



Global Poverty

Journal:	<i>International Encyclopedia of Ethics</i>
Manuscript ID:	Ethics.4000.08-0216
Wiley - Manuscript type:	4000 Words
Classification:	Philosophy < Subject, Practical (Applied) Ethics < Ethics < Philosophy < Subject
Keywords/Index Terms:	Aid, Duty, Distributive Justice, World Hunger



review

Global Poverty

Word Count 4,970

Normative discussions of global poverty have been focused on developing adequate answers to the following two questions:

(1) What, precisely, does global poverty consist in, and how should it be measured over time?

(2) What moral grounds are there for taking different agents to have duties to address global poverty?

Question (1) concerns the characterization of global poverty, Question (2) relates to how responsibilities to address it can be justified. We discuss each in turn.

I. The meaning of global poverty

The general concept of poverty is not contested –poverty is widely understood as a lack or deprivation. However, like other evaluative concepts such as “justice,” “fairness,” and “impartiality,” the concept of poverty has no clearly definable and specific use that can be set up as standard or correct (see JUSTICE; IMPARTIALITY).

Specific conceptions of global poverty can be distinguished from one another in terms of the answers they give to three main questions:

(i) *What information is relevant to the evaluation of poverty?*

(ii) *What is the relative importance of different kinds of information in determining whether or not an individual's overall living standard is such that they should be deemed poor?*

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4 (iii) *How, if at all, is information about the standard of living of*
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6 *individuals combined to give aggregate measures of poverty within a*
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8 *group or a country?*
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10 Question (i) is the most foundational of these three questions— it is on this
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12 question that many philosophers have concentrated, and on which the first
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14 part of this entry will focus.
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20 **Competing understandings of poverty-relevant information**

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22 There are 5 major competing understandings of the information that is
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24 relevant to identifying global poverty.
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30 1. Income/Consumption

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32 Global poverty as a shortage of income is by far the most dominant
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34 conception of poverty. On this account, poverty is either a shortage of income
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36 or a shortage of consumption which can be priced in income terms.
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40 The most dominant measure of global poverty is the World Bank's
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42 International Poverty Line, which is supposed to be a reflection of the national
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44 income poverty lines in a representative sample of poor countries, adjusting
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46 for differences in purchasing power of different currencies. The International
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48 Poverty Line has been revised several times, but currently stands at \$1.25
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50 USD 2005 Purchasing Power Parity—that is, the value of the international
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52 poverty line is supposed to be the amount of local currency that has the same
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54 purchasing power as \$1.25 had in the United States in 2005. It is the only
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56 global, regular measure of the number of poor individuals.
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4 This monetized conception of poverty has been subject to a number of
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6 serious objections. Income based approaches have been criticized for failing
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8 to take account of (i) the multi-dimensional nature of poverty, which includes
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10 non-monetary goods like education, health, and sanitation; (ii) the different
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12 needs of differently situated individuals; (iii) the differential ability of individuals
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14 to convert income into welfare; and (iv) the differential access to other assets
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16 that can help one avoid deprivation. The International Poverty Line in
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18 particular has been shown to be problematic for the purposes of global
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20 poverty assessments. The comparisons across context and over time are
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22 meaningless because they rely on methods of international price comparison
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24 that take into account the cost of *all* goods within an economy, instead of
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26 those goods that are most likely to be consumed by poor people.
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28 Furthermore, the distribution and extent of global poverty varies widely
29
30 depending on the selection of a base year for the price comparisons, and the
31
32 selection of that base year is arbitrary (Reddy and Pogge, 2003). The
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34 interesting question now is whether substantial revisions to the International
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36 Poverty Line that take account of the power of poor people to purchase the
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38 kinds of goods that are relevant to meeting their needs can make it a more
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40 meaningful measure.
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50 2. Basic Needs

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52 One alternative to the income approach is the basic needs approach, which
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54 conceives of poverty as a deprivation or lack of either the means necessary to
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56 satisfy basic needs or the actual satisfaction of those needs (see NEEDS).
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3 The basic needs approach has its roots in Maslow's hierarchy of basic
4 needs (Maslow 1943). Lists of basic needs and the levels at which they are
5 satisfied vary. Frances Stewart reports that although "the actual content of
6 BN have been variously defined: they always include the fulfillment of certain
7 standards of nutrition, (food and water), and the universal provision of health
8 and education services. They sometimes also cover other material needs,
9 such as shelter and clothing, and non-material needs such as employment,
10 participation, and political liberty" (Stewart 1985: 1).
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22 The basic needs approach is intuitively plausible. Human beings have
23 certain needs such that if they cannot satisfy them to a sufficient degree, they
24 would generally be deemed poor. The basic needs approach also seems
25 capable of addressing problems of comparison over time and across contexts.
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32 More problematically, however, in practice the basic needs approach
33 devalues the agency of poor people, treating them as static, de-
34 contextualized, and homogenous units of consumption and production,
35 ignoring questions about agency, choice, and the role of social and
36 institutional structures (see AUTONOMY). The basic needs approach guided
37 much of development practice in the 1970s and 1980s, which was
38 characteristically defined by top-down projects that were not responsive to the
39 actions and preferences of poor people. However, the basic needs approach
40 can be revised to accommodate some of these objections. Doyal and Gough
41 (1991:49-69), for example, make autonomy one of two primary basic needs of
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3. Capabilities

First formulated by Amartya Sen, the capabilities approach (see CAPABILITIES) provides both a theory of well-being and a conception of poverty. Capabilities are substantive freedoms to live the kinds of lives that people have good reason to value (Sen 1999: 87). Sen argues that poverty is best viewed as the deprivation of basic capabilities. This is because “capability deprivation is more important as a criterion of disadvantage than is the lowness of income, since income is only instrumentally important and its derivative value is contingent on many social and economic circumstances.” (Sen 1999: 131). *Basic* capabilities are understood as “the ability to satisfy certain crucially important functionings up to certain minimally adequate levels” (Sen 1993: 41). Functionings refer to things that a person “manages to do or be in leading a life” (Sen, 1993: 31). The capability set of a person is the set of functionings that those people can choose or achieve. A person is deemed poor if they come to lack these capabilities to sufficient degree.

Though the capabilities approach is widely affirmed in much contemporary development practice and study, some have argued that it is inferior to resourcist theories that assess individual disadvantage with reference to the resources to which an individual has access, including but not limited to income and wealth (Pogge 2002). Others have argued that the capabilities approach is overly individualistic, ignoring the importance of community (Gore 1997). From a measurement perspective, it is not clear how the capability approach is distinct from measuring basic needs or rights deprivations—in all cases, it may be most practical to measure the

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3 achievements of individuals. Measuring agency and/or freedom raises
4 particularly difficult challenges.
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8 Nonetheless, the capabilities approach remains a critical contribution to
9 the practice of development, focusing attention on expanding substantive
10 freedoms for autonomous agents rather than merely trying to satisfy basic
11 needs. Since agency is central to the capabilities approach, development
12 programs grounded in the capabilities approach seek to respect the agency
13 and choice of poor people. The capabilities approach has also importantly
14 highlighted the ways in which diverse personal heterogeneities and social
15 locations can affect the overall disadvantage a person faces even when
16 presented with apparently equal resources. For example, capability theorists
17 have extensively discussed the role of disability as a primary subject of social
18 justice theorizing, and made strong arguments that a disabled person needs
19 far more resources than her peers to reach the same capabilities (Sen 2009:
20 258-260).
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41 4. Social Exclusion 42

43 French philosopher René Lenoir is credited with first developing the
44 concept of social exclusion to describe those individuals who were not
45 supported by the welfare state and were somehow stigmatized, including
46 individuals with special mental and physical needs, the elderly and the invalid
47 (Lenoir 1974). Social exclusion is focused on the exclusion of individuals and
48 groups from 'normal social processes.' Social exclusion has come to be an
49 expansive term, including exclusion from "a livelihood; secure, permanent
50 employment; earnings; property, credit, or land; housing; minimal or prevailing
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3 consumption levels; education, skills, and cultural capital; the welfare state;
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5 citizenship and legal equality; democratic participation; public goods; the
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7 nation or the dominant race; family and sociability; humanity, respect,
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9 fulfillment, and understanding” (Silver 1995: 60).
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13 The social exclusion approach importantly highlights the relational
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15 features of deprivation (to other people and institutions), and the dynamic
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17 processes that result in deprivation, rather than focusing merely on
18
19 unencumbered individuals and their isolated deprivations. Much anti-poverty
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21 work and analysis has become de-politicized, but the social exclusion
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23 approach, by focusing on relations, necessarily maintains power and politics
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25 as central to understanding poverty.
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29 However, despite the relevance of processes and relations to
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31 deprivation, the social exclusion approach encounters serious challenges
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33 when used in a global perspective. Even if some processes can be judged
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35 ‘normal’ in some circumstances, given the vast internal diversity of many
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37 countries and the diversity of processes between countries, it is less clear
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39 whether the concept of social exclusion can be used to make assessments
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41 needed for global distributive justice (Gore 1994). Long term formal
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43 unemployment is central to social exclusion approaches in Europe, but this is
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45 of little analytical value in contexts where most people work in the informal
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47 sector.
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58 Finally, poverty can be conceived of as a deprivation of a certain set of
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60 socio-economic rights (see RIGHTS). There are two distinct strains of thought

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3 in this approach. On the one hand, human rights are seen as instrumentally
4 important to poverty alleviation. More interestingly and controversially, rights
5 deprivations can be seen as constitutive of poverty. The lack of secure
6 access to, or an institutional guarantee of, certain fundamental social and
7 economic rights is itself poverty. These rights arguably include, among other
8 things, the right to subsistence (including safe air, food, water, shelter, and
9 clothing), education, and health care (Nickel 2005: 388) and, more
10 expansively, the right to certain forms of social security (UDHR 1948: Art. 22)
11 and decent work (UDHR 1948: Art. 23). International law has long recognized
12 social and economic rights, beginning with articles 22 to 26 of the Universal
13 Declaration of Human Rights, and subsequently with the International
14 Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

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Human rights present philosophical challenges: what, if anything, are they; what, if any, status do they have; which, if any, rights should there be; and how, if at all, can they be justified? Anti-poverty rights face additional challenges, especially from philosophers who only defend limited, libertarian, negative rights but reject the basis for other allegedly positive rights (see LIBERTARIANISM). Furthermore, the measurement of anti-poverty rights risks merely measuring the formal existence of anti-poverty rights, providing no information on actual individual deprivation, or measuring individual achievements, seemingly abandoning the rights framework.

Nonetheless, it seems plausible that if there are any human rights, then anti-poverty rights should be amongst them. If one is malnourished or starving to death, it is difficult to argue that one's rights to free speech, trial by jury, or voting are adequately protected (Shue 1980). This need not entail the

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3 claim that all socio-economic rights are correlated with duties of all individuals,
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5 but rather that institutions should be structured such that individuals have a
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7 reasonable chance of securing anti-poverty rights.
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10 11 12 **Gender and poverty**

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15 Most purportedly gender-neutral conceptions of poverty tend not to
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17 take into account adequately the deprivations suffered by women. For
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19 example, income/consumption based poverty ignores the degree and kind of
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21 work one has to do to meet a certain level of consumption, thus obscuring the
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23 unjust distribution of burdens and responsibilities on women. Gender
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25 neutrality also obscures questions about who has the ability to make
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27 decisions regarding the use of resources within the household. For example,
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29 Sylvia Chant argues that female-headed households are frequently identified
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31 as the poorest of the poor, but this identification is based on a narrow
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33 assessment of household income poverty. Because women in these
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35 households have control over the resources they do acquire, they might be
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37 much better off than they would be if they were in a male-headed household
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39 with higher income in which they could not control the intra-household
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41 distribution of resources (Chant 2007). All conceptions of poverty that take the
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43 household to be the unit of analysis ignore the intra-household distribution of
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45 deprivation.
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53 Gendering conceptual analysis of poverty may play two roles in
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55 improving current conceptions and measures. First, making gender central to
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57 the conceptual analysis of poverty may highlight deprivations that both men
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59 and women can face which have been overlooked. For example, the
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3 deprivation of leisure time or a lack of physical security may be best
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5 understood as deprivations that are constitutive of poverty. Second, gendered
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7 analysis may illuminate how issues frequently thought of as independent from
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9 poverty, such as control, power, secure access, and vulnerability, may be
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11 better thought of as constituent of or at least closely related to poverty rather
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13 than as distinct (see FEMINIST ETHICS).
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18 **II. Responsibility for addressing global poverty**

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20 On any plausible understanding of the meaning of poverty, there is a
21
22 great deal of poverty in our world, much of it severe. This fact is generally held
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24 to be not merely unfortunate or regrettable, but morally unacceptable. This is
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26 not to say that global poverty could be avoided completely, even if all with
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28 responsibilities to address these problems did their share, but that the
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30 magnitude of acute deprivation in our world is due in part to the failure of
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32 some agents to meet their responsibilities (see RESPONSIBILITY).
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38 An account of responsibilities for addressing global poverty must
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40 provide an account of the principles for allocating responsibilities amongst the
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42 agents—individual persons, collective agents such as nongovernmental
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44 organizations, corporations and states, or more dispersed and loosely
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46 affiliated groups and collectivities—that might possibly bear them. These
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48 principles both identify the agents that have responsibilities with respect to
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50 acute deprivation, and the *content* of their responsibilities to address it; in
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52 short, who bears responsibilities and what these responsibilities are. Two
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54 types of principles are most commonly invoked in support of the claim that
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56 we—the affluent in the developed world—have duties to address global
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58 poverty. The first type is based on the idea that because poor people are in
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3 severe need and we are in a position to alleviate such need at some cost, we
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5 have duties to do so—*principles of assistance*. The second type is based on
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7 the idea that because poor people are in severe need and we have
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9 contributed or are contributing to their need we have duties to alleviate it—
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11 *principles of contribution*.
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14 15 16 1. Assistance-based responsibilities 17

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19 Principles of assistance have been frequently appealed to in
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21 philosophical discussions of global poverty since Peter Singer's seminal work
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23 in the early 1970's. In 'Famine, Affluence, and Morality,' (Singer 1972) Singer
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25 famously argued that we have responsibilities to assist the global poor by
26
27 alluding to an analogy of a person passing a shallow pond where a child is
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29 about to drown (see also Unger 1996, Lafollete and May 1995). Just as the
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31 former bears responsibility for saving the latter, we have a responsibility to
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33 assist the poor (see WORLD HUNGER; UTILITARIANISM). According to
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35 Singer, a plausible principle that would explain our reaction to the pond case,
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37 and which would also lead us to recognize our responsibility in the global
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39 poverty case, states that "if it is in your power to prevent something bad from
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41 happening, without sacrificing anything nearly as important, it is wrong not to
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43 do so" (Singer 2009, 15).
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50 Singer's assistance principle affirms that affluent agents have weighty
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52 moral reasons to address global poverty when the benefits of their doing so
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54 can be expected to be significant, and when they can do so at little or
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56 moderate cost to themselves and others. In our world, he believes that this
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58 principle, and even much more moderate principles of assistance would entail
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60 that "When we spend our surplus on concerts or fashionable shoes, on fine

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3 dining and good wines, or on holidays in faraway lands, we are doing
4 something wrong” (Singer 2009: 19).
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8 It is important to note that assistance principles such as those
9 defended by Singer and Unger would justify these claims about the
10 wrongness of how people spend their discretionary income only if their
11 empirical claims about the likely benefits of foreign assistance are reasonably
12 accurate (see AID, ETHICS OF). And some critics have pointed to evidential
13 uncertainties about whether such aid would actually do any good, or whether
14 it might rather do some harm (Schmidtz 2000; Kuper 2001; Wenar 2003).
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24 Setting these concerns about the expected moral value of assistance
25 aside, the plausibility of Singer’s principle of assistance remains a matter of
26 great controversy. Some have argued that principles like this ought to be
27 rejected because they are simply too demanding. In our world, it would seem
28 to lead to “a life of hardship, self-denial and austerity” (Kagan 1989: 360).
29 Critics argue that it is implausible to demand giving more when doing so
30 would impose risks of significantly worsening one’s life (Miller 2003: 359).
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41 Others have argued that views such as Singer’s and Unger’s fail to
42 take seriously enough concerns with fairness. Liam Murphy argues, for
43 example, that if an agent is complying with a principle of assistance such as
44 Singer’s, but others failed to comply with their duties of assistance, then she
45 not only has to do her own fair share of addressing global poverty, but has to
46 pick up the slack by doing the shares of the non-compliers. Murphy claims
47 that this is unfair, and advocates a “compliance condition”, which states, “the
48 demands on a complying person should not exceed what they would be under
49 full compliance with the principle” (Murphy 2000: 7). Singer’s principle of
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3 assistance might not demand very much of each particular agent, if each
4 agent complied with it, since even small efforts from a very large number of
5 agents might suffice to address global poverty. If this is so, then on Murphy's
6 view, each person needs to do no more than this small effort. Note that the
7 'moderating' effect of Murphy's proposal is conditional on the presence of
8 others who can help—it does not therefore limit the demands on a single
9 individual who is not surrounded by others, even if it diminishes significantly
10 the duties of particular affluent people to address the needs of the global poor.
11 The fairness consideration only seems to concern fairness *between*
12 prospective assistors. But unfairness between the complying and non-
13 complying should not be confused with what is morally required of each agent
14 (Arneson 2004; Cullity 2004).

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16 Critics have also objected to the conclusions Singer draws from his
17 discussion of the pond case. As Garrett Cullity has pointed out, Singer's
18 analogical arguments are "subsumptive" in form (Cullity 2004: 12–14). That is,
19 Singer conceives of the task of justifying particular moral judgments as a
20 matter of postulating general principles that these particular judgments can be
21 viewed as expressing. Singer's arguments are potentially quite radical
22 precisely because they have this form. His strategy is to show that a principle
23 that best explains a particular moral judgment in which we have a great deal
24 of confidence, such as the wrongness of failing to save the drowning child in
25 the pond case, would entail that we revise a great many of our other moral
26 judgments. However, there are various other less demanding principles that
27 would explain our reaction to the pond case, such as 'if we can prevent
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3 something (very) bad from happening at minimal cost to ourselves, and
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5 others, then we ought to do it.’
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8 To show that this much less demanding version of the assistance
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10 principle is too weak to account for our intuitions about duties of assistance,
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12 supporters of more demanding assistance principles such as Singer’s and
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14 Unger’s must appeal to further cases where we have strong intuitions that
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16 agents must take on relatively quite large costs to prevent very bad things
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18 from happening. One case that Unger has subsequently imagined, which
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20 Singer now puts front-and-centre of his defense of his principle is Bob’s
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22 Bugatti. Its essential features are the following:
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27 *Bob’s Bugatti:* Bob, who has most of his retirement savings invested in a
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29 Bugatti, is confronted with the choice of redirecting a railway trolley by
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31 throwing a switch in order to save a child which will result in the destruction
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33 of his Bugatti because it has accidentally been placed on the side spur of
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35 the line, or he might leave the switch as it stands so that his Bugatti
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37 remains in mint condition, which will result in the child’s death. (Unger
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39 1996: 136)
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45 It seems that Bob ought to sacrifice his Bugatti. Singer claims that it is correct
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47 to infer from this that “when prompted to think in concrete terms, about real
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49 individuals, most of us consider it obligatory to lessen the serious suffering of
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51 innocent others, even at some cost (or even at high cost) to ourselves”
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53 (Singer 2009, p. 15). But it is not at all obvious that this is the correct
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55 inference to draw, since there are other cases in which it seems
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57 counterintuitive to demand so much of the prospective assistor. Christian
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59 Barry and Gerhard Øverland, for example, present the following case):
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3 *Bob's Internet Banking:* Bob is sitting in his house doing some Internet
4 banking. Unbeknownst to his neighbours (the Smiths), he can see and
5 hear them through the open door on the veranda. He notices that they are
6 discussing the state of their terminally sick child, Jimmy. They need a new
7 and expensive treatment to cure Jimmy. They live in a society that has no
8 universal health coverage, they cannot afford the operation themselves,
9 nor are they able to finance it or acquire the funds from relatives and
10 friends. Bob understands that he can transfer the money for the operation
11 with a click of his mouse (he already has the Smith's bank account listed).
12 Clicking over the money would save Jimmy, but most of Bob's savings for
13 retirement would be gone. Bob decides not to click the mouse (Barry and
14 Øverland 2009).

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This case also involves thinking in real terms about a concrete individual. But it does not seem that Bob would be acting wrongly if he does not click the mouse to make the transfer, even if we would praise him if he did so. Examination of this pair of cases leaves us with a puzzle, since it suggests that an intuitively plausible principle of assistance may demand a great deal of agents in one set of circumstances, but very little of them in other sets of circumstances.

Despite some of the challenges to the specific assistance principle defended by Singer, few deny that some kind of assistance principle is morally required. However, few concrete competitors to Singer's conception have been developed so far.

2. Principles of Contribution

The second principle that has been invoked most commonly to ground responsibilities to address global poverty is what might be called the principle of 'contribution' (Barry 2005). This principle has been invoked in the important recent work of Thomas Pogge (Pogge 2008). Rather than seeing the responsibility of affluent people to address global poverty as rooted primarily in a general responsibility to assist people in need, those who affirm the principle of contribution argue that we should instead view such responsibilities as based on stringent and specific ethical requirements not to contribute to severe harms and to compensate those who have been harmed as a consequence of failing to meet these requirements (Pogge 2008, 2005). Pogge and others argue that our conduct and policies contribute to global poverty, and that the global institutional arrangements we uphold (international trading rules, for instance, and recognition conferred upon illegitimate rules) engender widespread deprivation (see GLOBAL DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE; GLOBALIZATION). This second type of argument invokes a moral principle that has significant intuitive support: that it is seriously wrong to harm innocent people for minor gains and that agents have stringent and potentially quite demanding responsibilities to address harms to innocents to which they have contributed or are contributing (see HARM; DEONTOLOGY). Of course, this claim rests on empirical premises that are contestable. Pogge writes, "radical inequality and the continuous misery and death toll it engenders are foreseeably reproduced under the present global institutional order as we have shaped it. And most of it could be avoided. . . if this global order had been, or were to be designed differently" (Pogge 2005:

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3 55). But identifying just what effects a different global order would have had is
4 necessarily a rather speculative exercise, and some of Pogge's critics have
5 argued that he does little to provide the necessary empirical support for these
6 claims (Cohen 2010). Although it seems widely agreed that contribution-based
7 responsibilities to address global poverty have some (and perhaps a great
8 deal of) significance, there is widespread disagreement about just exactly
9 what it means to contribute to global poverty, and indeed to harmful outcomes
10 more generally.
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22 To make the relevance of this type of dispute concrete, consider the
23 question of whether agricultural trade practices in the developed world
24 contribute to global poverty (see WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION). Growing
25 and processing rice sustain the livelihoods of a very significant portion of the
26 world's people, and three billion people depend on rice as their staple food.
27 By subsidizing the otherwise unprofitable US rice industry and maintaining
28 tariffs on agricultural imports, the US government undermines the potential
29 earnings of rice farmers in developing countries. To what extent can we say
30 that the US government bears contribution-based responsibilities to revise its
31 policies in this instance?
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45 Without a clear and plausible account of the distinction between
46 contributing to global poverty and merely failing to prevent it, we cannot
47 assess this type of dispute. Although it seems widely agreed that contribution-
48 based responsibilities to address global poverty have some (and perhaps a
49 great deal of) significance, there is widespread disagreement about just
50 exactly what it means to contribute to global poverty.
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3 Pogge offers one account of the distinction between instances in which
4 we harm the global poor, rather than merely fail to prevent their poverty. He
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8 claims:

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11 (W)e are *harming* the global poor if and insofar as we collaborate in
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13 imposing an *unjust* global institutional order upon them. And this
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15 institutional order is definitely unjust if and insofar as it foreseeably
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17 perpetuates large-scale human rights deficits that would be reasonably
18
19 avoidable through feasible institutional modifications. (Pogge 2005: 60)
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24 On Pogge's view, the subsidies offered by rich countries do indeed harm the
25
26 poor. Some of Pogge's critics have argued that he employs an unduly
27
28 stretched meaning of contributing to harm. It has even been suggested that,
29
30 appropriately construed, his conception of what it means to contribute to
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32 poverty would entail that failing to save some child may count as harming that
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34 child (Satz 2005: 54; Reithberger 2008: 377-8). These critics come to this
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36 conclusion by observing that a system of global institutional arrangements
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38 that would suffice to eliminate large-scale human rights deficits in developing
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40 countries might require international transfers to provide for the basic
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42 necessities to poor people, and adopting trade regimes that offer them much
43
44 better terms. Such measures may even involve asymmetries that permit
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46 certain kinds of discrimination against wealthy countries. They then dismiss
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48 Pogge's view on the grounds that his view amounts to the claim that you harm
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50 another person by failing to provide assistance, or by not granting them
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52 asymmetric terms that benefit them.
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59 Pogge is, according to this criticism, trying to increase the moral
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significance of the failure of the affluent to prevent global poverty by

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3 camouflaging a controversial positive duty of assistance as a stringent
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5 negative duty not to contribute to harm (Patten 2005: 26). Pogge has replied
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7 that his view does not depend on an unduly stretched meaning of harm,
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9 pointing to the restrictions that he places on the use of this concept (Pogge
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11 2005: 60).
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18 **Relative significance**

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20 The issue of the *relative* importance of principles of assistance and
21
22 contribution is of considerable practical significance. For while these principles
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24 can complement each other—as when some agent has both contributed to
25
26 the incidence of poverty and can address it effectively at little or moderate
27
28 cost—they may also pull in opposite directions. It may be that some agent can
29
30 much more effectively address the poverty of those to whose deprivations she
31
32 has *not* contributed than the poverty of those to whose deprivations she has
33
34 contributed. In cases like this one principles of assistance would seem to pull
35
36 in one direction—encouraging the agent to focus her efforts on the people
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38 whom she can most easily and significantly benefit—while principles of
39
40 contribution pull her in the opposite direction—encouraging her to focus on
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42 those deprivations to which she has contributed, even when doing so is less
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44 efficient from the point of lessening deprivations overall.
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52 The conflict between contribution and assistance-based reasons for
53
54 action can become quite acute when the likely effects of prospective
55
56 interventions to improve the circumstances of the poor are not known.
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58 Contributing money to aid organizations can help the poor, but it can also
59
60 harm them. If reasons not to contribute to harm are much more stringent than

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2
3 reasons to assist, then evidence that some intervention to improve the lives of
4
5
6 the poor may harm them or others should be a reason to reconsider the
7
8 intervention (Schmidtz 2000; Wenar 2003; Barry and Øverland 2009)
9

10 11 **Cross References**

12 AID, ETHICS OF; AUTONOMY; CAPABILITIES; DEONTOLOGY; GLOBAL
13 DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE; GLOBALIZATION; HARM; IMPARTIALITY;
14 JUSTICE; LIBERTARIANISM; NEEDS; RIGHTS; UTILITARIANISM; WELL-
15 BEING; WORLD HUNGER; WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION.
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