

Reaching out to the Global Poor

*A Critical Assessment of the theories by
Rawls, Singer and Pogge*

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Abstract

The problem of extreme poverty is a demanding challenge in our globalized world. Although Rawls recognizes that well-ordered peoples have a duty to assist burdened societies, the ultimate concern of his theory is justice of societies. In this regard Singer and Pogge claim that Rawls's theory does not provide an adequate response to the suffering of distant individuals. According to them, the existence of global poverty evokes certain moral obligations of the affluent states and individuals to respond to this problem.

The aim of this essay is to argue that, while addressing the problem of global poverty, Singer and Pogge establish constraints which in practice make their theories conditioned on the existence of well-functioning institutions in the poor countries. Consequently, although Singer and Pogge contest the limited scope of the Rawlsian duty of assistance, their respective proposals have problems with specifying how we can reach out to the distant poor. Nevertheless, Rawls's duty of assistance, though aiming at bringing the burdened societies into the Society of well-ordered Peoples and not at improving the well-being of individuals, provides a solution which in fact may contribute to alleviating poverty.

I exemplify this claim through the problem of high-level corruption in the developing countries. In this regard I refer to a real case from Uganda where the foreign donors have continued to provide state-to-state development assistance in spite of repeating signals of misuse of the donated resources. In my opinion Singer and Pogge do not address all implications related to this challenge. Consequently, I argue that the problem of high-level corruption in developing countries demonstrates that the proposals included in Rawls's theory of international justice may in fact have equally relevant impact on global poverty as the solutions promoted by Singer and Pogge.

Preface

I would like to thank my supervisor Caj Strandberg for thorough feedback and generous use of his time throughout the final process of writing this essay. I want also to state my appreciation to the late professor Gerhard Øverland, with whom I worked on this project in its first phase.

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Oslo, June 2015
Marta Stachurska-Kounta

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Introduction

Robert Nozick has notably written that “political philosophers now must either work within Rawls’ theory or explain why not” (in Moellendorf, 2002: 7). Rawls’s thought has inspired both philosophers who agree with his two-tiered reasoning and those who contest it. Probably one of the most controversial issues in this regard is related to those aspects in Rawls’s theory that define a distinction between his account of domestic and international realm. Peter Singer and Thomas Pogge appear to be among the most prominent critics of Rawls’s theory of international justice. Referring to different moral principles, consequentialism and theory of duty respectively, both Singer and Pogge represent a cosmopolitan approach and challenge Rawls’s notion of justice in the international relations based on isolated and self-sufficient states. Although Rawls recognizes that well-ordered peoples have a duty to assist burdened societies, the ultimate concern of his theory is the justice of societies (1999: 119). In this regard Singer and Pogge claim that Rawls’s theory does not provide an adequate response to the suffering of distant individuals since it deals with interstate relations. According to them the existence of global poverty evokes certain moral obligations of the affluent states and individuals. Singer argues for responding to poverty out of the moral obligation to contribute to the maximal reduction of suffering. Pogge’s approach, in turn, focuses on how the system of global political and economic arrangements, shaped by the affluent Western societies, actively and wrongly harms the world’s poor.

The aim of this essay is to argue that, while addressing the problem of global poverty, Singer and Pogge establish constraints which in practice make their theories conditioned on the existence of well-functioning institutions in the poor countries. Consequently, although Singer and Pogge contest the limited scope of the Rawlsian duty of assistance, their respective proposals have problems with specifying how we can reach out to the distant poor. In effect, Rawls’s duty of assistance, though aiming at bringing the burdened societies into the Society of well-ordered Peoples and not at improving the well-being of individuals, provides a solution which in fact may contribute to alleviating poverty. The proposals promoted by Singer and Pogge, in turn, though aiming at helping the extreme poor, risk of becoming futile. This is so because they tend to overlook that their proposals hugely depend on the existence of well-functioning institutions in the poor countries.

My claim is that while taking a point of departure in moral cosmopolitanism, Singer and Pogge seem to neglect the fundamental character of the present international system

composed of sovereign states. In order to exemplify this claim I use the problem of high-level corruption in the developing countries. I argue that Singer and Pogge do not address all implications related to this challenge. On the one hand, they establish a moral duty to alleviate global poverty which goes beyond the national borders and is valid regardless of corrupt and incompetent elites in the poor countries. On the other hand, however, they also acknowledge constraints to this duty with regard to challenges related to the international system composed of sovereign states. Rawls's duty of assistance does not face such a challenge because it explicitly concerns the interstate relations.

The ubiquity of high-level corruption in developing countries has also a significant impact on development assistance directed towards the worst-off. Nevertheless, Singer's focus on effectiveness of development assistance seems to concern almost exclusively the choice of the charities which make the best use of the received donations. Although the problem of high-level corruption, as I argue, appears to pose a serious challenge to the effectiveness of development assistance, Singer does not sufficiently address this problem in his considerations. And although Pogge deals explicitly with the problem of corrupt elites in developing countries, he seems to treat it selectively. He elaborates on the role of domestic high-level corruption while depicting the causes of global poverty, but does not draw all implications of this problem for his proposal to alleviate it. Consequently, I argue that the problem of high-level corruption in developing countries shows that the proposals included in Rawls's theory of international justice may actually have equally relevant impact on global poverty as the solutions promoted by Singer and Pogge.

*

Corruption is a complex phenomenon. Therefore, I adopt the definition provided by Transparency International: 'the abuse of entrusted power for private gain' (www.transparency.org). This definition encompasses cases of corrupt abuse of development aid money earmarked for people in need. At the same time I dismiss the now discredited argument that corruption can contribute to economic development (Hopkin, 2002, p. 575). In this regard the essay escapes the meanders of the debate on corruption in developing countries which flourished in the 1960s (Nye, 1967; Hopkin, 2002). In addition, I wish to emphasize that I by no means indicate that corruption is a kind of phenomenon that strikes only in

developing countries. I do believe that it is a global problem existing in all countries to varying degrees (World Bank, 1997, p. 4).

Furthermore, I am especially concerned with intergovernmental assistance to the public sector since such an approach allows me to look at domestic high-level corruption which inevitably affects effective anti-corruption policies on the national level. This kind of aid belongs to Official Development Assistance (ODA) which comprises “flows of official financing administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as the main objective” (www.oecd.org). In other words, it is the kind of assistance which is undertaken at concessional financial terms by the official sector and has as its main objective promotion of economic development and welfare. It is necessary, though, to add that aid agencies representing multilateral and non-governmental organizations are also affected by domestic high-level corruption, because they are obliged to cooperate with the authorities in the developing countries. In order to maintain their activity, the aid agencies often have to hand over a significant percentage of their project budgets to the local authorities. Consequently, this perspective makes it possible to highlight how the principle of sovereignty contributes to establish a relevant context for rendering development assistance.

In order to strengthen my argument I present a real case from Uganda where the foreign donors have continued to provide state-to-state development assistance in spite of repeating signals of misuse of the donated resources. By doing this, I want also to highlight the importance of the empirical questions for the moral theories about our duties to the global poor (Wenar, 2003: 291). The case demonstrates that although foreign aid has slowed down or has been halted at various times in response to high-profile corruption scandals, each time it has resumed after mostly cosmetic reforms. At the same time, it shows that while a vast amount of money was misused by the public officials, the rest was spent as designed. The halt in the aid which for instance came as a result of the subsequent revelations of a corruption scandal in 2012 might therefore have the greatest impact on the poor, not on those who took part in the mismanagement of the development aid. Nevertheless, the case implies that the aid fuelling the corrupt regime, while providing some help in one area, could also cause harm, and in the long term contribute to more need for assistance.

Accordingly, I start with sketching the case from Uganda. This part will subsequently serve as a point of reference for the further theoretical discussion. Next, I move to the main part of the essay which comprises the discussion of the standpoints advanced by respectively Singer,

Pogge and Rawls. In the main part I present the tenets of Singer's and Pogge's theories and demonstrate why it is relevant to consider high-level corruption as a challenge to their respective principles. Finally, I turn to discuss Rawls's theory of international justice. Although I regard it as inadequate in grasping moral implications of the global interdependence, I argue that his duty of assistance provides a solution which apparently is insusceptible to the challenge posed by domestic high-level corruption in the less developed countries.

The case from Uganda

The case from Uganda deals with an example of mismanagement of the development aid resources. In fact, it is often assumed that it is humanitarian aid that is more prone to corruption since it is usually provided without sufficient prior risk analysis and in chaotic emergency situations following natural disasters or civil conflicts (TI, 2010). However, this case provides an example of a long term development assistance which makes it more relevant to discuss the question in terms of its continuation or suspension. At the same time in the context of this essay it is also relevant to emphasize that although the presented case does not involve humanitarian aid, it is still about a life-saving aid. Africa has one-third of the world's extremely poor people, with some of the world's highest rates of childhood mortality and shortest overall life expectancy (Singer, 2009: 85). The international news stations tend to turn their attention to the problem when the situation suddenly deteriorates, for example when a disastrous large-scale famine occurs. But such catastrophes do not happen out of a sudden. They are usually culminations of a long-term lack of adequate nutrition. In reality the impact of hunger is usually less dramatic than shown on pictures of starving, skeletal children (O'Neill, 1995: 85-86). People affected by malnutrition relatively seldom die of hunger, but rather of illnesses they would probably survive if hunger had not weakened them. In this regard, it is plausible to acknowledge that the nature of the development assistance designed especially to support peace and reconciliation process in northern Uganda which in many years had been ravaged by the Lord's Resistance Army makes that its continuation or suspension has to be considered in terms of life or death for many affected.

According to Transparency International world corruption perception index of 2012 Uganda is ranked as 130 out of the total 176 states (www.transparency.org). At the same time, according to the data provided by The Organization for Economic Co-operation and

Development (OECD) the country is among the top 50 recipient countries of ODA (www.oecd.org). Still, with the corruption index at 29 Uganda is not the most corrupt among the top ODA recipients. According to the data from 2012 there are at least 16 countries among the top 50 ODA recipients which score worse on the Transparency International world corruption perception index. At the same time it is important to mention that while being dependent on development assistance Uganda is, however, neither one of the most fragile states. Therefore it is plausible to argue that Uganda may be seen as to some degree representative for many countries receiving development aid.

In August 2012 Uganda's Office of the Auditor General revealed that \$12.7 million in donor funds had been embezzled from Uganda's Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) (HRW, 2013). The aid was designed to support Peace, Recovery and Development Program for Northern Uganda as well as to contribute to development of Karamoja, Uganda's poorest region. As the fraud investigation wore on, several donor countries, among them Norway, decided to suspend further aid to Uganda (Lubega and Speed, 22 November 2012).

It is relevant to mention that the OPM scandal was not the first grand scale theft of development money which had surfaced in Uganda in the last years. In this regard it is even possible to claim that Uganda suffers from a strong culture of impunity. In 2011, British aid money was used by Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni to buy a £30 million jet - the top-of-the-range Gulfstream G550 private plane (Drury, 10 June 2011). Following these allegations the British Government carried out a sweeping review of how aid money was distributed and spent and promised that future funding would be targeted on sectors, such as health and education. Another example comes from Uganda's rocky history with the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria. In 2005 health ministry officials allegedly embezzled over \$4.5 million from the fund (IRIN, 1 October 2012). Also in 2007 the country lost a \$16 million grant because of its "unsatisfactory performance". Then in 2012, along the ongoing OPM scandal, Uganda's Ministry of Health in cooperation with Global Fund officers uncovered the mismanagement of a \$51 million malaria grant. Since Global Fund supports programmes providing life-prolonging treatment for more than 80 percent HIV-positive Ugandan who receive treatment and distributes insecticide-treated nets to protect families from malaria, any suspension in aid would inevitably be devastating for those in need.

In order to restart the donation after the OPM scandal the Ugandan authorities had to repay the stolen funds to its development partners, prosecute those responsible for the

embezzlement and put in place new and reliable systems for managing development aid. The Ugandan authorities did repay the money in the beginning of 2013. This, however, was met with a critique from the Ugandan civil society activists who claimed that the final beneficiaries should not be made to suffer because of the frauds committed by some public servants (Lubega and Opseth, 16 January 2013). Inevitably the repayment contributed to further cuts that effectively undermined programs and services tailored to benefit the public. Concerning the second demand of prosecuting those responsible for the fraud, in June 2013 the principal accountant working for the OPM was convicted and sentenced to five years for abuse of office (HRW, 2013: 49). It is beyond the scope of this essay to establish if he really was a main culprit or just a scapegoat. Anyway, it is relevant to mention that just a few months later in March 2014 the charges this person were dropped. This happened after a key witness for the state altered evidence in court.

The report “Letting the Big Fish Swim” by Human Rights Watch documents the multi-layered culture of corruption in Uganda and the government’s deep-rooted lack of political will to address this problem at the highest level (HRW, 2013). As a result of the lack of a clear system to protect witnesses and insulate prosecutors from bribery and intimidation, anti-corruption institutions in Uganda have ended up focusing on low-level corruption involving small sums of money, while the “big fish” have continued to accumulate wealth and power. What usually happens when a corruption scandal unfolds is that the high-ranking members of government remain untouched, while individuals working at the technical level face prosecution and sometimes jail time.

Furthermore, it is striking that in spite of President Museveni’s continuous reassurances of his commitment to eradicate corruption since he took office in 1986, the position of Deputy Inspector General of Government – which is legally required to be filled in order for the Inspectorate of Government (an office mandated by the Ugandan constitution to fight corruption) to prosecute cases – was vacant since 1995. The position was only filled in 2013 when donors presented it to President Museveni as a condition for resuming aid (HRW, 2013: 3).

Although I was not able to find any declaration on behalf of the donors announcing that they resumed aid to Uganda, the news following President Museveni’s signing Anti-Homosexuality Act in the beginning of 2014 suggest indeed that the development assistance started to flow again to Uganda sometime during the late 2013. As media reported the Anti-

Homosexuality Act led again to a new halt in the development assistance to Uganda. Although this time suspension is not directly relevant for the problem I discuss in the essay, it shows, however, how fast the development aid was resumed in 2013. This is especially noteworthy since the anti-corruption steps the Ugandan authorities took were of a cosmetic character. What makes the situation even more remarkable is the fact that the donors resumed assistance the same year when the Ugandan authorities launched a systematic campaign against anti-corruption activists from The Black Monday Movement that works to end theft of public money by government officials. In fact, the Black Monday Movement was established following the OPM scandal in 2012. In 2013 alone at least 28 anti-corruption activists were arrested on charges of “spreading of harmful propaganda”, “inciting violence” or “possession of prohibited publications” (HRW, 2013: 44).

At the same time it is relevant to mention that international donor commitment to fighting corruption in Uganda is severely compromised by other competing interests that inevitably soften their stance and dilutes their criticism (HRW, 2013: 51-53). These interests are mainly of strategic or commercial nature. Uganda under Museveni has in the last years consolidated its position as a strategic partner in combating terrorism as well as peacemaker and negotiator in the region. The country’s commitments to provide peacekeeping and military presence in Somalia and for counter-operations against the Lord’s Resistance Army make that the Western donor countries are reluctant to challenge the regime on corruption. It is also believed that being too outspoken in demanding anti-corruption protections could affect trade and economic interests of traditional Western donors and push Uganda towards a closer cooperation with China, which presumably is less concerned with the way their development assistance is managed by the recipient countries. This has become even more relevant since the discovery of oil in Uganda. Eventually, it is necessary to mention the interests of many in-country donor offices whose existence is totally dependent on continuing aid. Cutting off aid would very often be equal with their closedown. Consequently, corruption affecting the aid appears rather as a regrettable, but necessary cost of the arrangement.

Singer and maximal reduction of suffering

Recalling the first time he read Rawls’ *A Theory of Justice* Singer admits: “... I was astonished that a book with that title, nearly 600 pages long, could utterly fail to discuss the injustice of the extremes of wealth and poverty that exist between different societies” (2004

(2002): 8). Rawls' notion of justice based on a distinction between domestic and international realm did not appeal to Singer. The same year as *A Theory of Justice* was published he wrote one of his best-known philosophical essays "Famine, Affluence, and Morality". Although he did not explicitly argue against Rawls' theory, it is possible to regard it as an effort to develop an alternative approach to the inequalities between peoples. Consequently, taking a point of departure in the insufficient, in his eyes, response of both individuals and governments from the affluent countries to the famine in East Bengal in 1971, Singer settled an argument which framed his subsequent philosophical writings.

If it is in our power to prevent something very bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything morally significant, we ought, morally, to do it. (2008 (1972): 3)

The argument stipulates that accepting that some people live in abundance while others starve is morally indefensible. It applies to poverty no matter if it is brought about by an emergency situation or not. Singer argues further that the factors like geographical proximity and the number of people who are supposedly better equipped to help the extremely poor lack moral significance. In addition, the moral obligation concerns as much individuals as governments (2008 (1972): 2). In this regard the approach is relevant with regard both to aid projects managed by charities and to official development assistance provided by governments.

Singer proposes that anyone able to help the poor should donate part of their income to aid poverty relief and similar efforts. He maintains that, when one is already living comfortably, a further purchase to increase comfort will lack the same moral importance as saving another person's life. By promoting this standpoint Singer positions himself within preference utilitarianism which is a version of act utilitarianism. It defines right actions as those that fulfil the interests – preferences – of those being involved, regardless of whether the act causes sensations of pleasure. For Singer the moral goodness is identified with the maximal reduction of suffering. In this sense, it is possible to argue, he is rather not radical, since he does not argue for the maximization of the good (Widdows, 2008: 155).

In the following paragraphs I argue that Singer, while advocating the need to address global poverty, does not pay enough attention to the question of a potential abuse of the development aid provided by the donors. Although he is concerned with the effectiveness of aid programmes, he hardly mentions domestic high-level corruption as a relevant parameter. My claim is that this neglect has to do with Singer's desire to prove that we no longer should

place moral significance on national boundaries (Singer, 2004: 171). Emphasizing that our problems are currently too intertwined to be well resolved in a system consisting of nation-states, he seems to underestimate the endurance of state sovereignty in the current interstate relations.

Accordingly, I take a point of departure in Singer's famous visualization of our moral obligation towards the global poor through a parallel to a passer-by saving a drowning child. I argue that it does not fully reflect the way development assistance reaches those in need, since it does not include intermediaries involved in the process. Then, I move to discuss Singer's way of approaching the question of effectiveness. I refer here to the critique of utilitarianism for requiring from that we carry out calculations that we are unable to make. In this regard, by pointing at potential harm, I consider the problem of high-level corruption in developing countries as going beyond the question of effectiveness. Eventually, I consider Singer's two additional ideas which presumably may provide a way out of the challenge posed by high-level corruption.

Saving a drowning child

While arguing that the affluent have a moral obligation to respond to global poverty Singer provides an analogy to the moral obligation to save a child that is at risk of dying right in front of us.

If I am walking past a shallow pond and see a child drowning in it, I ought to wade in and pull the child out. This will mean getting my clothes muddy, but this is insignificant, while the death of the child would presumably be a very bad thing.
(2008 (1972): 3)

The analogy aims at appealing to our intuition that it is morally required to make the necessary sacrifice to save a starving child. Singer assumes that the globalization process requires impartiality, universalizability and equality (2008 (1972): 4). As a result geographical proximity does not have any moral significance. This implies further that there is no difference between helping children dying of poverty related causes across the world and saving children dying right in front of us.

Singer's principle appears as extremely radical for most of us. By claiming our moral obligation to help the extreme poor Singer wipes out the traditional distinction between duty

and charity (Singer, 2008(1972): 7). Consequently, it is immoral of us not to act according to this obligation. Some critics challenged Singer's account on this point by arguing that in normal conditions we are obliged to take only moderate cost to save a child, even if the child is dying in front of us (Barry and Øverland, 2013: 191-192; Barry and Øverland, 2014: 571). By normal conditions we should understand a situation when we are not responsible for the suffering. Behind this critique there is an implicit assumption that our moral obligation is not based on our involvement in the suffering. Indeed, Singer does not specify explicitly whether our moral obligation to alleviate global poverty is generated from the wrongness of unjustified poverty or from affluent societies' role in creating such poverty. In this sense Singer omits the question of responsibility for causing the extreme poverty (Knight, 2008: 716-717, 728). It does not seem to have any moral significance for his principle.

Most of the critics, however, have concentrated on proving that our relations to distant individuals are different in morally significant ways from our relations to a child in front of us (Miller, 2004; Schmitz, 2012 (2000); Wenar, 2003). Miller agrees with Singer that we cannot remain callously indifferent towards global poverty, but he argues for a less demanding principle of general beneficence. He calls it the Principle of Sympathy in contrast to Singer's Principle of Sacrifice (2004: 359). Miller's principle does not impose a significant risk of worsening one's life. It presupposes also that equal respect does not entail equal concern. Although such a principle presumably is easier to put into practice in our daily life, I do not find it strong enough to challenge Singer's theory based on an unqualified moral requirement to help those in need, regardless of geographical proximity. Neither does Miller's standpoint seem to bring any new insight in the context of this essay, since the modification he proposes does not exclude a problem of corruption.

The more relevant in this regard are the assessments by Schmitz and Wenar, who argue respectively that there is nothing clear or obvious about the relation between what the affluent individuals sacrifice and what the distant poor gain. They question the assumption that aid will always make a positive impact on the long-term well-being of the poor. Schmitz concentrates on a risk of creating a culture of dependence on development assistance (2012 (2000): 4). Wenar, however, highlights also several other dimensions of the impact aid has on the political situation in the affected area, such as moral hazard, fuelling conflict and oppression and corruption (2003: 293). Although Wenar discusses primarily T.M. Scanlon's contractualism and only mentions Singer's postulate, I find his considerations highly relevant. I do not share though the opinion that the complex causal nexus between the rich and the

distant poor reduces our specific duties with respect to the latter, something Schmidtz and Wenar apparently imply.

The point Wenar and Schmidtz make about the complex causal connection between the affluent individuals and the distant poor can also be identified in the case from Uganda. As I have shown in the previous section, the aid does not reach the poor directly, but is normally transmitted through various intermediaries. Singer pays a lot of attention to aid agencies as such intermediaries. It is, however, also necessary to take into consideration the authorities in developing countries with regard to their role in managing and distributing the aid. In case of the intergovernmental assistance the role of local authorities is in fact fundamental. The pond analogy suggests that we are directly involved in saving a child. In my opinion, this image is incorrect and functions rather as a kind of an oversimplified promotional material. Therefore, a modified version of the pond analogy seems more to the point.

I am walking past a shallow pond and see a child drowning in it. The pond is situated in a sheltered area, and the only way of saving the child is to pay one hundred dollars to a lifeguard supervising the pond. This is a cost of a necessary rescue kit. I ought to do it. This will mean that I cannot afford buying a fancy dress, but this is insignificant, while the death of the child would presumably be a very bad thing.

The impression one gets from this modified version is ambivalent. Singer's appeal appears less persuasive when we do not know to what extent we can rely on the lifeguard. We can imagine that the lifeguard gets bored of his job and decides to "save" some money – for example by reusing old rescue kits - in order to buy a TV set and make the tiresome days pass. As a result some children would not be saved, because sometimes the old rescue kits would fail to function properly. We can imagine further that the people from the same area discover the misuse of the donations and organize protests. The lifeguard uses a part of donations to buy a weapon to deal with the problem. He kills two of the most prominent activists. They happen to be parents of one of the children saved earlier from drowning in the pond.

I am aware of the fact that every analogy essentially simplifies the reality. Nevertheless, I think that the modified pond analogy is more successful in conveying the complex causal connection between the affluent individuals and the distant poor than the analogy presented by Singer. While the initial pond case solely emphasizes a need for our moral obligation to

respond to suffering, the modified version includes also our reliance on intermediaries in this process, and not least the uncertainty to what extent our action will lead to the intended result.

Corruption and effectiveness of development aid

Because Singer's approach towards global poverty is based on the idea of maximal reduction of suffering, one of its central issues concerns the transparency and effectiveness of aid agencies. From this point of view one can argue that the more effective use of a donation, the better result one reaches. Singer takes up this question in a book *The Life You Can Save* (2009) published almost four decades after the seminal essay. The book attempts to answer if it is true that a relatively modest donation to an aid agency can save a life. Although Singer admits that not all organizations make good use of money, he argues that there exist many forms of aid that can be highly cost-effective. His main focus is, however, on effectiveness measured in good management and competent evaluation practice. In this regard he does not discern high-level corruption in developing countries as a challenge with particular moral implications for donors.

One of the reasons for this omission may be the fact that Singer puts stronger weight on aid provided by nongovernmental agencies. Although his appeal is aimed at both individuals and governments of the affluent countries, he points out that the political and bureaucratic constraints that encumber official aid make private donations to effective charities especially important. Singer maintains that official aid often serves political aims rather than helps the extremely poor (2009: 107). And even in the cases when political aims are not prominent, official aid tends to suffer from failures resulting from grandiose ambitions, top-down planning, and a lack of accountability (2009: 110). His claim corresponds to the situation in Uganda, where the donors are motivated not only by an urge to help, but also by prominent security and economic interests. Nevertheless, according to Singer it does not mean that governments from the affluent countries should drop providing foreign aid. In fact, he argues that they should give more than they do now, since 1 percent of the GNP which Western societies generally consider an acceptable level for overseas aid is not enough (2008 (1972): 13; 2004 (2002): 180-185). Still, Singer's focus on charities does not provide a sufficient argument for neglecting the risk of high-level corruption in the recipient countries, because, as already indicated, the problem affects all kinds of development assistance.

With regard to effectiveness, Singer's approach encounters also a couple of inconsistencies. First of all, although Singer acknowledges that it is difficult to calculate how much it costs to save or transform the life of someone who is extremely poor, he seems to rely at the same time on the assumption that any effort in this direction will produce a favourable result (2009: 103; 110-111). Such an assumption ignores a potential harm which may come for instance as a result of high-level corruption in the recipient country. Second, he claims that some degree of uncertainty about the impact of aid does not eliminate our obligation to give (2009: 124-125). According to Singer, as long as the cost of making aid projects possible is "comparatively minor", we should still donate the money. The question is, however, how we can calculate the extent of the ultimate cost of an aid project if we are not certain about its impact.

The Kantian philosopher Onora O'Neill provides a relevant assessment of these apparent contradictions. She argues that utilitarianism comes short for specifying which policies lead to which results, because it requires calculations that we are unable to make (O'Neill, 2008 (1987): 142-145). In her opinion we know too little to predict which public policies will benefit the poor most. She points also that "the ubiquity of corruption" makes the gap between benevolent intentions and benevolent policies particularly salient (2008 (1987): 144). She does not, however, elaborate on this point, so it is not clear if she thinks of corruption solely in terms of reduced effectiveness, or if she also indicates that corruption may result in a greater harm.

It is possible to argue that in cases where aid is provided to systems under a corrupt leadership, much more is at stake than only a risk of pocketing local officials. This kind of corruption does not only divert a percentage of aid away from intended purposes and beneficiaries, but it also serves to feed further abuses (TI, 2007: 4). Accordingly, in case of Uganda it is possible to link high-level corruption to several unwanted results or even evident abuses, e.g. hindering development of effective anti-corruption policies and laws, slower economic growth, less attractive investment market, encouraging low-level corruption and not least harassment and intimidation of anti-corruption activists. Not to mention, of course, those in need who did not receive aid that would otherwise reach them. To a certain degree it is even possible to argue that the development aid has contributed to sustaining the position of Yoveri Museveni as President of Uganda since 1986.

Consequently, although in theory it is possible to imagine a dictator who pockets a part of development assistance and uses it solely for private gains, in practice such mismanagement inevitably leads to stronger incentives for remaining in office, more powerful position vis-à-vis political opposition and suppression of civil society movements, to mention just some of the most striking consequences. The harm brought about by this kind of corruption goes therefore far beyond the pure effectiveness. As a result, the calculations about the intended impact of development aid appear to be even less predictable.

Schmidtz makes a similar point. As he observes, Singer's principle seems to operate in a parametric world where the best results in alleviating global poverty can be obtained through giving to a point of marginal disutility (2012 (2000): 3). In reality, however, our world is strategic – people respond to what we have done and to what they may anticipate from us. Schmidtz uses this argument to show how aid may encourage recipients to modify their behaviour in order to fit the evoked expectations. The result, which he highlights, is a growing dependence on external assistance. In my opinion, also corruption may be seen as a result of modified behaviour on the part of those with access to aid resources.

Nevertheless, Schmidtz seems to be more optimistic than O'Neill in maintaining that it is possible to anticipate consequences of our action and adopt a suitable strategy. He seems to agree with Singer that it is possible to predict results. Consequently, his criticism deals mainly with pointing out Singer's failure to take into consideration particular consequences of development aid. O'Neill, however, argues that the approach promoted by Singer proves deficient not because he fails to anticipate certain consequences, but because it is not possible to make precise calculations in this matter. Schmidtz and O'Neill share, though, the view that Singer's proposal is based on benevolent intentions which do not guarantee a success.

It is possible to argue that Singer's approach implies that everything depends on the extent of corruption. His focus on effectiveness presumably suggests that as long as corruption is "comparatively minor" and we anticipate some positive impact on the lives of the extremely poor, we should not give up providing aid. However, the problem is that we normally learn about the extent of corruption and thus the whole impact of aid only afterwards. As the case from Uganda shows, even if it is possible to take into account a risk of high-level corruption in the recipient country, it is not possible to predict and measure all consequences of this kind of abuse. In this regard, I find O'Neill's criticism convincing and subscribe to her argument about our incapability to make precise predictions of which policies lead to which results.

The problem of high-level corruption in recipient countries demonstrates how unrealistic it is to be sure that aid always contributes to the maximal reduction of suffering. Singer's focus on effectiveness may suggest that we are able to anticipate and control the impact of our donations. The nature of the contemporary international system presupposes, however, that a vast part of development aid is distributed or managed by local authorities. Donors may exercise more or less formal pressure on the recipient countries, but they have to respect their sovereignty. Consequently this kind of corruption usually remains outside the donors' means of control. With regard to Singer's principle this implies further that the moral obligation to help the extremely poor displays a lack of considerations to their needs. In line with the utilitarian reasoning we are morally obliged to help the extremely poor, because 100 dollars presumably creates more utility in the hands of a poor person than it does in the hands of a rich person. Such an idea, however, creates an illusion that we help the distant poor by the sheer act of donation. This illusion tends to neglect the fact that we are not able to predict and measure the total impact of the money we have donated.

Without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance

Singer does not consider the problem of high-level corruption in developing countries as a challenge to his principle. Nevertheless, he puts certain constraints towards his original principle and goes thereby beyond the utilitarian reasoning. The constraints seem to make a significant difference for the way his theory may handle the challenge high-level corruption in recipient countries.

As already indicated, Singer seems to rely too much on the assumption that the individuals and the governments of the affluent countries can assist the distant poor without mediation. As a result he concentrates on arguing that the moral goodness has to do with donating a large part of the wealth to those who are suffering for want of basic necessities. Singer seems also to take it for granted that we are able to direct our action, in this case donating money, so that it will not cause any harm. As I have argued, however, aid can also have negative consequences, even if the positive ones will be predominant. The modified pond analogy refers to a scenario where a vast majority of aid reaches those in need, but there is a risk of corrupt officials seizing a part of the donation. The indirect result of the aid may thus have a negative impact. In this regard the modified pond analogy has some resemblance to the well-known Trolley thought experiment (Schmidtz, 2012 (2000): 5-6). In the Trolley case we have

a choice of saving five people by switching the rolling trolley to another track on which there is only one person. If we do it, we save five persons, but kill one. In the modified pond analogy we can continue to provide money needed to rescue many drowning children, but we have to take into account that the same money, if misused, can lead to unintended negative consequences.

Singer apparently solves the dilemma by incorporating certain constraints to the moral obligation he postulates. He mentions such constraints when he clarifies what it means that we are obliged to help the extremely poor “without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance” (2008 (1972): 3). According to Singer, such an obligation implies that we act “without causing anything else comparably bad to happen, or doing something that is wrong in itself, or failing to promote some moral goal, comparable in significance to the bad thing that we can prevent.” (2008 (1972): 3). Singer does not specify explicitly whether he regards corruption as “something wrong in itself”. He does indicate, however, that he considers corrupt dictators to be “criminals in possession of stolen goods” (2009: 31). Therefore, we may assume that corruption – or in the case here consenting to corruption or just allowing it to happen – can be seen as “something wrong in itself”. In such a case it is possible to conclude that we should withdraw from supporting the aid project which is exposed to a risk of mismanagement.

It is possible to argue, though, that there is at least one important difference between the Trolley case and the circumstances exemplified through the modified pond analogy. Whereas in the Trolley case we know for sure what will happen when we switch the track, in the modified pond analogy we lack such a precise knowledge. We are not sure if or to what extent the money will be misused; we know though that such a risk exists. Neither do we know if the corruption will have a character of a private gain, or if it subsequently will contribute to another abuse. In reality, therefore, it is quite difficult to determine how the aid will contribute to the well-being of distant people in need.

A single world community

The original principle about maximal reduction of suffering is not the only radical proposal promoted by Singer. The second way Singer’s theory may face the challenge of high-level corruption in recipient countries has to do with his view that we should seek to establish a single world community. This recommendation, however, cannot be seen as a response to the

question of global poverty in its present form because the proposed idea of a single world community presupposes a totally different world order.

Highlighting the need to develop a cosmopolitan consciousness Singer supports establishing “a world community with its own directly elected legislature, perhaps slowly evolving along the lines of the European Union” (Singer, 2004: 199). Singer takes a point of departure for his considerations in various modes of global interdependence which often disadvantage poor societies. He is aware of the hazards related to the establishment of a single world community, like giving rise to a global tyranny or producing an overwhelming and inefficient bureaucracy. But even if such scenarios did not become real, it appears very optimistic to assume that global governance would succeed in eradicating extreme poverty. Singer insists, however, that it is high time to “accept the diminishing significance of national boundaries and take a pragmatic, step-by-step approach to greater global governance” (2004: 200).

How is this proposal relevant in the context of this essay? First of all, the idea of “a single world community” implies a different world system. The question which arises is therefore whether Singer’s original principle is still valid in such new circumstances. It is true that people living in EU, which Singer treats as a point of reference, generally do not risk famine and extreme poverty. In a global perspective they are affluent citizens living in affluent societies. Nevertheless, it is possible to think that their relative wealth cannot be seen solely in terms of the EU membership. It is right that the EU’s Structural and Cohesion Funds aim at integrating and equalizing the development level of the member states. However, these measures do not seem to provide automatically equality of wealth. In the light of the recent crisis in Greece, it is actually no longer obvious whether the EU is a solution or a cause of the deteriorating social and economic situation in some member states. Neither is it entirely obvious whether the European Union actually contributes to stronger solidarity bonds between citizens of the member states. In this regard Singer seems to rely too much on the notion of moral cosmopolitanism.

It is therefore not entirely clear whether in “a single world community” Singer’s original principle would have the same validity as in the contemporary international system. On the one hand, he emphasizes that the affluent individuals are as much, if not more, responsible for alleviating global poverty as their governments (2004: 134-135). On the other hand, however, while appealing for global governance Singer proposes establishing “a United Nations Economic and Social Security Council that would take charge of the task of eliminating

global poverty” (2004: 200). These two ideas do not necessarily exclude each other. However, the latter proposal may suggest that the existence of a specialized body to eliminate global poverty would modify Singer’s original principle in that it would no longer stress the responsibility to help the distant poor. Such a reform would apparently transform the international realm into a big global domestic realm. Still, the idea of a world government is so far-fetched that it is impossible to predict how it would work in practice.

Therefore, we can only speculate whether a single world community would eliminate the need for help in the present form of development assistance (because resources would be distributed according to an egalitarian pattern), or if it would mean that the distant poor would be less or no longer “distant” (because the national borders would cease to exist). It seems, however, quite plausible to assume that the establishment of a world government would have implications on the problem of high-level corruption of local authorities. Since there would be no more national borders, a world government would presumably possess stronger means of control over local authorities. Possibly it would therefore be easier for the affluent to reach out to the worst-off. These considerations, obviously, do not take into account a potential risk of a world government itself becoming corrupt.

In light of these considerations we may finally attempt to establish what implications high-level corruption in developing countries has on Singer’s approach. If we consider his original principle of the maximal reduction of suffering on its own premises, the fundamental question concerns the extent of the problem of corruption. As long as the aid is supposed to lead to more good than harm, the problem of corruption should not constitute a hindrance in fulfilling the moral obligation to help the extremely poor. However, in such a case, we have to take into account that we may in fact also cause suffering. It is also a serious shortcoming that Singer’s theory does not succeed in convincing how we can predict and measure consequences of our action. If we in turn take into consideration the constraints adopted by Singer, corruption may be seen as something wrong in itself. In such a case it presumably poses an insurmountable obstacle to the moral obligation of assistance. The ubiquity of corruption may thus imply that Singer’s principle in practice may have quite limited area of application. In my opinion this alone severely undermines Singer’s goal to provide an effective response to global poverty and consequently weakens his argument against the limited scope of Rawls’s duty of assistance. In this regard the idea of a single world community does neither appear as a relevant alternative to Rawls’s dualistic approach. It concerns a utopian, at best a very distant,

vision of a global domestic realm and therefore does not provide a solution to the problem of global poverty in the contemporary international system.

Pogge and violation of negative duties

Similar to Singer, Thomas Pogge is also critical towards Rawls's vision of international justice. In this regard Pogge subscribes to a cosmopolitan view which acknowledges different aspects of global interdependence. However, in contrast to Singer's utilitarianism Pogge adopts a deontological account of ethics. He remains therefore within the same philosophical tradition as Rawls.

According to Pogge the sources of the problem of contemporary global poverty have to be seen both in terms of a historical process and of a structural harm (2005c: 4-5). The first issue concerns long-term consequences of enslavement and colonialism. Pogge claims that "these monumental crimes (...) have left a legacy of great inequalities that would be unacceptable even if peoples were now masters of their own development" (Pogge, 2004 (2008): 534). Even if the developing countries could nowadays enjoy a real opportunity to achieve similar rates of economic growth as the developed countries, this historical process itself should count as a sufficient reason to acknowledge a duty to make up for the inequalities accumulated in the past. Pogge, however, is aware of the fact that it would be extremely difficult to estimate the exact impact of historical injustices. He focuses therefore much more on the role of the contemporary global economic order which is regulated by an elaborate system of treaties and conventions (2005b: 55).

In order to exemplify his argument about the structural harm Pogge refers to the going WTO rules which conserve the protectionist policies of the rich countries, especially in the sectors where developing countries would be able to compete, such as agriculture, textiles, and clothing (2004 (2008): 536; 2005c: 6). Opening markets of the rich countries would greatly increase export opportunities for poor countries. Nevertheless, officials from the developed countries use their superior bargaining power to influence the global economic order so that it benefits first of all the interests of their countries. In this way, "large inequalities, once accumulated, have a tendency to intensify – and this is happening, quite dramatically, on the global plane" (2004 (2008): 537).

The above considerations constitute a cornerstone of Pogge's view on severe poverty as a violation of negative duties. Pogge describes this duty not to cooperate in the imposition of unjust practice as follows:

We are asked to be concerned about human rights violations not simply insofar as they exist at all, but only insofar as they are produced by social institutions in which we are significant participants (1992: 52).

Furthermore, using very strong words Pogge stresses that an injustice in this economic scheme happens "independently of whether we and the starving are united by a communal bond or committed to sharing resources with one another, just as murdering a person is wrong irrespective of such considerations" (1992: 56). Consequently, it is possible to argue that although Pogge relates the inequalities between the rich and the poor to the global economic order, he explicitly denies that the negative duty must be grounded in any formal associative relations. Some kind of causal relationship, even if not direct, is a sufficient prerequisite for the negative duty to arise. Accordingly, Pogge frames his proposal in the conception of moral institutional cosmopolitanism. It is moral because it morally obligates all persons, even in the absence of a global order in which they would enjoy universal legal rights and duties (1992: 49). It is institutional because it endorses a view that even some third parties may be implicated in a violation of human rights as long as they are the more privileged participants in a particular institutional scheme. As an example Pogge provides the institution of slavery which implicates not only those directly exploiting it, but also others who profit from it in a less direct way (1992: 50-2).

In the context of this essay it is possible to point out two fundamental things which distinguish Pogge's view from respectively Rawls's and Singer's ideas. First of all, Pogge contests Rawls's notion of domestic causation of poverty. He stipulates that world poverty is largely brought about and sustained by richer Western economies and institutions, albeit in collusion with the ruling elites of the poorest countries. In this way Pogge presumably manages to escape the objection which suggests that it is acceptable for citizens and governments to be concerned only with those nearer to them. Whereas this objection may be relevant in the case of positive duties, it is harder to defend it if the basic duty is not to make people suffer or violate their rights. Being responsible for causing poverty, the rich have an incumbent duty to repair it. Pogge denies also that his idea of the severe poverty in terms of violating the negative duties is only "an exercise in re-labelling" (Patten, 2005: 27; Pogge,

2005a: 52). Such an allegation came from Alan Patten who points out that Pogge does not succeed in establishing a more minimal, negative-duty-based foundation for obligations to the global poor than the positive, need-based principle. Pogge insists thus that his proposal is distinct since “it does not take away some of what belongs to the affluent” (Pogge, 2005a: 52). In this way, it is rather a form of compensation and reducing the impact of unfair rules. “We are not “redistributing” from the rich to the poor” Pogge argues “but offsetting an unjust institutional redistribution from the poor to the rich – *re*-redistributing, if you like” (2004 (2008): 552).

As a consequence, in contrast to Singer’s notion of a moral duty to provide assistance to the global poor, Pogge argues that we owe them rectification. This has implications for Pogge’s proposal to address global poverty. He does not urge that affluent individuals and states should come up with donations. Instead he concentrates on a global institutional reform. The aim of such a reform would be first of all to remove the special prerogatives the rich countries have given themselves under WTO. Nevertheless, Pogge proposes also setting up a tax on using any natural resources which he labels a global resources dividend (GRD) (In the earliest version of his proposal Pogge labels it a global resources tax, or GRT (1994)). The resources collected in this way would be then redistributed to the poorest countries.

In the following paragraphs I argue that although Pogge recognizes high-level corruption in developing countries as a serious challenge in alleviating global poverty, he does not pay enough attention to all implications this problem may have on his proposed reforms. Accordingly, I take a point of departure in Pogge’s claim that the affluent play a significant role in sustaining corrupt elites in the poor countries. I agree with Pogge’s diagnosis, but I argue that this observation is also relevant with regard to development assistance provided to corrupt government. Then, I move to discuss Pogge’s reform proposals. In this regard I argue that the problem of high-level corruption in developing countries slightly undermines Pogge’s ambitious goal to conceptualize a solution to global poverty. Eventually, I look at his idea of a gradual global institutional reform and argue that it is doubtful that it may provide a way out of the challenge posed by high-level corruption.

Sustaining corrupt national elites

Pogge points out four reasons why it is still widely accepted in the developed countries to support the thesis of the purely domestic causation of poverty (2004 (2008): 538-541). First of

all, it is simply comfortable to hold such a view. Second, there are in fact great differences among developing countries' economic performance which clearly imply certain role of domestic factors. Third, national and regional developmental trajectories are easier accessible for social scientists than the overall evolution of poverty and inequality worldwide. Fourth, the prevalence of corrupt governments and elites in the poor countries appears also to play a significant role in strengthening the inequalities between the peoples.

In the light of this essay's research problem it is the last point which appears especially relevant. Although Pogge is willing to acknowledge that the local corruption of national elites contributes significantly to poverty in their countries, he, nevertheless, attributes the prevalence of corruption primarily to foreign influence (2004 (2008): 541). Pogge demonstrates this claim by referring to two kinds of privileges "any group controlling a preponderance of the means of coercion within a country [and] internationally recognized as the legitimate government of this country's territory and people" enjoys (2004 (2008): 543-546). He labels the first privilege as an *international resource privilege* and the second one as an *international borrowing privilege*. The resource privilege does not include only effective control over the natural resources but also the power to effectuate legally valid transfers of ownership rights in such resources. The borrowing privilege has to do with the power to impose internationally valid legal obligations upon the country at large. In practise it does not matter if the government of the country in question is democratic or not.

Some critics have argued that Pogge's notion of causality in this regard is far-fetched. Joshua Cohen, for example, disputes that those responsible for imposing global rules bear moral responsibility for most poverty (Cohen, 2010: 18-45). The reason why he finds this thesis implausible is that he does not agree with Pogge's claim that the problem of extreme global poverty could be eliminated through minor modifications in some global economic rules. Furthermore, he is sceptical to the claim that the existence of corrupt institutions in developing countries can be sufficiently explained by global institutional factors. Neera Chandhoke shares a lot of Cohen's criticism. She believes that attributions of causality are too complex and disputable to claim that the main burden of responsibility for global poverty lies on the affluent societies (Chandhoke, 2010: 66-83). In her opinion Pogge focuses too exclusively on the responsibility of people in the affluent countries. Although Chandhoke acknowledges that they also are culpable, she finds local factors in the poor countries more important. In the same spirit Debra Satz points out that "if explanatory nationalism is false, then so is explanatory globalism" (Satz, 2005: 49).

In this regard Pogge does not agree with the argument that there is no evidence for the affluent countries' responsibility for the global poverty. Although he recognizes that the problem is very complex, he argues that his critics often confuse absence of evidence with evidence for absence of our responsibility for world poverty (Pogge, 2010: 181). In his view the data on the distribution of global household income and its evolution in the globalization period (1980-2005) clearly imply the responsibility of the Western citizens and policy makers. The data show a substantial increase in inequality, with the top eight percentiles improving their assets, and all the rest of world population getting poorer (2010: 188). For Pogge, the increasing global inequality provides evidence that the affluent are gaining at the expense of greatly aggravating world poverty. Furthermore, he clarifies that he does not attempt to establish a distinction between global and domestic causal factors but rather "a workable distinction between causal factors that are shaped, controlled, and imposed by our countries and governments in our name and those that are not" (2010: 178). The resource and borrowing privileges demonstrate how the affluent people indirectly harm the poor by enabling and incentivizing coups, civil wars, and oppressive governments (2010: 201).

With regard to these two privileges, it is possible to argue that the development assistance in form of direct aid to the public sector can potentially create circumstances for a similar privilege. Let us call it an *international aid privilege*. In many countries development aid provides the dominant share of government funding. The ruling government is then responsible for managing and distributing the funds. The case from Uganda shows that the donors, in spite of occasional and temporary halts in assistance, continue to provide the corrupt administration with money. By providing development assistance affluent donor countries may therefore also indirectly inflict harm on the poor.

It may thus seem that in cases of high-level corruption, the best option is to deliver aid outside the government system by channelling it directly to communities through local NGOs. This, however, is not so easy. Working directly with local NGOs can in fact lead to the perception of undermining governmental authority (TI, 2010: 48). Therefore, it is a usual practice that although the development assistance is channelled through different agencies, a substantial part of the aid goes to the public sector. Such a pattern exists also in case of the development assistance to Uganda, e.g. out of the total Norwegian aid to Uganda which in 2013 amounted to about 411 million NOK, approximately 157 million NOK was aimed at supporting the public sector (www.norad.no).

As already indicated, the problem of high-level corruption in the poor countries is not only about pocketing local officials. We may argue that fuelling the corrupt regime of president Museveni with development assistance, and thereby indirectly contributing to slower economic progress and human rights abuses, imposes a new negative duty on the donors. The donors become culpable of a new harm towards the population Uganda because they provide incentives for the corrupt elites to stay in power. But what implications does it have for Pogge's approach to global poverty?

According to Pogge, citizens of the affluent countries are not entitled to continue inflicting harm upon the global poor on the ground that others, for example corrupt elites in the developing countries, are also doing it (2005a: 53). This has primarily to do with Pogge's view that the severe poverty is not solely a result of neglecting positive duties towards the global poor, but first of all a result of violating negative duties. The affluent societies and individuals owe rectification to the global poor, not solely some sort of assistance. On the one hand, therefore, we have stronger obligation to respond to the poverty if we are somehow implicated in this harm. On the other hand, however, channelling the aid through the corrupt local authorities implies that we are not able to provide a total compensation to those who are suffering from the harm. In fact, not only does it mean a failure to fully compensate the harm, but, as already mentioned, it presumably invokes new negative duties with regards to the harm caused by the means provided by us. In this regard, it is plausible to claim that Pogge's theory implies that high-level corruption in the recipient countries should be a sufficient reason to stop the development assistance in form of direct aid to the public sector.

It is significant that Pogge, in contrast to for example Singer, does not appeal to affluent individuals and governments for donations, but urges for our moral obligation in support of a gradual global institutional reform. Such a reform would primarily involve structural changes in the global economic order so that it was no longer to the detriment of the global poor. Nevertheless, as I will argue below, Pogge's proposal for a global reform does not entirely manage to avoid transfers of money to the developing countries. Accordingly, my claim is that although Pogge acknowledges the ubiquity of high-level corruption with regard to the resource and borrowing privileges, he seems to believe that a scheme he proposes would be less liable for this challenge.

Proposals to alleviate global poverty

The reforms promoted by Pogge are grounded in a view that the contemporary global order is causally involved in perpetuating poverty. This has been disputed by some critics who, while referring to the increase in the global average income and longevity, argue that the present global order can actually be credited with the considerable improvements in human well-being that have been achieved over the last 200 years (Risse, 2005: 9). Pogge emphasizes, however, that the well-being of societies, typically assessed by their GNP per capita, does not necessarily correspond to the well-being of individual human beings (2005b: 55). This is especially evident with regard to the resource-rich developing countries. Therefore, he presents the reforms as feasible alternative ways of organizing the contemporary global economic order. In his view they are supposed to incorporate into the global institutional order the moral claim of the severely poor to participate in the benefits from the use of the world's resources (2002: 207).

Let us look closer at the reforms promoted by Pogge. First of all, Pogge envisages dismantling protectionist trade barriers. He refers thereby to the special prerogatives the rich countries have given themselves under WTO rules to favour their own companies through tariffs, quotas, antidumping duties, subsidies, and export credits (2004 (2008): 551). In his estimates the reform would result in annual welfare gains for the less developed countries estimated up to around \$200 billion (2010: 184). And even if not all additional export revenues earned by the poor countries in this way would reach the poorest, the reform could still generate significant improvement for the populations, including beneficial effect on employment. As Pogge reports, the resulting net income gains for the population of the poor countries would presumably lead to poverty reduction of up to 500 million people (2010: 184). In addition, while contributing to the substantial reduction of global poverty, the removal of protectionist trade barriers would not inflict new harm on the poorest. And even if governments in the developing countries would embezzle the gains, the character of the reform would not make the affluent societies part of this corruption.

Another reform idea concerns an international patent regime for medicines. Pogge advocates establishing the Health Impact Fund (HIF) to help those who are excluded from medicines by high prices (2010: 185). At present around three-quarters of humanity are unable to afford patented medicines (www.healthimpactfund.org). Such a fund would therefore have two objectives. First, it would coordinate efforts to make existing medicines more affordable and

available to the poor. Second, it would provide incentives for pharmaceutical companies to conduct researches on diseases that disproportionately afflict the worst-off. When dropping the price in one market for a patented drug, companies would be paid a separate performance-based incentive bonus based on measured health benefits. In more realistic configurations the core funding for the HIF is to be provided by states which agree to become funding partners (www.healthimpactfund.org). However, in another place Pogge suggests that the HIF could be fundable of 2 percent of the global resources dividend (GRD), a proposed tax which I discuss below (2010: 185). It is expected that the impact of the HIF could cause dramatic mortality and morbidity reduction among the global poor. Like the dismantling of protectionist trade barriers the idea of the HIF is merely about removing the unmerited privileges of the affluent. It is not conventional development assistance and it does not involve any money transfer to the developing countries. Therefore, neither does this reform appear as controversial with regard to the risk of corruption.

It is though Pogge's third proposal, the already mentioned GRD, which, in my opinion, is the most problematic in the context of high-level corruption in the poor countries. Pogge grounds the idea of the GRD in Locke's inalienable right to a proportional share of the world's resources (1994: 201; 2002: 202). The GRD is supposed to have a form of a tax on using any natural resources. It envisions that states and their governments will not have full libertarian property rights with regard to the natural resources in their territory. Accordingly, they will be required to share a small part of the value of any resources they decide to use or sell (2010: 196). Since this would result in higher costs for natural resources, the GRD could be seen as a kind of "tax on consumption" (Pogge, 1994: 200). According to Pogge, the proposed GRD of just 1% would consequently allow to "raise about \$320 billion annually, or 86 times what all affluent countries combined are now spending on basic social services in the developing world" (Pogge, 2005a: 50). Pogge assumes that this money could substantially improve basic medical care in the developing world, provide access to clean water, electricity and free education as well as relieve the debt burden, just to mention some of his assumptions. Pogge believes, further, that the reform would greatly benefit economies of the developing countries.

Nevertheless, as already indicated, in order to meet its goals the reform would inevitably involve some kind of redistribution of the GRD payments. Taking into consideration that the GRD would then probably be redistributed through the same channels as conventional development aid, i.e. directly to the governments of the poorest societies, this part of the global reform package would still be vulnerable to a risk of high-level corruption in the

developing countries. Pogge's estimates for example that the GRD would suffice to cover health care in the developing world appear very optimistic in the light of corruption scandals as the one in Uganda which tapped the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria for millions of dollars.

It is crucial to emphasize that Pogge is aware of this challenge. He acknowledges that "in an ideal world of reasonably just and well-ordered societies" the GRD could have a big impact on the emancipation of the present and future global poor (1994: 201). However, "[i]n a nonideal world like ours, corrupt governments in the poorer states pose a significant problem" (1994: 202). He claims, therefore, that a corrupt government involved in embezzling the money should be cut off from the GRD funds. Pogge believes that in such cases it would still be possible to administer meaningful development programs through existing UN agencies or nongovernmental organizations (1994: 202; 2002: 206-207). This, however, may not always be possible since excluding the local authorities from the distribution process would very likely be seen as undermining its legitimacy. Pogge acknowledges, therefore, that some global poor would probably not benefit at all from the scheme.

This brings us to Pogge's critique of Rawls's theory of international justice. In spite of the fact that Pogge tries to go beyond Rawls's static approach, he seems eventually to be trapped in the static order as well. His proposals are based on the cosmopolitan approach which addresses the massive life-threatening poverty on a global scale. Nevertheless, taking into consideration the ubiquity of corruption it is not entirely sure if the GRD would succeed in reaching out to many global poor. I am not convinced that it would be easier to eliminate the problem of high-level corruption in developing countries with regard to the GRD than it is in case of conventional development assistance. In this regard the GRD proposal seems to face the same challenge as Singer's principle of maximal reduction of suffering. Pogge's suggestion that corrupt governments would be cut off from the GRD funds has therefore the same function as the constraints to the original principle which Singer finds necessary to adopt. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize that the GRD constitutes only a part of Pogge's reform package. The dismantling of protectionist trade barriers and the global health reform through the HIF are not prone to the same challenge.

A vertical dispersal of sovereignty

Rawls operates within the international relations as they are. He does not address all the problems in the world. On this point it appears therefore as more realistic. Pogge, however, does not agree with such a position and argues that:

our task as philosophers requires that we try to imagine new, better political structures and different, better moral sentiments. We must be realistic, but not to the point of presenting to the parties in the original position the essentials of the status quo as unalterable facts (1994: 224).

Pogge does not stop at proposing these three above discussed measures to alleviate global poverty. Accordingly, he envisages an idea of gradual global institutional reform (2002: 168-195). Taking a point of departure in moral institutional cosmopolitanism Pogge claims that the concentration of sovereignty at one level is no longer defensible. Therefore, his proposal concerns gradual reforms that would bring our global order closer to the ideal of legal cosmopolitanism. Unlike Singer, however, he does not further an idea of a centralized world state. He advocates rather a multi-layered order based on the strengthening of political units above and below the level of the state. Pogge's idea of a gradual global institutional reform involves therefore both centralization and decentralization. Pogge emphasize at the same time that such a reform must bring to poorer societies not merely a reduction in their formal sovereignty, but also economic sufficiency and democratic governance. From the standpoint of a cosmopolitan morality dispersing political authority makes it more feasible to meet the aspirations of people and communities.

Is Pogge's proposal realistic? In my opinion it is possible to point out at least three dimensions which potentially appear to undermine the whole idea. First of all, grounding the reform on a moral value of democracy makes it too contestable to receive universal assent (Wenar, 2010: 135-136). In this regard Pogge seems to rely too much on the allure of democratic values and human-right standard. I do not see the reason why we should expect that democracy should have better chance to spread in a multi-layered order based on reduced national sovereignty than in the contemporary international system. Second, Pogge seems also to place too much confidence in a benevolent view of human nature. One thing is to establish a system composed of democratic political units. Another is to expect that the aspirations of people and communities will always be peaceful and just. War and conflict have always been an integral part of the human history, regardless of what kind of political units dominated at a

particular point in history. How would such a reform be capable of changing it? Eventually, although Pogge elaborates on several opportunities and potential challenges such a pluralist global order may face, the gradual institutional global reform is too utopian to be addressed with any precision. I do agree with Pogge that the international system based on state sovereignty is imperfect, and sometimes even oppressive. However, it seems too optimistic to expect that most of the global problems would disappear with the reform. It is simply unpredictable whether a world order, based on a network of regional and local political units with quite broad prerogatives on the one hand, and supranational institutions and organizations dealing with issues of global and transnational character on the other hand, would make our planet a better place to live.

Consequently, similarly like in case of Singer's proposal of a single world community, we can only speculate whether a multi-layered global order would eliminate global poverty. Pogge appears to be a strong believer of the idea that institutionalizing economic justice at the global level is the way to go. However, due to the fact that his reform includes also a (re)distribution of wealth it is relevant to ask if a pluralist global order would have implications on the problem of high-level corruption of local authorities. As indicated, the gradual global institutional reform aims at substantially weakening national sovereignty. But it does not imply that new political units would be less prone to a risk of corruption. It is also not clear whether supranational institutions and organizations would have any coercive measures to tackle such problems.

In light of these considerations we may attempt to establish what implications high-level corruption in developing countries has on Pogge's approach. Unlike Singer, Pogge elaborates extensively on the problem of corruption in the poor countries. He demonstrates how the affluent governments and societies sustain corrupt elites in the poor countries and that this should be seen in terms of a violation of negative duties. I have argued that also development assistance may contribute to strengthening the position of the corrupt elites. Pogge proposes a range of reforms to tackle the problem of global poverty. As I have indicated, not all of them are prone to the same risk as conventional development assistance. The dismantling of protectionist trade barriers and the proposed global health initiative seem to have considerable chances of improving the lives of the worst-off. However, especially in case of the first of these two proposals it is reasonably to argue that the effects of such a reform would not be immediate. Any positive results could at best be expected in a long-term perspective. Moreover, in my opinion these two reforms alone could hardly eliminate severe global

poverty. As to Pogge's proposal concerning the GRD, I am not convinced that its redistribution would work better than a distribution of conventional development assistance. Pogge specifies that corrupt governments would not be eligible for the GRD funds. Although he claims that the GRD would be free from a tinge of arrogance that conventional development assistance involves, its (re)distribution would inevitably use the same channels as the latter. The ubiquity of corruption may thus imply that the proposed GRD in practice would have quite a limited area of application, because it would not succeed in reaching so many poor. In this regard Pogge does not convincingly show that these reforms could have a greater impact on the situation of global poor than Rawls's proposals. Finally, I do not think that the proposal for a vertical dispersal of sovereignty may be regarded as a relevant alternative to Rawls's theory from the same reason as Singer's idea of a single world community could not do it. Its main shortcoming is that it does not provide a solution to the problem of global poverty in the contemporary international system.

Back to Rawls

This last section is composed of three parts. First, I present the main tenets of Rawls's theory of international justice. I argue that Rawls's approach is in many ways outdated and does not address the contemporary global challenges. In the context of this essay, however, I find Rawls's approach relevant since it proposes measures which are not prone to the risk of high-level corruption in the poor countries. Next, I adopt a comparative approach towards the theories of Singer, Pogge and Rawls. I argue that the problem of high-level corruption in developing countries demonstrates that the proposals included in Rawls's theory of international justice may in fact have equally relevant impact on global poverty as the solutions promoted by Singer and Pogge. Eventually, in the light of these considerations, I discuss what the respective theories have to say with regard to the case from Uganda.

Rawls's theory of international justice

In his book *The Law of Peoples* Rawls formulates a provisional list of eight principles of justice on which free and democratic peoples could reasonably agree in a hypothetical choosing situation (Rawls, 1999). These principles are mostly based on the rules of international law. The exception is the last one which aims at establishing a positive duty which goes beyond the established interpretation of the duties imposed by the international

law. It concerns “a duty to assist other peoples living under unfavourable conditions that prevent their having a just or decent political and social regime” (Rawls, 1999: 37).

If we compare Rawls’s principles of international justice with his theory of justice as fairness for the domestic realm, as formulated in *A Theory of Justice*, we notice two fundamental differences. The first one concerns a different level of representation in the hypothetical original position. Whereas the principles of distributive justice for the domestic realm are chosen by representatives of persons, the principles of international justice come up as a result of the alleged negotiations between representatives of “peoples”. In this regard, Rawls’s use of the term is not sufficiently clear, because he makes an explicit distinction between “peoples” and states. The assumption which lies behind this distinction is that states do not seek justice, but are guided by their basic interests (Rawls, 1999: 28). Therefore, it seems rather that the term “peoples” is an ideal term, coined in order to highlight its moral character in contradiction to a state’s self-interestedness. Consequently, it is possible to consider “peoples” as a kind of idealized notion which in the real world may roughly be associated with states.

The second striking difference between Rawls’s account of domestic and international level is that the list of principles proposed for the international realm does not include anything like the difference principle or the fair equality of opportunity principle which are crucial for the vision of a domestic society regulated by the distribution of social and economic advantages. Although Rawls recognizes that it is necessary to address a challenge associated with “attaining liberal or decent institutions, securing human rights, and meeting basic needs“ (Rawls, 1999: 116), he claims that the duty of assistance should cease when the targeted societies reach a level of a reasonably liberal society, or at least of a decent hierarchical society. Rawls does not find “any justifiable reason for any society’s asking for more than is necessary to sustain just institutions or for further reduction of material inequalities among societies” (Rawls, 1999: 119). Accordingly, he considers it to be “a principle of transition” which he parallels with the “principle of best savings” in the domestic realm. The objective of the latter is to meet the problem of justice between generations through founding a basic structure of the society in conformity with the two principles of justice (Rawls, 1971: 284-93; 1999: 106-7). It appears therefore that in contrast to the cosmopolitan account, Rawls’s postulate for a duty of assistance is not primarily motivated by a will to help the poor, but first of all is designed to contribute to establishment of a fair basic structure in the targeted societies. This has to do with his belief that wealth owes its origin and

maintenance to the political culture of the society rather than to its stock of resources (1999: 117). Rawls is even more explicit about this when he writes that whereas the ultimate goal from a cosmopolitan point of view is the well-being of individuals, the ultimate concern for the Law of Peoples is the justice of societies (1999: 119).

Furthermore, Rawls stipulates that the parties in the original international position “will formulate guidelines for setting up cooperative organizations and agree to standards of fairness for trade” (1999: 42). It implies that the Law of Peoples presupposes international trade without protectionist barriers. The more affluent societies cannot use their superior position to generate profits. Rawls specifies that “should these cooperative organizations have unjustified distributive effects between peoples, these would have to be corrected, and taken into account by the duty of assistance” (1999: 43). It is thus possible to argue that Rawls recognizes thereby a duty to rectify effects of injustice.

Finally, in the context of this essay it is relevant to emphasize that the duty of assistance is not about “throwing funds” at the burdened societies, as Rawls emphasizes, but rather about providing “certain kinds of advice” (1999: 110). Rawls points out: “What must be realized is that merely dispensing funds will not suffice to rectify basic political and social injustices (though money is often essential)” (1999: 111). The final aim of assistance is freedom and equality for the former burdened societies. Taking into account Rawls’s sceptical attitude towards assistance in form of money transfers, it is reasonable to argue that the problem of high-level corruption in the poor societies does not challenge his theory in a considerable way.

Global poverty – Singer and Pogge versus Rawls

Although both Singer and Pogge are critical towards Rawls’s two-tiered theory, it is Pogge who stands behind an explicit polemic with the author of *The Law of Peoples*. Pogge’s critique is based on the cosmopolitan approach that recognizes different aspects of interdependence transcending borders and boundaries. In this regard Pogge represents a range of cosmopolitan thinkers who challenge Rawls’s notion of justice in the international relations based primarily on isolated and self-sufficient states. Most frequently, their argument against Rawls’s statist view takes a point of departure in the global economic interdependence. Some of them put forward arguments in favor of applying the notion of distributive justice to the international realm (Beitz, 1979: 136-153; Moellendorf, 2002: 9-18). Others propose an

alternative needs-based minimum floor principle ensuring that every person is able to meet basic needs and enjoy a decent range of opportunities (Brock, 2009: 48-63). Pogge's main argument against Rawls's view is, however, that it does not do justice to the problem of global poverty resulting from the violation of negative duties (Pogge, 2004 (2008): 534-538).

Nevertheless, it is possible to claim that Pogge's critique somehow misses the point. Rawls's theory of international justice is about relations between societies/states - "peoples", and not persons. Moreover, it is not supposed to address the problem of severe poverty but deals with efforts to establish a fair basic structure in the targeted societies. One may agree with this perspective or not, but it appears coherent as long as we deal with relations within states or between states. Pogge's objective is therefore to emphasize the fundamental role of the global institutional context in creating inequalities across the borders. He does it by questioning a limited representation of interests in Rawls's international original position and draws consequently a parallel to the rules of the world economy which reflect the bargaining power of the various states. Pogge's claim that Rawls's account of international justice neglects the problem of world poverty may therefore be interpreted not as an argument against the internal logic of Rawls's theory but rather against Rawls's understanding of the international realm. Rejecting the purely domestic causation of poverty Pogge maintains that Rawls "should have complemented his duty of assistance after all, perhaps by a duty to help structure the global order so as to minimize personal poverty and international inequality" (2004 (2008): 534).

I do agree with Pogge that Rawls's theory fails to provide an appropriate response to poverty resulting from transnational phenomena like the global economic interdependence or the environmental pollution. My claim is, however, that the problem of high-level corruption in developing countries demonstrates that neither Singer nor Pogge provides a convincing argument that their proposals may actually result in a much more significant impact than the measures proposed by Rawls.

With regard to Singer's principle of maximal reduction of suffering I have argued that, as far as we recognize high-level corruption as something wrong itself, it seems plausible to regard this problem as a sufficient reason to stop providing donations. Like Pogge, Singer does not consider a country's economic growth to be a reliable factor in measuring the improvement of the situation of the extreme poor (2009: 111-115). Nevertheless, he elaborates also extensively on global inequalities, so we may assume that he would side with fair conditions for global trade. In this regard Pogge provides a more comprehensive account. Still, as I have

indicated, the proposed GRD would probably not reach all the worst-off because Pogge denies corrupt governments the GRD funds. In such a case, what remains out of Pogge's proposals are the reforms concerning the dismantling of protectionist trade barriers and the HIF. Taking into account the ubiquity of corruption we may, however, argue that in practice Singer and Pogge end up not so far away from what Rawls proposes in *The Law of Peoples* – “fair trade” and the duty of assistance. In this regard only Pogge's proposal for the global health reform seems to add new vital dimensions to this framework.

To a certain degree it is also possible to argue that the Rawlsian duty of assistance offers something Singer and Pogge do not consider explicitly. Rawls mentions assistance in form of “certain kinds of advice” which may be understood as expertise and know-how aimed at realizing and preserving just (or decent) institutions (1999: 110). The idea has to do with Rawls's thesis of the purely domestic causation of poverty. The objective of this kind of assistance seems relevant with regard to the problem of high-level corruption in the poor countries. It is necessary, however, to admit that the realization of this kind of assistance would necessarily be a long-term and problematic project. Therefore, Rawls emphasize that the well-ordered societies giving assistance must not act paternalistically. All in all, Rawls is cautious about specifying substance of the duty of assistance as he insists that “there is no recipe, certainly no easy recipe, for well-ordered peoples to help a burdened society to change its political and social culture” (1999: 108).

Following the OPM scandal in 2012 the donors cut all direct aid to the Ugandan government. At the same time the Norwegian State Secretary Arvinn Eikeland Gadgil admitted that: “...unfortunately it is the country's poor that will be affected. But we cannot provide any more funding if it is simply pocketed by corrupt official” (MFA, 2012). According to the official rhetoric the assistance to Uganda appears to be observing strict transparency standards. In reality, the donors resume development assistance to the corrupt regime of president Museveni soon after the repeating corruption scandals. They do it motivated partly by benevolent intentions, partly by various self-interests.

If we look at the case from Uganda in the light of the three theories, we may observe that it does not correspond to any of their underlying goals. First, from Singer's point of view it is not in line with the proposed constraints to the principle on maximal reduction of suffering. Second, taking into account Pogge's account it is possible to argue that the development assistance strengthens the sitting government and at least indirectly inflicts harm on the

Ugandan people. Consequently, it is relevant to see the assistance in terms of a violation of negative duties. Third, as for Rawls's theory, the assistance in form of money transfers to the corrupt government implies undermining the process of transformation to become a well-ordered society.

Realist utopia and real-world moral problems

Rawls presents his theory in terms of a "realistic utopia", i.e. a possible alternative way of organizing our social world (1999: 11-12). In this context it is, however, relevant to stress that Rawls distinguishes between the ideal and the non-ideal theory. The first deals with the international justice for liberal and decent societies, the so called well-ordered societies. The latter concerns the world outside this sphere – burdened and outlawed societies. In other words, the non-ideal theory has an application for these societies which either contest the law of peoples or struggle with implementing a fair basic social structure. Singer and Pogge, in turn, establish accounts which aim at promoting solutions to real-world moral problems. Their respective utopian visions of a global order function as upgraded extensions of their original accounts. In a way, therefore, the theories of Singer and Pogge depart from an opposite direction than Rawls.

Nevertheless, Rawls's theory of international justice appears as more realistic towards the problem of global poverty. Rawls does not seek to address this issue because he recognizes that it is hardly possible to find any ultimate solution to it. In this regard, state sovereignty, whose relevance becomes even more evident when we look at the implications of high-level corruption in developing countries, is a factor well-ordered societies cannot ignore. The duty of assistance is intended exclusively for those societies which are cooperating on the way to become well-ordered. Rawls's theory does not establish goals that are outside of its reach. Therefore, it is possible to claim that the problem of high-level corruption in developing countries does not challenge the coherence of Rawls's theory. As I have argued in the previous sections, however, this is not a case with regard to Singer's and Pogge's respective accounts. Their theories subscribe to a highly ambitious goal of finding a remedy to global poverty. The problem of high-level corruption in poor countries demonstrates, however, that this goal hardly is possible to achieve.

Conclusion

The problem of extreme poverty is a demanding challenge in our globalized world. The case from Uganda shows that there is no simple recipe to this overwhelming problem. The aim of this essay, however, was not to deny the duty on the part of the affluent societies and individuals to address it. Furthermore, it was not my ambition here to provide a concrete solution to the problem of global poverty or a way out of the dilemmas nurturing the discussed moral theories. I am also aware of the fact that the question of global poverty is even more complex than I have presented in this essay. I have not problematized here aspects like the risk of creating a culture of dependence on development assistance or the question of desirability of a cosmopolitan project. Neither have I touched upon the discussion concerning the relationship between the obligations to assist and the rights to assistance (O'Neill, 2001; Cruft, 2005).

I find Singer's efforts to put focus on the affluent societies' overconsumption essential to visualize the huge unmerited inequalities between people. I agree even more with Pogge, who provides an ingenious diagnosis of our responsibility for imposing a global system disadvantaging the worst-off. I recognize also that Rawls's approach is outdated and does not reflect the contemporary global challenges. Nevertheless, the aim of the essay was to show that high-level corruption in developing countries poses a challenge to the cosmopolitan approaches to global poverty promoted by Singer and Pogge. My claim is that their accounts do not succeed in providing a coherent and viable solution to the problem of global poverty which would be superior to the proposals put forward by Rawls.

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