beneficiaries as powerful agents who can decide and lead such initiatives.

disregard of beneficiary values and preferences, resulting in the squandering of substantial funding and harm to the interests of those it intended to aid (Keating 2009).[27] Launched in 2005, OLPC set out to provide every child in the global south with a laptop (Ames 2021). The program, however, proved to be impractical as the intended beneficiaries were malnourished, lacked adequate teaching resources, functional schools, stable electricity, and reliable internet access. Despite being rolled out in multiple countries and receiving significant funding from high-profile donors and media coverage, the initiative failed to deliver on its promise. Studies conducted on the OLPC programs in Peru and Uruguay revealed that investing in finding and training high-quality teachers would yield greater improvements in student achievement than investing in technology without complementary instruction and infrastructure (Cristia et al. 2017; de Melo et al. 2014). Over a seven-month study, Ames found that the laptops were neither user-friendly nor durable, and were designed for technically skilled boys that are idealized younger versions of the developers rather than the children who were actually using them (Ames 2019).

The failure of the OLPC program is in notable opposition to Principle (E). During a project's design phase, incorporating the beneficiary perspective is crucial in comprehending their needs, preferences, and constraints. Even the slightest attention to the reality experienced by the beneficiaries would have been a reminder of how distant it was from the OLPC's actual implementation. When a project is underway, getting rapid feedback from the beneficiaries can help the project team adapt quickly. Additionally, after the program concludes, a rigorous investigation into the beneficiary experience can enable an assessment of the program's effectiveness. Had the donors demanded such scrutiny and accountability from the initiative, the repeated failures of the OLPC projects in various developing countries could have been prevented.

[27] I wish to thank an anonymous reviewer for recommending the inclusion of a real-world example to demonstrate how paternalism can manifest in charitable acts, as well as how it may be mitigated.

The OLPC initiative is not an isolated instance that disregards the perspectives of its beneficiaries. A survey by the Centre for Effective Philanthropy found that only 27 percent of responding foundations include beneficiary opinions in their assessments (Twersky, Buchanan, Threlfall 2013).[28] INGOs, as much as they are recognized as a force for good, can be considered as a transnational social institution that systematically dominate the global poor by having asymmetric and arbitrary power dynamics with them. The list of principles inspired by Pogge's negative duty account can mitigate such power dynamic, where philanthropy should not be an arbitrary act of good will from the affluent, but reparations owed by those who benefit from an unjust system to its victims (Blunt 2022).

The third benefit of Principle (E) is that it can help us evaluate the risk and uncertainty of some international aid projects. Like Singer, Pogge deploys "probability-weighted expected moral value" and "probability-weighted expected cost" to cope with the risk and uncertainty of these projects (Pogge 2006: 239–40).[29] But we need to acknowledge that short-term and long-term effects are still difficult to measure and predict.[30] How do we choose between two very different projects that have the same probability-weighted expected moral value and cost? Probability-weighted values and costs can sometimes be thin and one-dimensional measures that quantify human lives in a way that objectifies beneficiaries as passive and with no preferences or autonomy

[28] As quoted in the same article, Bridgespan Group partner Daniel Stid elucidates why this dynamic may manifest: "[beneficiaries] aren't buying your service; rather a third party is paying you to provide it to them. Hence the focus shifts more toward the requirements of who is paying versus the unmet needs and aspirations of those meant to benefit."

[29] "Probability-weighted expected moral value" and "probability-weighted expected cost" are standard methods to estimate the moral value and cost of a chancy project. Since different outcomes are possible, one estimates the probability of each outcome and the moral value and cost associated with each outcome. The final moral value and cost are calculated as the sum of these products.

[30] Consider the case of deworming interventions. GiveWell contends the evidence demonstrates deworming is the most effective approach for alleviating child poverty (GiveWell 2022). However, these conclusions remain contested. The academic debate surrounding deworming's impact has been termed the "Worm Wars," highlighting substantial implications for global child welfare despite ostensible triviality (Evans 2015). While a consensus exists affirming deworming's benefits, disagreement persists regarding the magnitude of these benefits. Precisely quantifying deworming's efficacy is critical if GiveWell aims to justify its recommendation based on cost-effectiveness measures.

in deciding how they want to live. Principle (E) helps us give certain weight to the beneficiary's values, hopes, and aspirations. It requires us to ask: Given all the information we know, how will the beneficiary decide? What is the amount of risk she is willing to take? What would she prefer? Questions like these can help us mitigate the risk and uncertainty of international aid projects by factoring in the perspectives of the beneficiaries.

Though the history of charitable giving is littered with examples akin to the OLPC initiative, I am still optimistic that even though we have different values, we also have enough in common that most of the disagreements can be illuminated by respectful conversations, especially on the topic of basic human rights (Appiah 2006: 327–35).[31] In the long run, without Principle (E), we may do harm by directing resources away from activities and pursuits that would add real value to people's lives, and as a result, violate Pogge's other principles.

Issue (6): Material Involvement. Pogge argues that since we are implicated in the vast majority of all human sufferings, we rarely need to make the difficult choices between a project that we have more (negative or intermediate) moral reasons to choose but is less valuable in harm protection, and a project that we have less (positive) moral reasons to choose but is more valuable (2006: 251–52).[32]

Such choices might be rare and will not require large departure from principles (A)–(E). But in the event that an individual distinctly recognizes one's negative or intermediate duty towards a particular cause, region, or group of people, Principle (F) should take effect:

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[31] Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out that Bill Easterly's *White Man's Burden* and *Tyranny of Experts,* as well as Christopher Coyne's *Doing Bad by Doing Good* provide many examples similar to the OLPC initiative. Easterly and Coyne argue that foreign aid and humanitarian interventions often fail to achieve their intended goals due to factors such as the imposition of Western values, neglect of the needs of beneficiaries, and lack of accountability and transparency. The authors advocate for a more decentralized, bottom-up approach that empowers local actors and respects the rights and dignity of the poor.

[32] According to Pogge, "intermediate duty" entails the obligation to prevent or mitigate harm that one would otherwise have caused or participated in causing (2006, 251–52). This duty possesses a level of stringency that falls between positive and negative moral reasons.

> Principle (F): other things (including cost) being equal, it is morally more important to protect persons whose harm one is more responsible in causing.

In other words, any harm an individual himself has caused or would have caused should be assigned greater weight in the individual's deliberations. One might object that following Principle (F) can conflict with principles (A)–(D). Consider the case of one charity protecting Group X and another protecting Group Y, if people in Group X are more numerous and threatened by greater harms, but your involvement in the harms the Group Y would suffer is greater, which charity should you donate to? Or consider another case where you can more effectively protect Group X but you are more involved in Group Y's plight, which charity should you donate to?[33] I contend that this objection holds limited practical relevance. In practice, if Pogge's framework recommends a comprehensive list of effective INGOs addressing diverse causes and regions, donating to INGOs that mitigate harms one is more involved in causing would not lead to significant inefficiencies.

One might also object that it is difficult to specify the degrees of negative duty, or exactly how much more someone is responsible for certain harm than another. Admittedly, utilizing such gradations poses challenges for individual decision-making; however, as a general guideline, when we are able to donate effectively to alleviate harms we are more materially involved in causing, we should prioritize alleviating those harms. In special cases, like the examples above, when the same amount of donation would *greatly* reduce the aggregate harm protection achieved if donated to another project unrelated to the particular harm, then the donor may nonetheless donate to the other project—but only if the moral value of the expected overall increase in harm protection of the other project greatly outweigh that of the project directly related to addressing the specific

[33] This objection was raised by Pogge in our correspondence, highlighting the notion that prioritizing the protection of Group X while being more personally involved in the plight of Group Y, or vice versa, could result in both groups receiving less overall protection compared to focusing on the group one can assist most effectively.

harm we are more responsible in causing.

Conclusion

Singer and Pogge both contribute significantly to the conversation of global justice by demonstrating how we violate both the poor's positive rights to aid and negative rights against interference. As a result, we must recognize how stringent the moral requirements in fact are.

This paper has shown that there is a compelling case to expand Pogge's framework to apply not only to institutions, but also to individuals. It has done so by developing actionable principles for individual contributors. It has also considered how the main challenges to Pogge's framework can be addressed with these principles.

The history of the last century shows that outsiders—foreign aid agencies, foundations, corporations, and international organizations—have made meaningful progress in public health and education, but far less progress in addressing extreme poverty, human rights violations, and inefficient governance of poor countries. This is largely because most philanthropists and governments are top-down actors entrenched in the status quo that has rewarded them so well. As affluent individuals who are more empowered than ever by information, skills, and forceful moral arguments to act upon, it is our moral duty to seek bottom-up solutions, where citizens are organized to bring about the changes they want, which might be messy and loud, but can alleviate extreme poverty, the moral catastrophe that should not and does not have to exist today.[34]

[34] I wish to thank Kwame Anthony Appiah, Samuel Scheffler, Thomas Pogge, Olga Lenczewska, Adam Zweber, Robert Smithson, Stijn Talloen, Carol Pechler, Henk Pechler, and two anonymous reviewers for providing very helpful comments on early versions of this article.

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