

HEALTH, DEVELOPMENT & HUMAN RIGHTS

Systematic Injustices in the Global Order

Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, it is *information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible position on an issue, rather than another.

Reading

Pogge, T. W. (2001). Eradicating Global Poverty: Brief for a Global Resources Dividend. *Journal of Human Development*, 2(1), 59–77.

Comment

Please do a Google search for Thomas Pogge. I want you to know that he is a terrible human being whose treatment of women is truly despicable. (Pogge and/or Yale University may have hired a PR firm to polish his online image, so you may have to go a page or two into the Google results before you start to see the articles about his proclivity for sexual harassment.)

While any toxic behavior and/or beliefs by the previous authors we have read might be excused by the different times and places in which they lived, Pogge does not have such an excuse. We are not reading him as an exemplar of decent (or even minimally moral) behavior, but only in order to assess his critique of the global order. His arguments have simply proven too influential for us to ignore. I repeat, though, he is a terrible human being with whom I would never associate outside of this context.

Questions

1. What does Thomas Pogge mean by “radical inequality”? In what ways is it (A) impervious, (B) pervasive, and (C) avoidable?
2. What is the difference between having a *positive* duty to assist others versus having a *negative* duty against harming others? Why does Pogge believe it may be difficult to justify a positive duty to fight radical inequality? How does his example of the hypothetical people on Venus help illustrate this point?
3. What are Pogge’s three arguments justifying that the global poor are owed rectification because of past and ongoing injustices caused by the global order?
4. What is Pogge’s solution for addressing radical inequality and why does he think it is both modest and realistic?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.