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# GLOBAL POVERTY, MORALITY AND INSTITUTIONS

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A STUDY OF TWO PHILOSOPHICAL PROPOSALS TO ERADICATE GLOBAL POVERTY

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## PREFACE

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During my Master Political Theory, I followed the course *Justice Across Borders*. It was in this course that I first came in touch with the article 'Famine, Affluence and Morality' by Peter Singer. I vividly remember how the provocative, almost activist nature of the text struck me. I immediately felt the urgency of the poverty issue and could not keep my mind of the ideas in this article. My interest in global distributive justice increased rapidly and eventually lead to this thesis. Although the process of writing this thesis was long and sometimes frustrating (as writing always is and ought to be), I never lost my enthusiasm for the subject and the articles and books I have read about it. Hopefully, the ideas and arguments presented in this thesis will inspire people interested in philosophy and distributive justice. However, I would be even happier if my work could help those that will never read it. I hope that this thesis, in any way, contributes to the fight against poverty. If this thesis could inspire readers to think about global poverty and discuss it with family, friends, neighbours or colleagues, I would be most grateful.

In the process of writing this thesis, I was supported by many wonderful people. I want to use this space to thank some of them. In the first place, I wish to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Bart van Leeuwen. His course on global justice inspired me to write my thesis on this subject, and his intelligent and helpful comments and remarks have contributed greatly to the formation of the thesis as it is now. Moreover, it was always a pleasure to discuss these and other issues in our meetings – after which I was always enthused to continue thinking and writing. Overall, it was a very satisfying experience to have him as my supervisor. In addition, I would like to thank Professor Marcel Wissenburg for being willing to be the second supervisor of this thesis.

I wish to show my great appreciation also to my great friends, with whom I discussed the topic of this thesis endlessly. Their remarks, comments and question have been of great help (mostly, anyways). I am looking forward to many more endless discussions!

My wonderful parents, who always supported me (financially and mentally), deserve all my love and thanks. They have always had (or pretended to have) belief and trust in me and my decisions. Hopefully, this was not in vein. Thanks mom and dad!

And of course, I wish to express my gratitude to my awesome girlfriend, Naline. For the last year, she was not only the best girlfriend in the world, but she was also of great help in the process of writing this thesis. We had countless talks and discussions about this thesis (we still disagree on many subjects), and after hearing so many insightful and intelligent comments from her, I am convinced she would be a great philosopher! Thanks, love!

Nijmegen, July 2012

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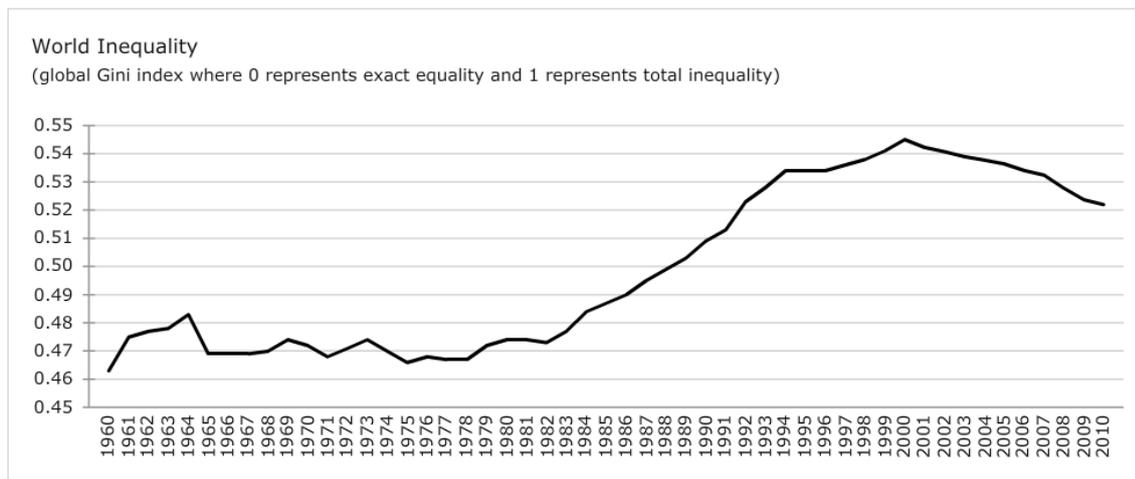
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## INTRODUCTION

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“As I write this, in November 1971, people are dying in East Bengal from lack of food, shelter, and medical care. The suffering and death that are occurring there now are not inevitable, not unavoidable in any fatalistic sense of the term.” (Singer 1972, p. 229)

In the forty years that passed since the well-known philosopher Peter Singer wrote these first sentences of his famous article, little seems to have changed. Still, more than one billion people live on less than one dollar a day and 10 million children and 8 million others die annually as a result of poverty. 46 (!) percent of the human population lives in severe poverty (cf. Singer 2010; Pogge 2002). Even more bewildering however, is the fact that things have actually gotten worse since the publication of Singer’s article: recent studies show that the income gap between the affluent and poor parts of the world have increased rapidly (see Figure 1). Although from 2000 onward the income gap has been slowly decreasing due to the economic development of China and India (The Conference Board of Canada 2011), the difference of inequality between 1971 and 2010 is staggering.



**Figure 1:** Source: *The Conference Board of Canada (2011)*.

In light of these developments, it seems legitimate to claim that global redistribution is one of the most urgent and significant issues in political theory. Knowing about these horrible numbers and facts, it is of the utmost importance to study whether we have any responsibilities in these tragedies. If it turns out that we indeed have some responsibilities and we do not act upon them (resulting in the deaths of many millions), we might play a part in one of the biggest crimes against humanity. This is obviously something well worth investigating. It is mainly for these reasons that this thesis will focus on global poverty.

Many propositions have been made in political theory that deal with global poverty and inequality. However, these theoretical propositions have only scarcely been put into practice. In fact, the *capability approach* as developed by Sen and Nussbaum seems to be among the few ideas that are actually being used in the fight against worldwide poverty. This raises the

question why so little is done with the many theoretical propositions made by political theorists. In this thesis, I will investigate two rather practical proposals that have been made by (political) philosophers in recent years. The first proposal is not very well known or elaborated and is made by Peter Singer. This proposal can be called the opt-out income deduction proposal. The second proposal under investigation is the Global Resources Dividend (GRD), as explicitly outlined by Thomas Pogge.

The Global Resources Dividend has been advocated and defended by Pogge in several articles over a substantial period. In this thesis, I will use the latest version of the proposal, without losing the previous versions out of sight. The proposal by Peter Singer, which I shall call the opt-out income deduction, is less well known because it only appeared in one small paragraph in the book *The Life You Can Save* (2010) and is further briefly mentioned by Singer in a reply to one of his critics in the book *Peter Singer Under Fire* (Schaler 2009). Here, Judith Lichtenberg criticises Singer's call for a change of morality of individuals, by stating that "most people in our society, constituted as it is now and with the incentives presently in force, will not give a great deal more than they are giving" (Lichtenberg 2009, p. 242). Singer responds to this critique by referring to recent studies into "presumed consent theories" on organ donations. These theories show (as did Judith Lichtenberg in an attempt to reinforce Singers position) that people tend to accept the default situation. In the context of our specific question, the current default situation is "not donating money to relieve poverty", or – in some countries – "not donating organs to those that need them". However, as Eric Johnson and Daniel Goldstein show in various studies (2003; 2004), if the default setting is changed, the turnout may change drastically. I will return to this issue at length in the remainder of this thesis, but for now let me just give a clear example of the effects of this alteration in the context of organ donation. In the Netherlands, the country with the highest organ donation rate of all "explicit consent" systems (opt-in systems), the percentage of donors is 27,5. In Sweden, the country with the lowest organ donation rate of all "presumed consent" systems (opt-out systems), the percentage of donors is 85,9 (Johnson and Goldstein 2004, p. 1715). This shows that many people do not have objections to donating their organs, but for some reason fail to get themselves into the system.

Singer states that if this same human psychological behaviour would be applied to the context of relieving global poverty, this approach might significantly increase overall donations even if the majority of the people would choose to opt out. According to Singer, there is not much needed to eradicate poverty across the globe. He cites the famous economist Jeffrey Sachs who states that annually 124 billion US dollars would be enough (Singer 2009, p. 266). Singer is aware that throwing money at the global poor is neither the only nor a sufficient method to relieve poverty, and that the actual money needed for this purpose might be a lot more. Still, "even if it took eight times that sum [claimed by Sachs], this would still be less than five per cent

of the \$20 trillion annual income of the twenty-two industrialized nations that are members of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee" (Singer 2009, p. 266).

Remarkably, this idea of a *presumed consent* income deduction to relieve global poverty has not been further elaborated.<sup>1</sup> Yet the idea could have a great appeal, since it has the potential of being rather effective and not all too demanding: a voluntary donation of a small percentage of the incomes of people living in the most affluent parts of the world to eradicate poverty is not a really demanding. It is my belief, therefore, that this proposal deserves some further investigation. In this thesis, I will do so by comparing the proposal with the GRD proposal by Thomas Pogge on moral, (political) philosophical and practical grounds.

The GRD proposal is based on the assumption that because of the process of globalisation and growing interdependence around the globe, affluent and poor states, regions and individuals are in one common institutional cooperative scheme. I will elaborate on this assumption and the moral basis of Pogge's reasoning later; let us at this point take it for granted. Because there is one common cooperative scheme, the affluent parts of the world have – according to Pogge – obligations towards the less well-off parts. In order to eradicate poverty and distribute the benefits of the cooperation more equally, Pogge proposes to tax natural resources. The affluent parts by far exceed the indigent in the use of these natural resources, while these natural resources are harvested in the poorest regions of the world. Therefore, states should pay a small dividend over the natural resources they use or sell. The funds raised by this dividend should be used to eradicate global poverty. With this model, the affluent states would be the main donors, while the indigent states would be the main receivers of these funds (Pogge 2001).

Just like the proposal made by Singer, the GRD too has the potential of being both effective and not too demanding. The most obvious difference between the two approaches however, is the unit of action. In the presumed consent (or opt-out) model by Singer, the unit of action is the individual citizen, who has to think about (and act upon) his moral obligations towards the poor and the question whether or not to donate a small amount of his income to relieve poverty. In Pogge's proposal however, the main units of action are states. These are the main political actors in the international arena (next to maybe some large companies) and therefore the main participants in the eradication of poverty. These nation-states constitute institutional schemes that are harming the global poor. Therefore, if we wish to eradicate poverty, it is necessary to change these global institutions. This can barely be done without the nation-state, although individual morality plays a role as well. Therefore, Singer's theory can be

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Singer also knows of no further elaborations on this idea, as became clear in personal e-mail correspondence (17-05-2012 and 22-05-2012).

said to be one of individual morality or ethics, whereas Pogge's theory could be characterised as an institutionalist theory of rights.

In this thesis, I will compare the two proposals and try to find the answer to the question whether the GRD proposal or the presumed consent proposal should be preferred, based on their philosophical merits and practical feasibility. In order to formulate a sound response to this question, I will have to work through several phases. The first part of this thesis will deal with the philosophical backgrounds of the two models. These will be embedded in the moral, ethical and philosophical thoughts of their creators. A good starting point for this exercise are the philosophical ideas the two theorists have in common: the cosmopolitan idea of global distributive justice. Both authors believe – although based on different assumptions - that people have distributive obligations towards others, and that these obligations do not stop at territorial, ethnical or national boundaries. I will elaborate on this common cosmopolitan framework and analyse whether there are sound arguments to claim that we have obligations towards “distant needy strangers” (Arneson 2009). It will not come as a surprise that I believe we indeed have these obligations. When this common ground is investigated, we will take a closer look at the different philosophical backgrounds of the two theorists. In order to understand where the proposals originate from, what their context is, it is necessary to analyse the main lines of reasoning throughout the most important works (regarding global justice) of both Pogge and Singer.

With the necessary philosophical context of the proposals outlined, in the second step it will be possible to investigate the two proposals more carefully. They will be outlined and critically analysed in order to find out what the stronger and weaker aspects of the proposals are.

The third and last step consists of a thorough comparison and assessment of both the two philosophical theories and the proposals to eradicate poverty. Although philosophical arguments play an important role, in this part, more than in the previous parts, the actual *status quo* will be taken into account. I will argue that feasibility is not (and should not be) a primary measuring scale for the attractiveness of a moral or philosophical idea, but it *is* nonetheless an important issue to keep in mind. All the more so, I believe, because we are dealing with the urgent and delicate subject of global poverty. With literally so many lives at stake, it might be rather important to come up with a realistic, feasible and practicable idea of how to solve the problem. The analysis in this third part should help us decide whether we should prefer one theoretical approach over the other, and whether we should also prefer one proposal over the other.

After going through these three steps, an answer to the main question of this thesis will be formulated. By carefully examining the proposals on the different levels outlined in the three

steps, this answer is interesting for philosophers dealing with the matter of cosmopolitanism and global justice, as well as for those involved in politics or the international fight against poverty. If this turns out to be the case (political) philosophy might be able to regain its importance in societal debate and practice.

## 1 – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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In order to be able to analyse the two proposals to eradicate global poverty that are the focus of this thesis, a sense of their theoretical background is indispensable. Therefore, this part will deal with the philosophical tradition from which both proposals arise: cosmopolitanism. The first chapter will describe the general notions and assumptions of this school of thought, which provide us with some common ground the two authors share. After this, it is possible to differentiate between the various ways in which these approaches develop. Through this elaboration of the different philosophical theories it becomes clear where the common ground stops and where we enter the separate theories that lead to the two rather distinct proposals.

### 1.1 – COSMOPOLITANISM

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Let us begin this exercise with a definition of the concept of cosmopolitanism. Thomas Pogge provides us with a clear overview:

“Three elements are shared by all cosmopolitan positions. First, *individualism*: the ultimate units of concern are *human beings*, or *persons* – rather than, say, family lines, tribes, ethnic, cultural, or religious communities, nations, or states. The latter may be units of concern only indirectly, in virtue of their individual members or citizens. Second, *universality*: the status of ultimate unit of concern attaches to *every* living human being *equally* – not merely to some subset, such as men, aristocrats, Aryans, whites, or Muslims. Third, *generality*: this special status has global force. Persons are ultimate units of concern *for everyone* – not only for their compatriots, fellow religionists, or suchlike” (Pogge 2002, p. 169, emphasis in original).

Almost all contemporary cosmopolitan philosophers share these three principles (individualism, universality and generality).

The cosmopolitan tradition is one that stretches from classical philosophers like Diogenes and Cicero, via Voltaire and Kant to contemporary (analytical) theorists like Beitz, Singer, Pogge, Nussbaum and Caney. As we shall see, these theorists – although they share the same basic principles – come up with a great variety of theories and insights. Among these differences is the subject of inquiry. Cosmopolitan principles can be applied on apparently any subject of political and social theory. Although a lot of these subjects are intriguing and of great importance, there will not be room for us here to discuss the lot of them. Rather, the focus will be on the cosmopolitan views on distributive justice.

Simon Caney gives a concise outline for the debate on cosmopolitan distributive justice in his study on global justice (Caney 2010). Regarding the character of the arguments used in defence of universal principles of distributive justice, he states that these have to be similar to his scope<sub>1</sub> claim on civil and political cosmopolitanism: “the standard justifications of rights to

civil and political liberties entail that there are *human* rights to these same civil and political liberties". When applied to distributive justice, the adapted scope<sub>2</sub> claim would state that "the standard justifications of principles of distributive justice entail that there are cosmopolitan principles of distributive justice" (Caney 2010, p. 107, emphasis in the original).

This *de facto* means that cosmopolitan claims of distributive justice should show that no significant moral value can be attached to nationality, ethnicity, community or religion, so that the same distributive principles apply to every human being. In this, cosmopolitan philosophers will face a number of opponents that claim that there are indeed reasons to attach moral value to these elements. In order to understand cosmopolitan theories of distributive justice, it is therefore useful to first analyse the various arguments used against them. Let us begin with the idea of (liberal) nationalism.

### *The moral irrelevance of nationality*

There are several nationalist critiques of cosmopolitanism, of which I shall only analyse the most influential ones. A first line of argumentation is the idea developed by Rawls in *The Law of Peoples* (2008). Rawls claims that cosmopolitans fail to attach the appropriate moral value to the autonomy of nations. A society has the right to determine its own governing, and therefore is responsible for its own choices. David Miller makes a comparable argument by stating that nations are

"responsible for decisions they may make about resource use, economic growth, environmental protection, and so forth. As a result of these decisions, living standards in different countries may vary substantially, and one cannot then justify redistribution by appeal to egalitarian principles of justice [...]" (Miller 2002, p. 108)

However, is this a sound argument? I agree with Caney that it is not: "it is extremely unjust toward individuals" (Caney 2010, p. 130). Miller and Rawls hold individual citizens responsible for the policies of their governments. In some sense, this could be justified in the case of democracies where the people choose their government. However, all too often the worse-off countries are ruled by a non-democratic, corrupt political elite. Should the people living in those countries be held responsible for the wrong decisions these elites made? Moreover, these wrong decisions are not made in just one generation, but are often a concatenation of wrong decisions made by many past generations of corrupt elites. Is it right to hold people responsible for the results of this? In my opinion, this argument against cosmopolitanism should be rejected, since it appears to lead to rather unjust situations.

Maybe a second nationalist critique is more successful. This argument states that cosmopolitan principles of justice are unfeasible, because they fail to motivate people to comply with them. This motivation can only be provided when the benefits of redistribution go to others that they can identify with: fellow nationals. Caney distinguishes two different versions of this

argument, which he calls the individualistic and the societal version. The individualistic version claims that individuals “will not be swayed to act on cosmopolitan lines and hence lack an obligation to do so” (Caney 2010, p. 131). The societal version is slightly different, stating that for a system of justice to succeed, the participants must be able to identify with it. This identification is possible on the national level, but not on the global level.

Are these two versions of the motivation argument serious challenges to cosmopolitanism? Caney thinks they are not. The individualistic version makes it possible for individuals to refuse any obligations to others that they do not identify with. This would lead to a rather strange network of duties. One could think of various examples in which even fellow-nationals do not identify with each other, or identify primarily with citizens of another country. Therefore, this line of reasoning does not hand us a convincing argument against cosmopolitanism. And according to Caney, neither does the societal version. His main argument is that it exaggerates the necessity of national sentiments and overlooks other social unities that are able to produce at least the same level of identification (Caney 2010, p. 132). Moreover, this overstating of national sentiment is not only morally questionable, but also dangerous. As David Luban argues:

“Nationalism may have originated as an ideology of liberation and tolerance; in our century it is drenched in blood. [...] Its picture of the nation-state, however, is a myth. It emphasizes a nation’s commonality, affinity shared language and traditions and history [...]. This picture glosses over intramural class conflict, turmoil, violence, and repression [...]” (Luban 1980, p. 393)

According to Luban, nationalism replaces respect for individuals with respect for nations. I believe this is true and indeed potentially politically dangerous.

A third nationalist argument against cosmopolitan principles of global distributive justice is what Caney calls the “*allocation of duty thesis*” (Caney, 2010: 136, emphasis in the original). This thesis is put forward by Miller, and consists of two premises. (P1) Human beings have certain basic rights and (P2) individuals are under special obligations to their fellow nationals. This leads to Miller to conclude that (C) individuals are under a special obligation to ensure that their fellow nationals’ basic rights are observed. This argument stands or falls with the second premise. Is it true that individuals have special obligations towards fellow nationals? There needs to be a distinctive morally relevant property that exists at the domestic level, which is absent at the global level. It has already been pointed out by Caney and Luban that this property is not national sentiment or identification. Two other properties are brought forward by defenders of nationalism.

First, consider the intuitive argument as put forward by Miller. It states first that “correct moral principles are those that cohere with people’s intuitions. Second, it then claims that people have a strong intuition that one should favour one’s fellow nationals over foreigners.” (Caney 2010, p. 134)

Apart from the fact that this claim seems to be empirically questionable, is it morally convincing? Caney asks why people's intuitions should be taken as authoritative. Indeed, what could justify the moral value of people's intuitions? As stated earlier, I believe that it is hard for a moral theory to be feasible if it lacks compliance to people's moral intuitions, but is it possible to turn this argument around, so that compliance with intuition becomes the criterion? I believe not, and the following examples may strengthen this position. For a very long time, slavery and suppression of black people complied with people's moral intuitions: it did not seem to be a morally bad thing. The same goes for the suppression of women and homosexuals. These examples should suffice to show that determining the correctness of moral principles by their coherence to peoples' moral intuitions is not a desirable strategy. However, we shall later see that these moral intuitions should not be left out of sight entirely.

Furthermore, as Caney argues, the fact that we believe that persons have special obligations towards fellow-nationals does not necessarily mean that these obligations are obligations of distributive justice.

"The latter are one specific kind of obligation. [...] What we need if we are to accept the claim that persons have special obligations of justice to fellow nationals is an argument that can show not just that persons have obligations to fellow nationals but that these are obligations of *distributive* justice."(Caney 201, p. 134, my emphasis)

One other argument against cosmopolitanism remains. I take this to be the most convincing argument brought forward by nationalists, and it conforms to Caney's scope claims. It is what Caney calls the reciprocity argument. It claims that people who are involved in a cooperative scheme have a right to the product that results from this cooperation. Therefore, members of such a scheme have entitlements to goods that others (non-participants) lack. Miller (2002, pp. 65-67) and Rawls (1999, pp. 96-98, 301-308) have successfully applied this argument to the nation-state. Note that the argument succeeds in meeting the two conditions I argued (after Caney 2010, pp. 124-125, 134) to be crucial for a fertile critique of cosmopolitanism: first, "it identifies a property that exists within nations that does not exist at the global level" (Caney 2010, p. 135), and second it shows that persons have obligations of *distributive* justice to fellow nationals.

However, Caney provides three reasons why this last line of reasoning should also be rejected. First, the argument seems to be an argument about states and citizens rather than about nations and nationals. Since states are the units in which this cooperation is situated, citizens might have obligations towards fellow citizens, but this does not necessarily imply that the same goes for nations and fellow nationals. This counterargument is not very persuasive: in modern times, states are often nation-states, so it should not be too difficult for nationalists to argue that the argument holds. A second reason given by Caney is that it is hard to sustain that nations (or states) are systems of cooperation. To underpin this argument, Caney makes the

claim that “members of nations are scattered throughout the world” (Caney 2010, p. 135). This second counterargument however is also unconvincing. Even if it were true that nationals are scattered across the globe (which I doubt), it would still not affect the validity of the “state-version” of the argument. A last argument given by Caney is a more serious problem. He claims that a theory based on the participation in such a cooperative scheme “cannot ground obligations to those fellow nationals (or fellow citizens) who are mentally or physically disabled [...]” (Caney 2010, p. 135). Therefore, this approach leaves room for grievous injustices to those that are unable to participate in the institutional scheme. This is not only a complaint against nationalist theories, but against any theory that makes use of the cooperative scheme argument.

Against this, one could argue that in a just cooperative scheme, those individuals that are involuntarily unable to participate, ought to be helped as well. As we shall later see, Pogge provides a number of obligations that we have towards all other human beings, even if these do not participate in a cooperative scheme. One could state that there is a universal right to basic subsistence, independent of interaction or shared institutions (cf. Moore 2007). Another possibility is the installation of the insurance mechanism that Ronald Dworkin advocated in order to assist victims of brute bad luck. With a redistribution of external resources within the system of cooperation, the involuntary lack of internal resources can be compensated (cf. Dworkin 2000). These are just some examples of possible ways to show that even if we accept that a system of cooperation has moral value, there are powerful philosophical arguments to believe that we have obligations to those that involuntarily cannot participate in it.

But what about the outsiders that were never in the cooperative scheme, that lived somewhere else, as a result of which they have never taken part in the cooperation? Do we have any obligations towards them? Against nationalism, this is a rather strong argument, although it can be contradicted, for example if we accept that we have certain basic obligations towards all human beings – irrespective of their membership of a cooperative scheme. Cosmopolitans that use an institutionalist approach do not have to deal with this argument, simply because in their conception of a global cooperative scheme, every human being is a member of this system. Therefore, there are no outsiders like there are in the case of nation-states. This line of arguing (that has been used by Beitz and Pogge) has again evoked a reaction by defenders of the moral value of nationality. Rawls states (aided by Brian Barry; cf. Caney 2010, pp. 109-110) that his argument only applies to *mutually beneficial* systems of cooperation. This is, according to them, not the case on a global level. This seems like a legitimate argument, and it seems beyond doubt that these cooperative ties are indeed anything but mutually beneficial. However, it could be argued that it is not important for the logic of Pogge’s and Beitz’ argument whether or not these cooperative schemes are beneficial for both sides. It might even be a more serious case of

injustice of such a system if this is not the case (cf. Caney 2010, p. 110). This particular issue will be further discussed in the analysis of Pogge's theory.

### *Institutional cosmopolitanism*

In the beginning of this chapter, it was argued that cosmopolitans face several nationalist critiques regarding the moral relevance of nationality. It has now been shown that these nationalist arguments were not thoroughly convincing. However, this is not sufficient to show that there are indeed reasons to believe that cosmopolitan claims are sound. In order for that to be so, it is necessary to take a better look at several cosmopolitan arguments for the claim that distributive issues arise at a global level, and that these should be dealt with likewise. In this paragraph, I will therefore analyse four strands of cosmopolitan thinking, which I believe are the most influential ones.

The first strand is what might be called *institutional cosmopolitanism*.<sup>2</sup> One of the most influential thinkers in this particular school of thought is Charles Beitz. In *Political Theory and International Relations* (1999), he states that Rawls' theory of justice implies that there ought to be cosmopolitan principles of distributive justice. This is obviously contradictory to the claims made by Rawls himself, since he states that norms of justice apply to cooperative schemes and these are apparent only within "peoples". According to Rawls, redistribution should take place within a nation. He claims that there exist no such principles of *distributive* justice on a global level, although there are other principles of global justice that do exist (principles of humanitarian aid in cases of emergency, for example). To decide on these global principles, states enter into a hypothetical original position in which they deliberate – behind a veil of ignorance – on the principles of international relations. The units in the original position are unaware of what state they represent and what geographical position they will end up in once the veil is lifted. Rawls claims that states will choose for principles of self-determination and the sovereignty of states instead of global principles of redistribution (Rawls 1999, pp. 331-333).

Beitz takes this same original position as starting point for his theory, but argues – contra Rawls - that states *will* decide on some principles of global redistributive justice. He mentions two lines of argumentation to come to this conclusion. First, the deliberators will recognise that the distribution of natural resources around the world is completely random and that governments thus have no claim whatsoever on the resources within their states' territory. Therefore, principles of redistribution are necessary to justify the assignment of natural resources based on fair and equal chances of development. The deliberators in Rawls' international contract choose principles of distributive justice regarding natural resources (Caney 2010, pp. 108-109). Second, contradictory to the claims made by Rawls and others, there

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<sup>2</sup> This paragraph is partly based on Caney (2010, pp. 107-116).

is indeed a global institutional scheme of cooperation. A global original position is needed in which all participants are unaware of their nationality, geographical origins et cetera (of course next to all the other veiled features that Rawls mentions). According to Beitz, the participants would choose the difference principle on a global scale (Beitz 1999, pp. 144-160).

Another important institutional cosmopolitan theory is provided by Thomas Pogge, which will be analysed later. For now it suffices to state that Pogge, like Beitz, claims that there is indeed a global institutional scheme of cooperation (although probably not mutually beneficial) which implies that there should be global principles of justice. Affluent countries have both a positive duty to aid those in urgent need and a negative duty “not to contribute to or profit from the unjust impoverishment of others” (Pogge 2001, p. 60). These assumptions and the corresponding arguments will be dealt with in the chapter on Pogge’s theory.

### *The Human Rights approach*

The Human Rights (HR) approach harbours a wide variety of theorists and is therefore rich in viewpoints and theories. For the purposes of this thesis, it is unnecessary and maybe even undesirable to analyse all of these, so I will elaborate on two lines of argumentation presented by Caney, and another one that I believe is also insightful. The first is represented by Henry Shue, who in his work *Basic Rights* defends the fundamental human right to subsistence. He states that this right to subsistence is one of the necessary (inherent) conditions to exercise any other right. This should not be seen as a means to a certain end (the exercise of rights), but rather as a logically necessary element of other rights (cf. Caney 2010, p. 120). The second line of argumentation is strongly influenced by the work of Charles Jones. He states that the aim of rights is to protect important human interests. Obviously, good health is a fundamental human interest, which implies that there ought to be a fundamental right to subsistence (cf. Caney 2010, pp. 120-121).

In this overview of Caney, I believe an influential line of thought is missing. Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen have successfully defended their so-called *capability approach*. This approach is based on the principle that distributive justice should ensure the capability of individuals to function on a certain level. Nussbaum states that thinking in terms of rights *an sich* is insufficient regarding distributive justice. Too many questions remain unclear, like the question what duties are linked with all these rights and who is responsible for the fulfilment of these duties. Thinking in terms of rights should be complemented with thinking in terms of capabilities and human functioning (Nussbaum 2002, pp. 118-120).

The capability approach aims to create a foundation for thinking in term of rights, but without enforcing a certain conception of the good:

“to put forward something that people from many different traditions, with many different fuller conceptions of the good, can agree on as the necessary basis for pursuing their good life.”  
(Nussbaum 2002, pp. 128)

Nussbaum mentions ten capabilities, among which are the right to live, the right to physical health, the right to respect, friendship, et cetera. It is a list of capabilities or options every human being ought to have: it provides for a space in which meaningful choices can be made. This is exactly why Nussbaum claims that the list does not force any conception of the good: it only determines a structure of basic options that every individual should be able to choose. Whether or not people actually make use of these possibilities is up to them. One brief example might clarify the idea. If there is a capability to have sufficient food, this means that everyone should have the opportunity to eat. When an orthodox religious person however wishes to fast for a month, this is perfectly fine - as long as he *chooses* (is not forced, in any way) to do so (Nussbaum 2002, pp. 131-135; cf. Sen 1999).

#### *Caney's approach*

The last cosmopolitan position that will be analysed in this chapter is the theory of Simon Caney. In his book *Justice Beyond Borders* (2010), he also defends his own vision on global distributive justice, which is based on four principles. The first one states that “persons have a human right to subsistence” (cf. Shue and Jones). Second, “persons of different nations should enjoy equal opportunities: no one should face worse opportunities because of their nationality.” His third principle states that everyone has a right to equal pay for equal work (cf. article 23(2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and his fourth principle entails that “benefiting people matters more the worse off these people are” (Caney 2010, pp. 122-123). The main reasoning for the first two principles is based on the idea that if one believes it is unjust that people are worse-off due to their ethnicity, class or gender, one should also consider it unjust when people are worse-off because of their nationality.

This approach might appear legitimate at first sight, but in my opinion it has at least one great disadvantage: it is very demanding. The strict equal opportunities principle entails that even in the poorest countries, there ought to be a wheelchair path next to most public staircases, in order to provide these equal opportunities also for disabled people to visit swimming pools, go to work, to recreate in the park et cetera. Obviously, many more examples are imaginable. Although this high demandingness is not a reason to reject Caney's theory directly (as Caney asks himself: maybe global poverty is a demanding problem?), it might be a disadvantage when there appear to be other good solutions that are not as demanding as this one. Moreover, as Richard Arneson argues, when a theory is considered counter-intuitive or unfeasible, it loses its attraction to the greater public (Arneson 2009, pp. 286-287).

## 1.2 – SINGER’S COSMOPOLITANISM

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The previous chapter dealt with various forms of cosmopolitanism, but one very influential account was missing. In the article ‘Famine, Affluence and Morality’ (1972) Peter Singer expresses his utilitarian cosmopolitan theory of redistributive justice. With this, he laid the foundations for a special account of cosmopolitanism, one that Caney calls “outcome-centred” (Caney 2010, p. 116). Singer’s position combines universalism with the classic utilitarian principle: “always act so as to produce the greater happiness” (Brock 2001, p. 942). In this chapter I will start with a broader analysis of Singer’s moral theory that can be distilled from some of his writings, in particular his book *One World* (2004). After this, I will take a closer look at his 1972 article on global poverty and his position on global redistributive issues. Through this analysis of his work, we will gain the necessary contextual luggage to understand his proposal that will be the focus of the second part of this thesis.

### *One changing world*

Globalisation has been, is, and will keep altering our world and we need to adjust our moral convictions to this development. Structures that seemed to be fixed for centuries might be under question. It is this context in which Singer asks himself “Is the division of the world’s people into sovereign nations a dominant and unalterable fact of life?” (Singer 2004, p. 4). Of course, this division has determined the world’s ordering, not only in the (meta-) political sense, but also in moral thinking. In Singer’s opinion, this is most clearly illustrated by what might be called the most influential book on justice of the last century, *A Theory of Justice* by John Rawls. It is typical –although astounding - that a book with such a title fails to properly address “the extremes of wealth and poverty that exist between different societies” (Singer 2004, pp. 8-9). Rawls’ theory is international instead of global, and this is exactly what needs reconsidering in light of globalisation. The decline of power sovereign states face nowadays is not only a political development, but also an economic one. The growth of a global economy and the increasing influence of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) also mark a decline of power for these traditional governing structures.

Singer claims that if our moral assumptions stick to the traditional structure of sovereign nation states and national economies, this will cause (in fact *are* already causing) us to act morally seriously wrong. His central thesis in *One World* is therefore

“how well we come through the era of globalization (perhaps whether we come through it at all) will depend on how we respond ethically to the idea that we live in one world.” (Singer 2004, p. 13)

In the book, he analyses the effects of globalisation on environmental, economic, juridical and social issues and proposes changes necessary in our ethics in order to address these problems properly.

Global warming and all the worldwide problems that result from this (rising seawater levels, great droughts, increase in tropical storms, et cetera) are among the issues that force us to think differently about our ethics. These environmental issues are (at least partly) caused by human behaviour - mostly the behaviour of those in the more affluent parts of the world. Think of driving big cars that release carbon dioxide, spraying Greenhouse gases with deodorant, producing goods in factories that dump their waste somewhere on the surface of the planet, et cetera. In the meantime, the results of these harms to the planet are mainly felt in the least well-off parts of the world. Rich countries will be better able to deal with these problems, e.g. by building higher dykes. The countries that do not have the means to do so (and often happen to be geographically situated in heavier affected areas of the globe) will suffer the consequences of the behaviour of the affluent portion. These issues should be addressed with a global ethic (Singer 2004, pp. 14-20).

The problem with the traditional nationalist ethic becomes visible in the negotiations about the Kyoto agreement, in which solutions were discussed to the problems mentioned above. These negotiations took place between national leaders, and the results were not based on any principles of fairness. Moreover, due to the still apparent ethic of national sovereignty, countries cannot be forced to commit to the decisions made during these negotiations. Therefore, according to Singer, "the Kyoto agreement will not solve the problem of the impact of human activity on the world's climate. It will only slow the changes that are now occurring" (Singer 2004, p. 23). A better solution would be to think of some global principles of fairness that can address the question of who should do what to prevent further damage to the planet.

Singer provides some principles to deal with these atmospheric issues. First, he states that the best thing to do would be to begin with a fresh start - with standards that look to the future instead of the past. At this moment, there is no morally significant reason to think that any individual on the globe has any greater claim to the planet than anyone else. Therefore, according to Singer, a just distribution in this sense should be one based on equality. If we then set a certain maximum of carbon omissions the atmosphere can handle, it is possible to calculate the total emissions every individual may emit: 1 metric ton per year. These numbers can be linked back to the number of citizens per nation - tied to the current United Nations projection of population growth per country in 2050 - which provide the quota per state (Singer 2004, p. 43).

However, this solution would be devastating for the industries of developed countries. The limit of 1 metric ton per capita is incredibly much lower than the current emissions in the developed countries: In the USA it's 5 metrics tons per capita per year and in Western Europe the numbers vary between 1,6 and 4,2 metric tons (Singer 2004, p. 35). To avoid this problem (partly, at least) is to introduce a system of *emissions trading*. The principle of this trading is the

same as the regular market principle: America needs more transferable quota (in order not to have to cut down its economy to one fifth of its current size) and Russia does not meet the quota. In this situation, Russia can sell its residual quota to the USA. This is both an incentive for the USA to reduce their emissions, and an incentive to Russia to keep its emissions low, in order to make money with the residuals (Singer 2004, pp. 46-47). Moreover, the total emissions will not exceed the limit set in the beginning and the less developed countries can profit rather large gains due to their selling of residual quota. This proposal by Singer shows that rethinking ethics in a globalised manner is both possible and necessary in order to cope with the problems the world faces.

#### *Economic issues and Human Rights*

Singer shows the need for a new global ethic not only with regard to environmental issues, but also with regard to transnational problems in the realms of economics and Human Rights. The WTO is a good example of the globalisation of the world economy. Singer examines several accusations that have been made against the WTO. The first accusation is that the WTO prioritises economic considerations over concerns for the environment or Human Rights. Singer shows that this is indeed likely to be the case, which according to him is a bad thing. The second accusation against the WTO is that it erodes the sovereignty of the nation state. This claim is also proven to be true, Singer argues. This is not only so because of the transnational financial power it has, but also because refusing to take part in (or to leave) the organisation comes at high costs for the nation state. The third accusation is that the WTO is undemocratic, and Singer agrees with this. The organisation decides by consensus, which is not necessarily a democratic procedure (cf. Mouffe 2005). Moreover, the main agenda setting is done in informal meetings between representatives of the USA, Canada, the European Union and some other major traders – and this is often in their favour. The fourth and final accusation is that the WTO increases the gap between the affluent and the impoverished. This is a claim that cannot be proven, according to Singer, although the organisation often decides in the advantage of the big players (Singer 2004, pp. 51-105). These developments, and in particular the many problems that arise alongside, strengthen the call for another view on ethics. The traditional ethics are insufficient to address these transnational issues.

This idea becomes even more apparent in the case of law. For a long time, the juridical realm was seen as a typically national entity. However, this is rapidly changing, with new international institutions that appear to undermine national sovereignty in the field of law. International laws against genocide and crimes against humanity show that the sovereignty of the state is slowly diminishing. In addition, in recent years there have been several cases of international military action under the term *humanitarian intervention*. In all these cases, the

sovereignty of the state in which the action was undertaken was bypassed in order to prevent evils. However, many theorists like Michael Walzer still have some problems with these interventions in many cases. According to Singer, this is the result of their traditional nationally bound ethics. The idea of sovereignty does not allow other states to intervene in domestic issues. Yet, these interventions are necessary and therefore, Singer claims, we need to adjust our ethics to a transnational reality that is concerned with Human Rights first, and only after that with national sovereignty (Singer 2004, pp. 106-149).

### *Global poverty*

The clearest outline of Singer's theory of global poverty is of course his famous article 'Famine, Affluence and Morality'. In this work, he begins with the claim that there are people dying of famine and lack of medical care every day. This is obviously a bad thing. He then continues that this suffering is "not inevitable, not unavoidable in any fatalistic sense of the term" (1972, p. 229), since people in the affluent parts of the world are capable of preventing this. He therefore comes to the following theory, based on two assumptions.

A1. Suffering and death from lack of food, shelter and medical care are bad.

A2. If it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it.

He then states that this second assumption might be considered too strong (although Singer definitely does not think it is); hence, he provides a weaker version of his second assumption:

A2<sup>b</sup>. 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.

These assumptions lead to the conclusions that affluent people have a moral obligation to aid the impoverished. Singer makes an analogy with a man in an expensive suit, walking past a pool. The man sees that a child is about to drown in this pool. The man has two choices; the first is to go in to the pool and save the drowning child, thereby ruining his nice suit. The second choice is to walk past the pool, letting the child drown and saving his suit. Most people would find this second choice morally seriously wrong. Yet Singer states that this is exactly what affluent people do if they choose not to save people from famine, and spending their money on luxuries instead. The consequentialist theory of Singer is often regarded as "extremely arduous" or "highly demanding" (Caney, 2010, p. 117). Leaving the question whether this is true or not aside, I believe the demandingness of a theory does not tell us much about its truth. However, as Richard Arneson points out, if a theory is conceived as being too counterintuitive and therefore as unfeasible, this can be problematic for a moral theory (Arneson 2009, pp. 286-287).

What is remarkable about Singer's theory is its focus on individual citizens. His main unit of attention is not the affluent state, the affluent nation, affluent corporations or the affluent

West. He directly places the responsibility to assist the needy in the hands of the affluent individual. This becomes even clearer in interviews or articles in newspapers in which he explains his theory, after which he tells his readers how to donate money to Oxfam America using their credit card and telephone. He claims that after this, there are no more obstacles for the reader to help the impoverished: "Now you, too, have the information you need to save a child's life. How should you judge yourself if you don't do it?" (Singer 1999). He further underpins his point with an analogy he rephrased from a thought experiment from Peter Unger. In this story, Bob is a car lover, close to retirement. With the savings he made over the past decades, he buys an expensive Bugatti, which he is not able to insure. On a day Bob parks his beloved Bugatti close to the end of a desolated railway. Suddenly a loose train comes rolling down the tracks at great speed, heading straight for a little girl playing at the end of the tracks. Bob sees a lever, which could change the direction of the train, making it crash into his expensive Bugatti instead of the girl. Bob chooses not to touch the lever, thereby saving his beloved car and the financial security it presents. However, this also results in the innocent child dying from the crash (after Singer 1999).

Most people reading this anecdote will find that the choice made by Bob – saving his expensive car instead of a child's life – is a serious moral wrong. However, Singer continues, this is the same decision we make all the time when we decide not to donate some money to charity organisations.

"If you still think that it was very wrong of Bob not to throw the switch that would have diverted the train and saved the child's life, then it is hard to see how you could deny that it is also very wrong not to send money to one of the organizations listed above." (Singer 1999)

Here again we see that Singer directly addresses the readers of his article and tries to convince them that not aiding the impoverished is a morally wrong thing to do. It is this direct approach, aimed at the individual affluent citizen that is characteristic for Singers strategy in his struggle for a better distribution of wealth across the globe. Moreover, it is also characteristic for his theory – as noted before; he aims at individuals, not at states. This coinciding of theory and strategy is what gives his ideas extra force and persuasiveness.

### 1.3 – POGGE'S COSMOPOLITANISM

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This chapter will address the cosmopolitan principles of Thomas Pogge that can be distilled from his writings. In the first chapter, a brief outline of the positive and negative duties that affluent states have towards the less well-off has already been sketched. These principles will be further elaborated here. However, let us begin with an analysis of Pogge's other works, in order to get a broader context in which these principles and assumptions can be best understood. After that, Pogge's view on distributive justice can be examined, in order to be able to comprehend the proposal to solve global poverty that will be the focus of the second part of this thesis.

#### *Globalism and Human Rights*

Arguably Pogge's most influential work has been his 2002 book *World Poverty and Human Rights*, which

“transformed the terms of Western philosophical debate about global justice, especially debate over how citizens of affluent countries should respond morally to profound and widespread poverty occurring simultaneously with unprecedented affluence” (Jaggar 2010, pp. 1-2).

In this work, Pogge attacks the commonly held view that mass poverty is caused by local or national mismanagement, and that therefore affluent parts of the world have only a positive duty of humanitarian aid. This positive duty states that there are some basic human rights for all human beings, irrespective of the causes of their unfortunate situation. He shows that this image of affluent countries having only positive duties towards the impoverished is not correct. Rich countries in fact maintain severe poverty and therefore also have negative duties of justice to assist the least well-off. This negative duty states that we are obliged not to uphold unjust situations. The current world order is unjust on many levels and this unjust *status quo* is profitable for the wealthiest parts of the globe. Moreover, these injustices were and are foreseeable and avoidable. This new perspective radically changes the morality that is necessary to deal with poverty and provides new principles and duties for the well-off (Jaggar 2010, pp. 2-3; Pogge 2002).

Throughout his works, Pogge can be characterised as institutionalist in the sense that he believes – like Rawls and Beitz – that justice and injustice can be explained by investigating institutional design. This is not to say that poverty is not sometimes also caused (or initiated) by non-institutional issues like crop failure, but the institutional framework is the primary cause of the endurance of these injustices. In his 1989 book *Realizing Rawls*, Pogge (like Beitz) argues that Rawls' principles of justice should be applied to the global arena. Rawls fails to deliver a morally relevant reason why his institutional framework should be restricted to the societal realm, and Pogge claims that there is indeed no reason to believe that it can be justified to do so. He shows that there is a global institutional scheme, and states that therefore the principles of

justice should be extended to capture the global sphere. If this were done properly, it would be clear that the wealthy part of the world indeed have positive and negative duties towards the impoverished (Pogge, 1989).

*Positive and negative duties*

Pogge begins his article by providing us with facts about global poverty, derived from the United Nations Development Report (2000). He states that there are 790 million people suffering from malnutrition, one billion people lacking safe water and 2.4 billion people without basic sanitation (Pogge 2001, p. 60). As horrible and disturbing as these facts may be, they do not show any obligations or duties that can be derived from them.

Therefore, Pogge presents two arguments to show that the outlined global poverty issues *do* pose a moral challenge to us. The first argument states that we may have a positive duty that we do not fulfil. This positive duty consists of helping persons in acute distress. Secondly, he states that there is a negative duty that we may fail to fulfil: the duty not to uphold injustice, that is: “not to contribute to or profit from the unjust impoverishment of others” (Pogge 2001, p. 60). The positive duty is not too extreme: even some nationalist theorists of distributive justice agree that there is a human duty to help those in urgent need. The conditions of this “*radical inequality*”, as Pogge calls it (2001, p. 60, emphasis in the original), can be summarized in five points:

- “(1) The worse-off are very badly off in absolute terms.
- (2) They are also very badly off in relative terms – very much worse off than many others.
- (3) The inequality is impervious: it is difficult or impossible for the worse-off substantially to improve their lot; and most of the better-off never experience life at the bottom for even a few months and have no vivid idea of what it is like to live in that way.
- (4) The inequality is pervasive: it concerns not merely some aspects of life, such as the climate or access to natural beauty or high culture, but most aspects or all.
- (5) The inequality is avoidable: the better-off can improve the circumstances of the worse-off without becoming badly off themselves.” (Pogge 2002, p. 198)

These conditions show us that there are possibilities for us to aid the impoverished at little costs to ourselves, so it provides us with a positive duty. However, these conditions are not sufficient to prove that we also have a negative duty. For this to be so, we would have to show that we would be upholding an unjust structure that contributes to the continuation of this radical inequality. Pogge comes up with three possible approaches: shared institutions, uncompensated exclusion from the use of natural resources, and a common and violent history (Pogge 2002, pp. 198-199). I will go over these three approaches, to see if we indeed have a negative duty towards the impoverished.

The first approach focuses on the effects of shared institutions. This approach formulates three additional conditions to the five conditions mentioned above:

“(6) There is a shared institutional order that is shaped by the better-off and imposed on the worse-off.

(7) This institutional order is implicated in the reproduction of radical inequality in that there is a feasible institutional alternative under which so severe and extensive poverty would not persist.

(8) The radical inequality cannot be traced to extra-social factors (such as genetic handicaps or natural disasters) that, as such, affect different human beings differentially.” (Pogge 2002, p. 199)

So are these shared institutions present, and if so, what is their moral value? Pogge persuasively argues that the Westphalian state system consists of territorially recognized states that are interconnected through a global market. This global trade system is based on consumption choices, and hence the survival of the small economies in impoverished countries depends on our consumption choices. Furthermore, developed countries are in the position to determine the rules of the game: both militarily and economically, they have the power to control this system, and therefore share a responsibility in upholding the *status quo* and its foreseeable effects (Pogge 2002, pp. 199-200). Condition (6) is thus satisfied. Let us now consider condition (7), is there an alternative to the current situation? There is: Pogge’s Global Resources Dividend (GRD) proposal. I will study the feasibility of this alternative later on; we first need to see if condition (8) is satisfied as well. This one is rather easy to control for, since the global poor “if only they had been born into different social circumstances, would be just as able and likely to lead healthy, happy and productive lives as the rest of us”(Pogge 2002, p. 201). I believe this does not need much further elaboration.

The second approach Pogge mentions, deals with the uncompensated exclusion from the use of natural resources. This approach adds only one condition to the initial five, stating that:

“(9) The better-off enjoy significant advantages in the use of a single natural resource base from whose benefits the worse-off are largely, and without compensation, excluded.” (Pogge 2002, p. 201)

This is defended using conceptions of justice that support the unilateral appropriation of natural resources. All should be better off with the disproportional shares than the appropriation of proportional shares, according to these conceptions. The Lockean Proviso states that one can only extract natural resources from the global base as long as this leaves enough and as good for others. Pogge claims that this proviso may be lifted with universal consent. This second-order proviso would then state that the rules of human coexistence may be changed only if all can rationally consent to the alteration, e.g. everyone will be better off. This is clearly not the case, as Pogge shows. The educational and employment opportunities of the worse-off are restricted in a way that gives them no outlook on anything like a proportionate share of the world’s natural resources. The citizens and governments of affluent states therefore violate the negative duty by excluding the poor from a proportional resource share (Pogge 2002, pp. 202-203).

The third and last approach is concerned with the effects of a common and violent history. Just like the second approach, it adds one condition to the initial five.

“(10) The social starting positions of the worse-off and the better-off have emerged from a single historical process that was pervaded by massive grievous wrongs.” (Pogge 2002, p. 203)

The idea of this last condition is clear, and needs little further elaboration. If the radical inequalities in social starting positions are indeed caused by grievous wrongs in the course of history, that have massively violated moral principles and legal rules, and the benefiteres of these wrongs are upholding the results thereof, it seems obvious that this violates the negative duty as positioned by Pogge.

Now that all conditions except one have been shown to be met in the case of world poverty and radical inequality, we should have a look at condition (7). Until now, we have not seen an alternative to the current situation, while this is necessary to be able to conclude that affluent people indeed are guilty of upholding an unjust situation and thereby violating their negative duty. Moreover, condition (5) demands proof of the fact that by aiding the badly-off, we will not become badly-off ourselves.

In the next chapter, it will be investigated further how Pogge will use his theory to constitute a proposal to diminish global poverty. There, I will also explain how this proposal succeeds in fulfilling condition (5) and (7). Pogge’s theory and proposal are thus inherently intertwined since his proposal is necessary to complete his theory, and his theory is necessary to understand the logic of his proposal.

## 2 – TWO PROPOSALS

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The previous part dealt with the overall political philosophical idea of cosmopolitanism. Moreover, it has shown and analysed the particular strands of cosmopolitanism defended by Singer and Pogge. In this part, these broad cosmopolitan theories will be specified. Both Singer and Pogge have – based on their cosmopolitan assumptions – outlined proposals to eradicate or at least relieve global poverty. Singer proposes to establish a special sort of income deduction, for affluent citizens in the Western world. This donation is not mandatory; every employee can choose to opt out easily and without justification. Singer’s plan will be further elaborated and critically analysed in the first section of this part. The second section will then investigate Thomas Pogge’s more well-known plan of establishing a Global Resources Dividend. This proposal states that the affluent countries that use most of the world’s natural resources, should pay extra for the use and selling of natural resources. The revenues gained are then again redistributed in order to provide aid to the impoverished.

### 2.1 – THE OPT-OUT INCOME DEDUCTION

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As we have seen in the previous part of this thesis, Peter Singer makes a compelling appeal on the individual morality of the reader. The two assumptions A1 and A2 are the core of his theory, which continues by stating that we, as affluent citizens of ‘the West’ are aware of the horrible numbers and facts about one third of the world’s population living below the poverty line, and many thousands of those dying of the results thereof every day. Moreover, we live in exorbitant luxury, using money for things that Singer deems less important than saving the lives of those dying as a result of their poverty. Therefore, we *are* capable of preventing or at least greatly reducing their suffering.

In his writings on global poverty, Singer mainly refers to the merits of charity. His solution for reducing poverty lays in the morality of wealthy individuals. In some of his books and newspaper articles, he addresses the readers in a very direct way, stating that after reading his theory, they know what the problem is and how they can solve it. To make it even more compelling for his readers to give generously to charity organisations, he provides phone numbers, bank accounts or forms which can be used to directly transfer money to Oxfam, Unicef or other recommended organisations (cf. 2010; 1999).

In *The Life You Can Save* (2010), Singer extends his basic argumentation with a third assumption A3: “By donating to aid agencies, you can prevent suffering and death from lack of

food, shelter, and medical care, without thereby sacrificing anything nearly as important.” (2010, p. 15) This addition to his initial argument (which is completely in line with the subtitle and aim of *The Life You Can Save: ‘How to do your part to end world poverty’*) stresses the appeal on individual morality and directly calls upon the readers to do something themselves. This does not imply that Singer opposes aid programs run and financed by governments or companies. The question whether or not states should this is not explicitly answered by Singer, although from the general tendencies in his work one can easily expect that he thinks they can and should. However, the focus of his argument is the wealthy citizen: “My aim is to convince you, the individual reader, that you can and should be doing a lot more to help the poor.” (Singer 2010, p. 28)

#### *Reasons not to help*

For some time, there have been debates about giving to charity or aid agencies and whether or not this is a good thing to do. One of the most heard arguments is that we are giving a lot through taxes and government aid programs already, and therefore there is no need for individual citizens to send more money to aid agencies. Singer is aware of this argument but is – of course – not convinced. In order to counter the above claim, he provides some data from questionnaires and opinion polls, showing that what people *perceive* their government to be spending on developmental aid is quite a lot more than the amounts their government *actually* spends on it. In the United States of America (USA), for example, a survey carried out by the Program in International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) in 2002 showed that the perceived percentage of the federal budget that was spent on foreign aid was 20%. This, according to the people in the survey, was too much. Actually, they would prefer a percentage of 10% of the federal budget to go to foreign aid. In fact, the true percentage of the budget spent on foreign aid in the United States was only 1% (Singer 2010, pp. 33-35).

These statistics show that citizens in the USA expect their governments to be doing more to fight global poverty. However, because of their misconception of the actual amount of money used for that cause, they complain that the government is already paying too much for aid programs. We can therefore engage the argument - that citizens do not need to give money to charity organisations because their governments will do this for them - with some scepticism.

Another popular argument against Singer’s claims is that it is not in our nature to give money to needy distant strangers if we can also use the money to help family members or friends (cf. Lichtenberg 2009; Arneson 2009; McGinn 1999). Although it might be true that the human psychology is programmed to show more affection for those close to us, one can doubt the moral implications of this. Many aid organisations have used this knowledge of the human psyche to adjust their manners of campaigning for donors. Posters or flyers with a story about

ten thousands dying of malaria generally do not yield as much money as a poster telling the life story of a single child, compelling the reader to send money to save this poor child from dying (Lichtenberg 2009; Singer 2010). I believe it is good to have this knowledge of human behaviour, and it is recommendable for charity organisations to use this information to find better ways of reaching people and compelling them to give generously. However, the moral consequence of this aspect of human nature is not to be overestimated. The fact that we might naturally be compelled to do something does mean neither that this is the right thing to do, nor that it is inescapable. Of course, everyone has the right to do with his money whatever he or she wishes to (except of course for paying taxes and other mandatory payments). However, within this range of rights, there are many moral decisions to be made. The fact that you have the right to choose what you spend your money on, does not imply that every choice you make is of equal moral value. Some choices are more right than others, and vice versa. As Singer states it: “having a *right* to do something doesn’t settle the question of what you *should* do.” (Singer 2010, p. 27: emphasis in the original)

Obviously, if someone feels compelled to spend the money they have on their neighbours, friends or family who need it more than them, this shows empathy and care, which I believe to be good things. However, one should not forget that probably most of our near ones still are still much better-off than those issued in this thesis. Singer argues that our problem is with extreme, absolute poverty, and not with relative poverty, e.g. compared to fellow nationals who own not one but two LCD-screens and a more expensive car. Therefore, it seems reasonable to urge those who say that those near to them matter more in this sense that they at least think about this, and make a decision that is morally justifiable in their opinion.

There are two more critiques I briefly want to mention here. The first is the claim that we did not make the least-off so poor, and therefore we have no duty to help them (cf. Narveson 2003). I will only superficially deal with this argument here: I will analyse it more thoroughly in the next section about Thomas Pogge’s GRD-proposal. However, in order to address the critique that the affluent countries have nothing to do with the poor countries’ poverty, it is useful to have a quick glance at the role of increasing globalism. In the theoretical part of this thesis, it was already mentioned that for example the emissions of greenhouse gases are mainly the result of the lifestyle and actions of rich, wealthy countries and individuals. The problems that arise because of these emissions, however, are more evident in the poorer regions. Moreover, these regions do not have the resources to deal with these problems, while the affluent countries do. This shows how interconnected the wealthy and less wealthy parts of the globe are, and that the former play an important role in the (obstinacy of the) problems of the latter. In the next section about Pogge’s reform proposal, the role of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in the poverty

of some nations will be explicitly analysed and criticised, showing that our role in global poverty is in fact much more influential than some might perceive.

The second critique I superficially want to examine here is the popular belief that part of the goods we send to poorer regions in fact falls into ‘the wrong hands’, meaning brute dictators and oppressive regimes. Therefore, the argument goes, giving money (although probably with the best intentions) for the fight against poverty is in fact discouraging (or even obstructing) democratic reform in those regions. Again, in the part about Pogge’s GRD, this critique will be more thoroughly studied. For now, let me just make the claim that although it might be true that some of the money intended to eradicate poverty is actually used by authoritarian regimes to strengthen their power, this does not mean that the entire idea of aiding the needy ought to be abolished. The fact that some immoral people abuse these funds to further their own interests at the expense of the most vulnerable, does not do justice to the fact that the vast majority of funds *does* reach the people that they were intended for. Therefore, we should not abandon the idea of aiding the least well-off entirely, just because some bad people abuse these good deeds. What this critique shows, however, is that aid organisations, governments and giving individuals should be very aware of the existence of these risks, and continue to investigate how to avoid them.

#### *Current philanthropy*

Before we come to the proposal made by Singer, which aims at convincing people to do more in the fight against poverty, let us first take a brief look at the current situation. In the United States in 2009, citizens (and corporations, foundations and bequests) donated \$ 303,75 billion to charity organisations. This is about 2,1% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Centre for Philanthropy 2010). In the Netherlands, generally conceived as a very charitable country, in 2009 citizens donated about € 4,7 billion, which amounts to 0,8% of their GDP to all sorts of charity organisations<sup>3</sup> (Schuyt, Gouwenberg and Bekkers 2011). This figure is not entirely just in the sense that the Dutch citizens pay more taxes and a larger amount of these taxes go to foreign aid and charity organisations (Statistics Netherlands (CBS) 2009). Therefore, the difference between the Netherlands and the USA is not as large as it appears. What is not clear from these statistics is how much of the money donated in the USA is actually used for fighting poverty. The Giving USA report gives us an indication: Religious Organisations receive 33% of all donations and education receives 13%. The percentage of donations that are given directly to ‘International Affairs’ is only 3% (Centre for Philanthropy 2010, pp. 12-13). Even more disturbing is the fact that this category does not only inhabit poverty-fighting organisations, but

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<sup>3</sup> Note that these percentages consider all forms of donations. Later in this chapter, we will see that the percentage of the Dutch GDP actually used for *fighting poverty* is even much lower: 0,05%.

also funds that provide exchange programs or international peace and security programs (Singer 2010, p. 24). Therefore, the actual percentage of individual donations to decrease global poverty is estimated to be only 0,07% of the GDP in the USA (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), cited in Singer 2010, p. 24).

This percentage is not as much as many might expect or hope. If we want to reduce or diminish global poverty, we need to find a way to attract more funds and use those funds more efficiently. Singer tries to do this by making a moral appeal to individual readers to do more themselves. However, one can doubt if this will have the desired effect. Although his books are in general well read and many copies are sold, only a small percentage of the population is aware of his arguments and appeals. Moreover, although some of these readers might indeed be compelled to act after reading his arguments, not all of them will. However sorry it might be for Singer, it is not likely that this will change in the (nearby) future. Therefore, something else needs to be done.

The most promising idea brought forward by Singer is “creating a culture of giving” (Singer 2010, pp. 63-78). Currently, donations are mostly done privately and somewhat secretly. Especially large donations are mostly kept out of the public sphere. And not without reasons. The general tendency in the public sphere in the Netherlands (and also in the United States, according to Singer) is to look at philanthropists with some scepticism. For instance, when Bill Gates and his wife Melinda decided to donate a large portion of their assets<sup>4</sup> to poverty relieve, the general reaction was mainly one of distrust. People believe that it is either done to polish the public status of the generous giver, or that there is a hidden agenda behind this generosity. Even the statement by Bill and Melinda Gates that they will give away almost everything they own<sup>5</sup> was received with some scepticism.

What this shows is that the current dominant tendency in Western society is one in which giving is not ‘normal’. And I believe, with Singer, that if the aim is to truly do something against global poverty, we ought to change this tendency. We should find ways of establishing a slightly different public morale in which aiding the poor does become the ‘normal’ behaviour. A first step in this process would be to get donating into the open, for example by publicly ‘celebrating’ contributions and showing that many rich or wealthy people donate parts of their fortunes to poverty reduction (Singer 2010, pp. 64-68). This can both create the idea among wealthy citizens that it is normal and good to give to charity, and put pressure on other rich people to do the same. Although in this last instance the reasons these individuals donate (social status or esteem) might not be ‘pure’ or entirely philanthropically, but the important thing here

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<sup>4</sup> Bill and Melinda Gates already have already spent \$ 29 billion to charity (Singer 2010, p. xiii).

<sup>5</sup> In fact, they pledged to give away 95% of their fortune (BBC News, 18 October 2010).

is that we fight poverty. The reasons why people contribute to this are only of secondary importance.

### *Defaults and nudges*

The most promising proposal Singer makes to create this ‘cultural shift’ is his idea of a ‘presumed consent income deduction’ (Singer 2009; 2010). In this proposal, briefly stated, employers deduct one percent of an employee’s income and donate it to charity, unless the employee chooses to opt-out of this scheme. Before analysing Singers proposal, I will first explain the general idea of defaults, preferences and decision making. In empirical and theoretical theory about cadaveric organ donation, the last decade has shown an increase in authors pledging for presume consent legislation. In many countries, amongst which e.g. the Netherlands and the United States, there are too few donor organs. Because of this, many people who are in need of organ transplantation have to wait for months or years before they can be treated. Sometimes, these long waiting times are fatal: “Since 1995, more than 45,000 people in the United States have died waiting for a suitable donor organ.” (Johnson & Goldstein 2003)

The Netherlands have a so called “explicit consent” or opt-in system for donor registration. Citizens have to register that they want to be an organ donor. As long as you do not register, the government assumes that you do not want to be a donor. The ‘default situation’ (the situation if you do not explicitly state your choice) here is one in which you are in principle not a donor. Of all the countries in the European Union with such a system, the Netherlands are the most effective, due to active campaigning by activists and, in recent years, some government campaigns. The total percentage of organ donors in the Netherlands is 27,5% of the population. This is rather high, as compared to other European countries with a corresponding system of donor administration: United Kingdom (17,17 %), Germany (12%) and Denmark (4,25 %) are doing a lot worse (Johnson & Goldstein 2003, p. 1338).

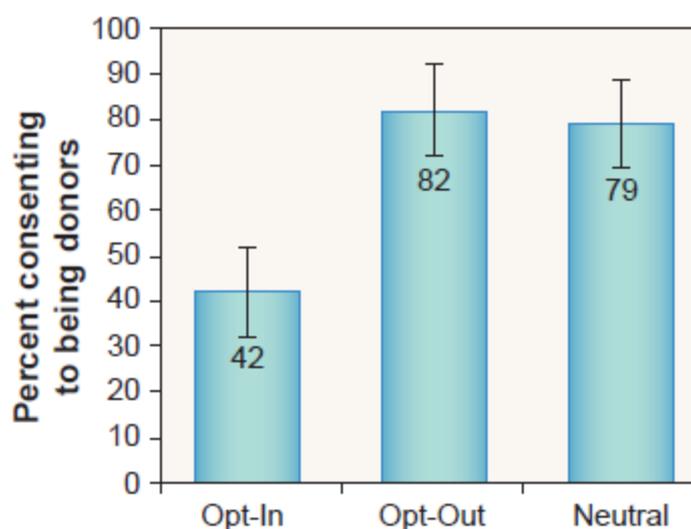
In other European countries, a different organ donor registration system is used. The “presumed consent” or opt-out system of donor registration has the same principle as the “explicit consent” or opt-in system, except for the default situation. In these countries, the default situation is one in which you are presumed to be a donor, unless you state that you do not want to be one. Sweden is the European country with an opt-out system with the lowest percentage of organ donors: 85,9% of the Swedish population is an organ donor. Other European countries with the same system produce considerably higher results: Austria (99,98%), Belgium (98%), France (99,91%), Hungary (99,97%), Poland (99,64%) and Portugal (99,64%) do much better (Johnson & Goldstein 2003, p. 1338).

These enormous differences between explicit and presumed consent (generally 60 percentage points!) are not incidental. Johnson and Goldstein have conducted three

psychological experiments with participants that were asked whether they wanted to become an organ donor or not. In the first test, the default situation was opt-in. In the second test, the default was opt-out, and in the third test, there was no default: the participants had to state explicitly whether they wanted to be a donor or not. The results from these experiments are illuminating (see also Figure 2):

“The form of the question had a dramatic impact [...]: Revealed donation rates were about twice as high when opting-out as when opting-in. The opt-out condition did not differ significantly from the neutral condition (without a default option).” (Johnson & Goldstein 2003, p. 1338)

Other empirical studies show similar results (Johnson & Goldstein 2004; Abadie & Gay 2006).



**Figure 2:** Effective consent rates, online experiment. Source: Johnson & Goldstein 2003.

#### *Opt-out charity*

This default theory can be deployed on many aspects of human behaviour. Studies have shown that it also functions with economic or financial issues, for example in retirement-savings schemes. Employees that are automatically enrolled in such schemes by their employer are much more likely to participate in the programme than employees that have to enrol themselves in it (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). If the changing of the default functions so well in all these aspects of human behaviour, Singer argues, it must also be applicable to charity. And this is exactly what his plan is about:

“If major corporations, universities, and other employers were to deduct 1 percent of each employee’s salary and donate the money to organizations fighting poverty, *unless* the employee opted out of the scheme, that would nudge employees to be more generous and would yield billions more for combating poverty.” (Singer 2010, pp. 72-73)

Unfortunately, Singer has not elaborated on this promising proposal very much. He states that experiments and experience should point out the exact percentage to be donated. In addition,

one could think about making it a progressive scheme, letting the higher incomes donate more than the lower ones and so on (Singer 2010, p. 73).

But how could this blueprint be further shaped and given content? The most obvious way to implement this default change is to involve national governments, since these have the necessary power to alter their policies. Governments can decide that all companies have to let their employees donate one per cent of their income to charity, unless the employee states that he or she does not want this. One problem with giving governments a central role in this process is that this might drive away citizens because they feel that it is just another tax that is forced upon them. However, there are also big advantages to a central role for governments. They have the power to initiate the proposal on a great scale, making the policy more effective. Doing this would result in a somewhat hybrid system, in which the government obliges companies to implement the system, whilst the employees (and thus citizens) still have the fair choice to opt out of it. An additional benefit would be that the citizens might feel that if the government actually enforces this system, this will be some kind of guarantee that it is a good system, making these employees more willing to enrol. However, persuading governments to implement such law might be a difficult and time costly process, especially since the revenues of such an income deduction would not flow to the state but to aid organisations. It might be easier to lobby with big companies to implement this system. Some big American banks already have a similar scheme in which all employees are obliged to donate at least four per cent of their income to a non-profit organisation (although in these schemes there is no opt-out option). After the media picked this up, it became a popular idea and other (rival) companies started to establish similar systems of donation (Singer 2010, p. 71). So if some big international companies could be persuaded to install a system of automatic opt-out donations to charity, it is very likely that the idea will spread and that the amount of companies implementing it might increase rapidly.

There is another way in which governments can play a role, although it is not such a central one. National or local governments *can* assist in persuading corporations to install the programme. Governments are very useful administrative strongholds, which makes them very suitable for unifying the forms, arrangements and information that are used in the campaign. Governments can for example provide blueprints and structural outlines of the process of installing and maintaining the income deduction programmes. Moreover, governments have the benefit of being the tax collector, which can be useful in persuading employers and employees to enrol in the programme. For example, the government can provide tax benefits for companies that have the programme installed or for employees that donate their one percent to charity. These kinds of nudges will make the programme more attractive for companies as well as employees.

How would the instalment of such a programme practically be done? In this regard, three questions, related with three steps in the process, come to mind. The *first* question is how employees should be made aware of this new system. Recall that creating a culture of giving and goodwill is of the utmost importance. Therefore, the first step in implementing the opt-out charity donation would be to inform the employees very carefully and with the highest transparency and clarity what the measures are all about. They have to know when the automatic enrolment will start, what it is for, and how they can opt out of it. Only if the employees have all this information, they have a fair chance of making an informed choice on whether they want to donate their part. The goal of the proposal is not to trick people into something they in fact do not want to do. The goal is just to make them conscious of their choice whether to give to poverty reduction, and to assist those that usually do not give to charity, but that actually do want to do so.

If it turns out that employees or other citizens find it uncomfortable that the choice is somewhat forced upon them, and thus that they do not really have been able to make a fair decision, it might be worthwhile to experiment with a slightly adjusted programme. In the organ donation experiments the difference between opt-out and 'neutral' appeared to be barely significant (see figure 2). It is of course possible to satisfy the inconveniences of employees by losing the default situation (either in or out) completely, instead forcing them to make a choice. The employee would then be obliged to fill out a form, choosing either to give or not to give one percent of their income to poverty relief.

The *second* question is what percentage of their income the employees should give. Singer proposes a one percent norm, with the possibility of a progressive increase. Let us investigate these norms<sup>6</sup>. I do not intend to make an economic analysis here (I will leave that to economic experts), although it might be very useful to investigate and further elaborate on this proposal from an economical perspective to make it as effective as possible. Currently, Dutch citizens' donations (companies, government etc. are not included) to international aid amount 0,05 % of the GDP (Schuyt, Gouwenberg & Bekkers 2011). Now, I will give three possible situations, one very modest, one moderate and one quasi-optimal. All examples are based on the 1% income deduction. In situation (A), only ten per cent of the Dutch citizens work for a company that has the opt-out donation scheme. Of these employees, only 30 per cent decides to enrol into this scheme provided by their employer. The money collected this way would amount to 0,03 % of the GDP. This is less than the current donations, but note that the 90 per cent not working for a company with an opt-out donation scheme will probably still want to donate as

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<sup>6</sup> I will take the Netherlands as an example, simply because this fits my own knowledge best. All data are based on (Schuyt, Gouwenberg & Bekkers 2011) and are measured in 2009.

they used to do. Therefore, even in this very modest example, the total amount yielded for poverty reduction will be higher than it currently is.

Let us now consider situation (B), in which thirty per cent of the Dutch citizens work for a company that has implemented the opt-out donation scheme. Of these employees, 50 per cent decides to enrol into the donation scheme. The money collected this way would amount to 0,15 % of the GDP. This is more than twice as much as the current percentage is, and the 70 per cent not working for a company with an opt-out donation scheme will probably still want to donate as they used to do. Therefore, in this moderate example the total amount of money gathered for fighting poverty will be far higher than in the current opt-in situation. Situation (C) would be a very hopeful situation, in which fifty per cent of the Dutch citizens are employed by a company with the automatic enrolment implemented. Of these employees, 60 per cent decides to donate the one per cent of their income to charity. The money collected this way would amount to 0,3 % of the GDP. This much more than in the current situation, and the 50 per cent not working for a company with an opt-out donation scheme will probably still want to donate as they used to do.

These numbers (although not very specific) show the potential of this proposal. In the numbers above, it is not shown what difference the various examples would make to the establishment of a culture of giving. If we take into account these altering values, it is likely that also others, not enrolled in the donation schemes, will be lead to donate to charity, as it becomes more and more normal to do so. If people hear neighbours, friends or family talk about their donations, this will make them think about their own part in it, probably leading to more donations. In addition, employees of companies that do not have an opt-out donation scheme yet might deliberate with colleagues and employers about the possibilities of establishing it. In the three examples used, progressive systems in which those with a higher income donate more (by default) than those with lower incomes have not been taken into account. Obviously, this will yield a lot more donations for the fight against global poverty. Studies and experience will have to calculate what percentages and what ways of harvesting the donations lead to the best results.

The opt-out salary deduction will probably be more effective if additional nudges are established. One idea might be to have an internet webpage (preferably linked to the enrolled organisation) on which there is room to discuss the programme and the wishes and issues that live among the employees. This has two advantages. One the one hand, the employer can monitor how satisfied employees are with (aspects of) the programme, and what parts of it might have to be discussed or altered. On the other hand, such discussions among donators can aggregate attachment to the programme and even to charity and developmental aid in general. The website of the organisation that has implemented the scheme of income deduction could also host a page on which all employees that are enrolled in the programme are named and

depicted. This way, the website could function as some sort of ‘wall of fame’, complementing the efforts made by these employees and encouraging others (who are not yet enrolled) to do so.<sup>7</sup> One could think of many more incentives that can generate a stronger culture of giving.

A *third* and last question concerns the recipients of all these donations. One possibility would be to let the corporations decide on what aid organisation they want to support. Obviously, this choice will be between a variety of organisations that have an aim of eradicating global poverty. Employers could also let their employees vote yearly on what organisation they want their money donated to. An additional advantage of this option would be that employees and their employer actively debate their favourite aid organisation, creating more consciousness and attachment to the fight against poverty. A more formal, institutionalised option is to have a central fund to which all donations go. But then the question is what organisations can use this money. It could be a newly formed organisation, focussed solely on eradicating global poverty, for example under the realm of the United Nations. However, this might evoke some tensions with the current charity organisations that will probably lose part of their donors. Although the money they lose will still be used to achieve the aims they themselves also strive for, they might not like this idea. Therefore, if such a central fund would be created, the most harmonious way to manage it would be in close cooperation with the most important aid organisations.

In the Netherlands, there is a good example of how such collaboration can be established. Since 1984, several Dutch and international aid organisations cooperate and jointly collect donations to provide urgent humanitarian aid in disaster situations all over the world. The cooperation was formalised in 1989 and in 2007 the SHO (*Samenwerkende Hulporganisaties*, Cooperating Aid Agencies) Foundation was officially established as a corporate entity. It consists of ten permanent partners<sup>8</sup> that “jointly engage in the organisation of national fund-raising campaigns in response to large humanitarian crises in developing countries.” (ANLAP 2011, pp. 6-7) This cooperation has resulted in 38 national actions since 1989, with a total collection amount of 680 million Euros (SHO 2012).

It is feasible to think of a central fund for all the incomes from donations through the new opt-out system, managed by cooperating international poverty fighting aid organisations. This would eliminate the problem stated above, and make Singer’s proposal more acceptable for the current big players in the field of charity.

### *Adjusting norms, values and morality*

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<sup>7</sup> I owe this idea to Dr Bart van Leeuwen.

<sup>8</sup> Cordaid *Mensen in Nood* (People in Need), ICCO & *Kerk in Actie* (Church in Action), Dutch Red Cross, Oxfam, Save the Children, *Stichting Vluchteling* (Refugee Foundation), Tear, Terre des Hommes, UNICEF Netherlands Committee and World Vision Netherlands.

Let us now briefly return to the idea of creating a culture in which giving away one percent of one's income is considered normal. Singer argues that the presumed consent income deduction can generate a change in morality. This fits in with existing philosophy on the relation between identity and expression. Charles Taylor distracts a central thesis from Hegel's philosophy of the mind, which can be of use in our investigation here. Hegel's principle of *necessary embodiment* states that

"the subject and all his functions, however 'spiritual', were inescapably embodied; and this in two related dimensions: as a 'rational animal', that is, a living being who thinks; and as an expressive being, that is, a being whose thinking always and necessarily expresses itself in a medium." (Taylor 1979, p. 18)

In the first dimension, it is important to reject the strict dichotomy between mental and physical realms. Instead, there is a continuity between these two functions, between organism and consciousness. The second dimension is the continuity (and thus rejection of dichotomy) between thought and expression. According to Hegel, thoughts are always expressed in a medium, and hence there exists no thinking without language, art or other media. The medium is therefore not another entity than the content; it is rather constitutive for the content. It makes the content possible and in a certain way forms it.

Norms and values cannot exist *independent* of everyday activities. A certain cultural norm only exists as such, because there are social practices and institutions through which this norm is shaped and is given social meaning (Van Leeuwen 2003, pp. 176 -178). What this entails is that everyday actions can transform or generate cultural or moral norms. When we apply this to the presumed consent income deduction proposal it becomes clear that by changing everyday action (nudging people to donate part of their income to poverty reduction), this will also transform prevailing norms. The expression of care and solidarity, although it might initially not feel 'natural', is inextricably related to the transformation of the subjects' thoughts and consciousness about the act of giving. Therefore, the opt-out donations to poverty are indeed very likely to actually change norms and morality, or as Singer calls it: creating a culture of giving.

If we were to make some preliminary conclusions, we could state that changing defaults and providing the right kind of nudges have shown great successes in theories and studies of cadaveric organ donation and welfare state issues. Singer's proposal to introduce such an opt-out income deduction to provide donations for the fight against global poverty is therefore one that deserves great attention. The costs of introducing such a new system will be rather low, whereas the profits it will bring are likely to be very high, on the short term as well as on the longer term. Indeed, more research by economists, management experts, aid organisations, etcetera is very welcome, but a first analysis of the proposal shows that it is very promising.

## GAARD KETS

Especially if we consider the additional benefits this proposal brings in the form of a change in morality.

## 2.2 – THE GLOBAL RESOURCES DIVIDEND

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In the first part of this thesis, Pogge's cosmopolitan theory of global redistributive justice was outlined. Recall the ten conditions that Pogge used to show that affluent parts of the world have a positive duty as well as a negative duty not to keep up an unjust order that is disadvantaging the global poor. Apart from defending that this unjust global order is indeed being upheld by the wealthy countries, he also stated that, in order to be able to define this situation as unjust, it is necessary that there is a feasible alternative: "This institutional order is implicated in the reproduction of radical inequality in that there is a feasible institutional alternative under which so severe and extensive poverty would not persist." (Condition (7)). Therefore, Pogge outlines an alternative institutional order, which he calls the Global Resources Dividend (GRD).

### *The current situation*

Condition (9) of Pogge's theory on global redistributive justice stated that "[t]he better-off enjoy significant advantages in the use of a single natural resource base from whose benefits the worse-off are largely, and without compensation, excluded." (Pogge 2002, p. 199). In the theoretical part, we briefly mentioned that this indeed seems to be the case. Let us now dive into this issue a little deeper, to find out what Pogge actually means.

Let us begin this investigation with examining the question Pogge asks himself in the introduction of *World Poverty and Human Rights* (2002, p. 15): "Does our new global economic order really not harm the poor?" With the term 'new global order', Pogge is pointing at the WTO, formally established in 1995. The question what exactly is harm or benefit in this regard is more difficult to answer. The complexity of this question is mainly caused by the relativity of the two terms. Which in turn raises the question: relative to what? Therefore, if we want to know whether certain people are harmed, we want to know if they are worse off than they would have been in another situation. But then we should ask ourselves: *what* other situation? A previous moment in time? This could be, but it is not the only possibility to measure harm, nor is it always the best one. Another way to look at the concept of harm is to compare the current situation with a feasible alternative. I will begin with the conception of harm as relative to a previous situation.

The argument would then be that the poor are better off after the signing of the WTO Treaty than under the previous order. There are at least two objections to this argument, one concerns the flawed logic, and the other concerns the false empirical claim. Pogge translates this argument into a more comprehensive one, which makes clear why the argument is logically false. Imagine you ride to your work every day by bike. Yesterday, you encountered a strong headwind. Today again, there is a strong headwind but not as strong as it was yesterday. According to the logic of the argument under scrutiny here, "one could argue that the headwind

you are facing today must be benefiting you because it is not as strong as yesterday's headwind." (Pogge 2002, p. 17) Obviously, 'benefiting' is not the term you would use to describe the headwind you faced: the argument's logic is flawed.

Empirically, one can also express some serious doubts as to whether the poor are really better off under the WTO than they would have been under the continuation of its predecessor. Pogge cites from an article that was published in *The Economist*, a magazine that "can certainly not be accused of anti-WTO bias", showing that the foundation of the WTO has in fact been *disadvantageous* for poor countries. In the Uruguay Round (the round of negotiations that transformed the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) into the WTO), rich countries have become more protectionist, imposing anti-dumping duties and cutting their tariffs far less than the poor countries did. As a result, "tariffs on manufacturing imports from poor countries are four times higher than those on imports from other rich countries" (Pogge 2002, p. 17). If these rich countries were to open their markets more openly, poor countries could export 700 billion dollars a year more. An enormous amount of money, especially for these countries. So in fact, the instalment of the WTO did not benefit the poor but actually worsened their position.

Pogge predicts some typical responses to this statement. One of which is that although some poor people might be disadvantaged because of the foundation of the WTO, the poor in general benefit from it. According to Pogge however, this is a wrong line of reasoning because it visions the poor as a pool. A better way of looking at the poor would be to see them as individuals, struggling to survive. If we would do this, we realise that many of the individual men, women and children that died from poverty-related causes would still be alive if the WTO Treaty had not been implemented. Remember the numbers brought forward in the article in *The Economist*: the poor countries lose 700 billion dollar every year due to the protectionist policies of our governments. Millions have died because of the WTO and its consequences.

The second conceptualisation of harm would be in a subjunctive way, in which the current order is compared with another feasible alternative. Defenders of the WTO will argue that even more millions have been kept alive due to the WTO Treaty; people that under the old regime would have died. Even if this were true, Pogge argues convincingly that this is no justification for the deaths of the others, because the argument neglects the fact that the WTO was neither the only nor the most just alternative:

"our governments [...] could have avoided most of this harm, without losing the benefit [the saving of individuals that would have died under the old regime, GK] by making the WTO Treaty less burdensome on the developing countries. They did not do this because they sought to maximize our gains from the agreement. But our material gains cannot justify the harm either." (Pogge 2002, pp. 18-19)

This means that even if we take harm as the relative position compared to a feasible alternative, Pogge thinks that we are still harming the poor because of the WTO. One might ask oneself whether alternatives to the WTO were available, and if so, why these were not negotiated. The answer to this question is also clearly given in the article in *The Economist*. Most of the poor countries present at the Uruguay negotiations had little knowledge of what was negotiated and in fact did not really understand what they signed for. These poor countries cannot afford expensive experts to negotiate and investigate the issues for them, which makes them rather ignorant and easy to persuade into treaties like the WTO. Even now that they understand their missteps, there is in fact not too much they can do: "Of the WTO's 134 members, 29 do not even have missions at its headquarters in Geneva. Many more can barely afford to bring cases to the WTO." (Pogge 2002, p. 17)

Pogge concludes that our 'Western' governments are responsible for massive crimes against humanity. Although this will feel highly uncomfortable for most of us, since we are in turn responsible for our governments and representatives, this does not make the statement untrue. Pogge states that there are certainly enough victims of our activities: every seven months as many people die from poverty-related issues as died during the entire period of the Nazi death camps (Pogge 2002, p. 25). Therefore, it is our responsibility, as citizens of the affluent countries that commit or at least maintain these enormous injustices, to think about what alternatives are possible. With his proposal to establish a GRD, Pogge provides one of these alternatives.

#### *Pogge's 'moderate proposal'*

In the formulation of his proposal, Pogge works from the second approach as outlined in the previous part of this thesis. This approach stated that the affluent parts of the world should compensate their massive use of natural resources to those that involuntarily use very little. Pogge states that the first and third approach will accept almost every reform proposal, while the second one is somewhat narrower. Therefore, if he succeeds in providing a reform proposal that will be acceptable for this second approach, this will most probably also be the case for the other approaches (Pogge 2002, p. 204).

The central idea of Pogge's proposal is that "those who make more extensive use of our planet's natural resources should compensate those who, involuntarily, use very little" (Pogge 2001, p. 66). For this idea to function, it is necessary to reject the libertarian notion that governments have full property rights over the natural resources within their countries' borders. Instead, they will be required to share a small part of the value - "dividend" - of the natural resources they either use or sell. The term "dividend" corresponds to the idea that the global poor own an inalienable stake in all limited natural resources. Note that this line of

thought is very much in line with Locke's ideas on property rights, as outlined in the theoretical part I of this thesis. However, is this all possible without major, somewhat unfeasible changes in the global economy and the sovereignty of states?

Pogge uses crude oil as an example to show that there is indeed no need for major changes in the global economic order (he calls his proposal a *moderate* one). At the same time, the GRD *does* provide possibilities to eradicate (or at least substantially decrease) world poverty. Pogge states that gaining only the maximum of one percent of the aggregate global income with the GRD would not mean a devastating blow to Western economies. However, this money, as long as it is effectively spent, would make a huge difference to the global poor in only a few years. Moreover, after extreme poverty has been eradicated, it would take only a small portion of this money to keep the balance this way (Pogge 2002, p. 205). Therefore, Pogge believes that his proposal is a moderate and realistic (and of course a more just) alternative for the current situation.

There are several demands to the GRD. First, it has to be easy to understand and to apply. It should for example be applied to resources that are not all too complex to monitor, measure and estimate. Second, overall collection costs should be kept low (the first demand is helpful in this sense). Third, the GRD should only have a small impact on the price of goods consumed to satisfy basic needs, since condition (5) stated that by aiding the badly-off, we would not become badly-off ourselves. Fourth, it should be focused on "resource uses whose discouragement is especially important for conservation and environmental protection" (Pogge 2001, pp. 66-68). The money that will result from this GRD will be used for ensuring that all human beings are capable of meeting their own basic needs with dignity. The scheme for distributing the GRD funds will therefore have to be maximally effective towards the poor and their needs.

#### *Resource Privilege and Borrowing Privilege*

I believe it is right to state that Pogge's core argument can be paraphrased as: a) the current institutional scheme is harming the poor and b) Pogge's alternative institutions will do better. Let us consider these two premises in greater detail, beginning with a). As Pogge has convincingly shown, the WTO is a global institution that is harming the poor. However, there are other problems as well. Pogge states that

"two aspects of the global economic order, imposed by the wealthy societies and cherished also by authoritarian rulers and corrupt elites in the poorer countries, contributes substantially to the persistence of severe poverty" (Pogge 2002, p. 115).

These two global institutional features arise from the concept of national sovereignty, which is one of the (or *the*) core concept(s) of international relations within the Westphalian System. This national sovereignty is not sensitive to who is ruling a particular territory, or how they came to

power. Nor is it sensitive to the way these rulers relate to the population of these territories or the management of the national interests. The problem that arises from this principle of national sovereignty consists of two privileges for the ruling elites in power, the resource privilege and the borrowing privilege.

The resource privilege consists of the privilege of any ruling elite to be entitled to harvest and use the natural resources available within their territory in any way they like. This privilege leads to a continuous stream of coup d'états in resource-rich countries. The benefits that are to be gained from the sale of these natural resources (to wealthy parties like rich states or corporations) are huge. These gains are mainly used by the ruling powers to enrich themselves or to entrench their own position as powerful rulers. This resource privilege therefore prevents (or at least discourages) stability and peace that are needed for economic growth and it does not come to the benefit of the poor populations of these countries. The borrowing privilege is the idea that any ruling elite has the right to borrow great sums of money on the international financial market, without any considerations about the responsibilities for their population. The debts that are the result of this borrowing principle keep existing, even long after the authoritarian ruler that was responsible for it has gone. The population of the country is obliged to pay for the bad decisions made by these rulers they did not choose or want. This also prevents the eradication of poverty (Pogge 2002, pp. 112-117). These institutional flaws benefit the wealthy and disadvantage the poorest, and are even actively upheld by the rich countries. Therefore, we (citizens and governments of the developed countries) are responsible for upholding poverty, according to Pogge.

Leif Wenar (2010) agrees with Pogge that the resource privilege is indeed an enormous hurdle for developing countries, and that it would be good to change it. However, although it might be a good idea, it is not very realistic to expect that these global institutions are going to be changed in the near future. Enormous interests are at stake in resource trading – “ninety percent of the world’s transportation runs on oil” (Wenar 2010, p. 134). Therefore, trying to structurally change anything in the current situation will be a great challenge, and it might prove to be even impossible within the anarchic international state system. International collective action is already very complex as it is (according to some students in International Relations (IR) even impossible), and this will be all the more so if Pogge’s proposal were to be implemented, since none of the powerful actors has anything to gain from it.

This critique is powerful albeit it is a little too pessimistic. Although there are schools of thought within IR that proclaim international cooperation unfeasible, Robert O. Keohane has in his work *After Hegemony* (2005) persuasively shown that within the international realm, cooperation is indeed possible. He states that although on the international level there are always conflicts, this does not imply that cooperation is impossible. On the contrary, cooperation

is a result of conflict, for if there were no conflict, there would be harmony – and harmony is *apolitical*, especially on the international scene (cf. Mouffe 2005). Therefore, even within a seemingly anarchic world order, cooperation is established all the time. We only need to look at organisations like the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU) or (to a lesser extent) the World Trade Organization (WTO).

However, in all these occasions and in Keohane's model, some amount of goodwill on all sides is needed. This might pose a serious threat for Pogge's proposal; therefore, it is suitable to ask ourselves whether it is realistic to expect that this goodwill might be generated on a large enough scale? Pogge is optimistic about this. First, he believes that a strong moral argument *can* have serious influence in politics. On the one hand, politicians themselves have moral convictions that play a role in their decision making. On the other hand, and way more influential, there are the moral opinions of the citizens. Especially in current politics, opinion polls are very influential in the sense that politicians have become more and more sensitive for these tenets. This might be a good way to gradually influence international politics through societal opinion forming (Pogge 2002, pp. 210-212). We will later return to this issue, and see that this goodwill might be increased in other ways as well.

The second reason for some optimism here is that affluent states can no longer ignore the economic inequality in the world. As a result of the process of globalisation, our affluent societies have become more dependent on other societies, including the developing ones. The poverty that makes these countries unstable and potentially dangerous is becoming an increasing security risk for the affluent states as well. Therefore, prudence is important here. The goal of democratic and economic reform in developing countries is also in our own interest. This is a moral interest as well, according to Pogge: a future in which we are dependent on unstable developing countries "would, quite generally, endanger the security of all human beings and their descendants as well as the survival of their societies, values and cultures" (Pogge 2002, p. 213). Therefore, we have reasons to believe that the moral as well as the self-interest argument will convince future leaders and governments to try to alter the global institutions currently maintaining this situation.

#### *Poverty and Democracy*

Pogge's proposal consists of the GRD, but there are some other important reforms included as well. We have seen that the resource privilege gives authoritative regimes property rights over their territorial natural resources, which increases the risk of internal colonialism within these countries. This would not only be an unfortunate development in light of democratic ideals, but also in light of eradicating hunger. Since authoritarian regimes are not only undemocratic, but also often corrupt and self-interested, more authoritarian regimes because of a new trade order

would establish a lot more difficulties for aiding the impoverished citizens. Therefore, if we wish to efficiently fight global poverty, we need an institution that can secure democratic values and prevent or discourage authoritarian coup d'états. As Wenar states it:

“The challenge in framing a proposal to reform the resource privilege is to find a way to transform the current system in which anyone with sufficient power within a territory can sell off that territory’s resources into a system that makes distinctions: *these* regimes can sell resources, while *those* can not.” (Wenar 2010, p. 134, emphasis in the original)

In *World Poverty and Human Rights*, Pogge outlines a reform to deal with this challenge. This proposal consists of two reforms. The first is a national constitutional amendment in resource exporting countries,

“in which our country declares that only its constitutionally democratic governments may effect legally valid transfers of ownership rights in public property and forbids any of its governments to recognize ownership rights in property acquired from a preceding government that lacked such constitutional legitimacy.” (Pogge 2002, p. 163)

By implementing such an constitutional article, coup d'états will become much less attractive, according to Pogge and it will provide an incentive for the governments in developing countries to stay democratic and not make an ‘authoritarian turn’. The obvious question here is how much we can depend on potential authoritarian forces to state earnestly that they are undemocratic or authoritarian and therefore not capable of making valid resource transfers. Moreover, how is this reform to be implemented in countries where an authoritative regime is already in place?

Pogge is aware of the problem of authoritarian regimes that declare themselves democratic, and therefore creates a second reform to support his first one. This second reform proposal states that an independent group of experts should be installed, that continuously revises the situation in a certain country. This is what Pogge calls the ‘Democracy Panel’, which is

“an international panel, composed of reputable, independent jurists living abroad who understand our [the resource exporting country’s, GK] constitution and political system well enough to judge whether some particular group’s acquisition and exercise of political power is or is not constitutionally legitimate.” (Pogge 2002, p. 156)

As soon as the panel declares that the country in question is no longer democratic, it should be clear to all potential resource buyers that the transaction of natural resources would be considered illegitimate. The main criterion for this panel would be the question whether or not the country monitored has a broadly democratic constitution. This panel would, according to Pogge, not be expensive since all it takes for a country that wants to be declared democratic is some independent lawyers to form such a (genuine and credible) Democracy Panel. If necessary, it could be decided that the UN would support such an initiative financially (Pogge 2002, p. 158).

However, this second reform proposal is not very likely to be truly influential in the current international context. Wenar addresses this issue correctly by stating that a country like

China is becoming one of the major players in the world's resource extraction, especially in developing countries in Africa. How realistic would it be to think that China cares much about whether or not a country from which a lot is to gain in the sense of natural resources is democratic or not according to such a Democracy Panel? I believe Wenar is right in assessing this as highly unthinkable. Therefore, as long as this Panel stands virtually on its own, with no enforcement power behind it, it will not be of much influence in global resource trading (Wenar 2010, p. 136).

However, this does not necessarily make the entire idea useless. If Pogge is right in his assumption that over time governments of affluent countries will have to respond to the moral and political issues resulting from great inequality, it is not unrealistic to think that on the long term they will make arrangements to promote democratic and economic reforms. One reform might be the agreement that these affluent countries (which are still the major resource consumers) will no longer trade natural resources with undemocratic regimes. The 'democraticness' of the developing countries could indeed be assessed by a Democracy Panel, constituted by the countries that participate in these agreements.

Although the proposals provided by Pogge seem unfeasible to implement in the current global order, it is not unrealistic to think that they can be implemented once the norms, values and morality in the affluent countries change over time. A shift of public opinion will put pressure on governments and democratic leaders and increase the probability of true reforms. We will see later that this change of morality can be nudged, and this process can speed up.

### 3 – CRITICAL REFLECTION AND COMPARISON

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In this last part, the two theories under scrutiny will be critically analysed and compared with each other. The same will be done with the two proposals discussed in the previous part. Thereafter, we should be able to make an underpinned assessment of it all, and study whether one of the two theories on global redistribution should be preferred. And does this mean that we should prefer one or the other proposal to fight global poverty? Or can they maybe be combined into one account of global poverty, or one programme to fight it?

#### 3.1 – THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

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Let us begin this exercise with a brief recapitulation of the theories under scrutiny. Both Singer and Pogge can be considered cosmopolitans, in the sense that they defend a cosmopolitan theory of distributive justice. There are at least three key principles that they have in common. For both of them, the ultimate units of concern are individual persons. They also both acknowledge the principle of universality, which means that “the status of the ultimate unit of concern attaches to *every* human being *equally*”. Moreover, they share the principle of generality, stating that the special status of the individual person “has global force”: it accounts for *everyone* (Pogge 2002, p. 169, emphasis in original). Within this family however, they represent different positions. Singer is a utilitarian, with the core principle of seeking the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest amount of people. Pogge defends his cosmopolitan worldview from another perspective, which can be labelled institutionalist. He focusses primarily on injustice caused by institutional orders, whereas Singer is mainly concerned with individual morale and actions.

##### *Singer and his critics*

This *prima facie* difference between the two philosophers becomes clear when we have a closer look at their theories. Based on the assumptions A1 and A2, Singer concludes that the affluent citizens of the rich countries are obligated to aid the impoverished since this would only be a small moral sacrifice for them. Without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we can prevent suffering and death in the developing world.

However, is it true that we have these obligations? Are these assumptions correct? Colin McGinn (1999) argues that the assumptions are only correct in a narrow context. He gives an example of someone starving in front of you. You can save this person by giving him or her half of your meal. In this context, McGinn says, “I agree that omitting to do this would be morally monstrous.” (1999, p. 153) However, this is not a situation that many people face in their daily lives. In many other situations, the assumptions do not hold. One problem that arises is the

problem of distance. According to Singer, distance is of no moral relevance because “we cannot discriminate against someone merely because he is far away from us” (Singer 1972, p. 232). McGinn thinks that it is not as simple as Singer puts it. If Singer would be right about this moral irrelevance of distance, then why does it not match with our intuitions? “The intuition here is that remote suffering is not “our problem” – it does not come within the cone of our moral responsibilities, strictly so-called.” (McGinn 1999, p. 158) Especially so, McGinn continues, if we take distance not just in the spatial sense of the term, but also in the relational sense. Family can be close, even if they are on the other side of the globe. Social groupings are not only morally relevant but also morally central, which McGinn describes with the term hospitality. He ends his argument with the phrase that “our duties to others are greater the closer they are to us socially” (1999, p. 159).

I believe that this is not a convincing argument. As we noted earlier, the fact that Singer’s moral appeal might be inconvenient for many people, and goes against their intuitions, is not *per se* a problem for his theory. Indeed, Singer is stating that there might be something very wrong with our moral intuitions *because* we do not act to relieve suffering while we can. Therefore, in this case, the argument McGinn makes has no force. Now let us consider the distance argument. Indeed, most people will feel stronger affection towards those in their social (and maybe even spatial) proximity, but this does not mean that this is morally just. Let us take, for the sake of the argument, the moral intuitions of people as a reference point here. I believe that McGinn is right when he states that people feel more affection towards people in their social surroundings. However, even if this is the case, one should ask oneself what the moral value of these social relationships is, concerning the argument here. For example, is it morally just if I decide to give my son a new tablet PC that he uses only to play games, while I could have spent the money to save some distant stranger’s life? Here, the answer is not directly clear. In order to find an answer, we have to dig into another argument given by McGinn.

In his critique on Singer’s theory, the focus point for McGinn is the moral sacrifices that one is obliged to make according to Singer’s assumptions. McGinn states some examples that should show that these assumptions could lead to absurd results. One of these is the situation in which I have to choose between sending my child to college and using the money to prevent or relieve suffering in the Third World. McGinn believes that Singer tells us to make the sacrifice of not sending our children to college, because the suffering this leads to is in no way comparable to the suffering of those dying from starvation. But is this a correct interpretation of Singer’s assumption? If we look back at the assumption, we have to answer this question negatively. The assumption says that we ought to prevent suffering if we can, “*without thereby sacrificing*

*anything of comparable moral importance*".<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the question here is what exactly counts as comparable moral importance. McGinn interprets this sentence as the idea that we should give everything away until we suffer at least as much as the worst-off. However, this is not the only interpretation of the assumption. Singer defends his assumption by stating that one should take a subjective (or relativistic) approach towards the assumption, which goes something like this: the assumption does not say that we are obliged to help until we reach a comparable suffering. It rather states that we are obliged to prevent suffering unless we have to sacrifice something of comparable *moral importance* (Singer 1999b, p. 303). These two interpretations differ greatly, since the second (subjective) interpretation leaves it up to the individual to decide what is of comparable moral importance. Singer provides a good counter-example to illustrate this point:

"Some, for example, may think that to cheat or steal to get money that could save lives of people in the Third World would be to sacrifice something of comparable moral importance, namely the breach of the moral rules that prohibit such actions." (Singer 1999b, p. 303)

The critique raised by McGinn does not come unexpectedly. He is particularly opposed to the utilitarian philosophy that Singer advocates in much of his work. Although Singer states that he tries to refrain from any utilitarian argument in his writing on global poverty, I tend to agree with McGinn that there is some reason for concern here. In the subjective reading of the assumption discussed above, according to Singer it is indeed the individual that is responsible for making the moral decisions. However, at the same time, throughout his writings, he *does* make it very clear what kind of behaviour *he himself* deems moral or immoral. It is exactly in these parts that Singer's utilitarian convictions surface. I believe that in this regard, critics of utilitarianism do raise a good point when they state that utilitarianism can easily produce absurd results, including extreme self-sacrifices in order to promote the greatest good for the greatest amount of people. However, we will find later that this might be a serious argument against utilitarian theories, but that it is not effective when it comes to the assessment of the concrete proposal that is being discussed in this thesis.

We already touched upon the possible tensions between moral demands and intuitions. The demands Singer is making in his theory of global poverty are often called extreme. This is not surprising if we consider the sacrifices Singer expects from affluent citizens. They ought to give up going to the theatre, going out to have dinner and even then, they still ought to give away great parts of their fortune. Here we see that Singer does not take into account the subjective

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<sup>9</sup> Note that this is strong version of the assumption. In 'Famine, Affluence and Morality' (1972) Singer also provides a weaker version of the same assumption, stating that "if it is in our power to prevent something very bad from happening, *without thereby anything morally significant*, we ought, morally, to do it" (p. 231, emphasis added). Singer is not fond of this weaker version, and states that it might only be applicable to the "Bengal emergency" he is writing about. In this thesis, this weaker version will not be taken into consideration because it is not used in any of Singer's other works. Moreover this version is only meant to be applied in the Bengal case, while in this thesis the concern is with poverty in general.

approach, but rather strictly lays down the demands of his theory. This demandingness is often conceived as “extremely counterintuitive” (Arneson 2009, p. 269). Before we get to the question whether this is true, whether these demands are indeed *that* counterintuitive, let us investigate the relevance of moral intuitions in (political) philosophy. According to Arneson “reliance on moral intuitions cannot be avoided” in philosophy. This becomes especially evident in the theory of Singer, because when the demands are indeed extreme, Singer’s outcry might not find any listeners. Moreover, if these demands are so far away from what people generally consider morally necessary, how can we expect them to hold others to this demanding moral code (Arneson 2009, p. 287)?

The point raised here by Arneson is a forceful one. One might even argue that it is the most convincing argument against Singer’s theory. While discussing Singer’s theory with friends and colleagues, the idea that the theory is logically sound but will never work out because it is too demanding, is often the core problem they have with the argument. In this sense, I think Arneson is right when he argues that we have to take these moral intuitions into account. However, this is not a black-and-white issue. I believe that there are degrees of demandingness and degrees of responsiveness to intuitions, and the important thing here is to find a balance between the two. In general, I believe that Singer’s argument *is* rather demanding. The relativistic reading of his assumption (“*without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance*”) leaves the responsibility to assess the amount of sacrifices one ought to make up to the individual person. Therefore, the demandingness of Singer’s assumption depends (at least partly) on the evaluation of the person deciding whether to sacrifice something of his own in order to prevent suffering. However, Singer makes some strong claims later in his article that suggest that the interpretational bandwidth of this assumption might not be as wide as the subjective reading suggests. Let me provide an example that implies that the sacrifices Singer expects us to make are indeed rather demanding: in order to relieve as much poverty as possible, citizens in wealthy countries should work full time, or even over time, and then donate this money to charity (Singer 1972, p. 238). This is strong evidence against the subjective or relativistic approach towards Singer’s assumptions, and shows that his theory is indeed rather demanding.

The other side of the story is that we should not attach *too* much weight to the moral intuitions of the affluent citizens. Sometimes, intuitions are simply morally bad. The often heard example of the intuitive moral support for slavery (not that long ago) shows that many people can sometimes morally be very corrupted. So also in the case of intuitions, we should be careful and not take them for sacred, fixed standards. All this considered, we end up with a somewhat boring, nuanced view of the situation. Although one should take moral intuition into account,

especially concerning the feasibility of the solutions proposed, one should not view them as the most important variable when assessing moral theories.

Moreover, as we will see in the remainder of this thesis, the demandingness of Singer's theory does not spill over to his income deduction proposal. This proposal gives us the choice whether or not to donate 1% of our income to poverty relieve. The fact that we can choose whether we want to do this or not, and the fact that it constitutes only 1% of our income, shows that the proposal is way less demanding than the theory and more in line with current moral intuitions.

#### *Thomas Pogge and his critics*

Pogge's argument is rather different to the one Singer makes. Pogge is an institutionalist in the sense that he believes that the current global order is systematically disadvantaging the least well-off, and that this should be solved with an alteration of these institutions. This view is not undisputed. Let us consider two reasons why institutionalism is objectionable.

The first argument has to do with Pogge's central claim that we owe something to the global poor because the global economic order is disadvantaging them. Caney asks: what exactly is the moral relevance of this economic interaction? What he aims at here is the philosophical distinction between *institutional* and *interactive* approaches. Whereas institutionalists like Pogge maintain that principles of justice apply to schemes of trade and interdependence, interactionalists would hold that these principles of justice apply even without institutions (Caney 2010, pp. 105-106). Caney provides a good example to illustrate this point. If we imagine two economic systems that do not interact between them, although they know about each other's existence. One of these economic societies is very prosperous, whereas the other is poverty-struck. When two members of the distinct societies meet, and we imagine that they both work equally hard, but one of them is affluent and the other has barely anything to eat, it is hard to see why the rich one is entitled to more goods than the poor one. Although the two individuals are identical in all respects (except for the fact that one was lucky enough to be born in a richer society), according to the institutional argument the affluent one is entitled to more than the poor one. The fact that the first person is entitled to more because he was born in a certain economic system seems rather arbitrary. To put the point more sharply, it can be argued that the membership of an institutional scheme has no obvious moral relevance (Caney 2010, pp. 111-112).

One response to this, given by Pogge, is that the question Caney asks here is not important. In our current world order, the interactional and institutional approaches overlap. Because the global institutions and interdependence are so extensive that the institutional approach generates global principles of justice. Caney states that even if we

would accept this assumption, Pogge still should be clearer about his theoretical logic and assumptions, and therefore be able to answer to questions like the one Caney asks here (Caney 2010, p. 106).

Another argument Pogge could use to defend his theory is to maintain that his theory does not focus on the 'entitlement-bearer' but rather on the 'duty-bearer'. This would indeed justify the moral relevance of an institutional scheme, since we have (according to Pogge) the negative duty not to uphold an unjust order. However, Caney argues that this is also unsatisfactory, since this would leave room for injustices that cannot be traced back to any institutional causes. For example, when people are starving because of a crop failure and the resulting famine, we would not have a duty to assist them. Therefore, Caney concludes that Pogge "pays too much attention to 'duty-bearers' and not enough to 'entitlement-bearers' – to the needy, the hungry and the sick." (Caney 2010, p. 114) I will come back to this critique in a moment, because I believe that Caney does not understand Pogge's argument entirely. However, I first want to respond to Caney's argument that there is no obvious moral relevance in economic relationships. I believe that this argument is invalid. Pogge focusses on the duty-bearer, and he *does* provide us with the moral relevance of the fact that the world is tangled up in a global institutional scheme. The negative duty, which states that we ought not to uphold unjust systems, deals with this question.

The second critique by Caney in which he argues that Pogge does not pay attention to those that are not included in the global institutional scheme, or whose poverty is not a result of these institutions *prima facie* seems more harmful to Pogge's theory. However, this is in fact not the case. The problem is that Caney seems to have overlooked the part of Pogge's theory that deals with our positive duties. Recall that everyone has the positive duty to help individuals that are in acute distress. Recall the five conditions that are connected to this positive duty, as presented in chapter 1.3 of this thesis. I believe this sufficiently shows that also this second strain of critique made by Caney does not affect Pogge's institutionalist theory.

#### *Some similarities*

Let us now begin to compare Singer's theory on world poverty with that of Pogge. In part I of this thesis, we already saw that the two share at least some foundations, since they are both cosmopolitan theories. But are there more similarities? In addition, can we stress and assess some differences between the two? And of course, is one of the two theories more sound?

The core similarity is obviously the cosmopolitan basis of the two theories. Although this cosmopolitan essence is more explicitly apparent in Pogge's work, Singer does acknowledge these same core principles. It does not need much explanation that these principles (as presented in chapter 1.1 of this thesis) are shared by the two theorists. These principles are

included in Caney's scope<sub>2</sub> claim, stating that cosmopolitan claims of distributive justice need to show that there are no significant moral values attached to special subgroups, like nations, races, genders, religions, ethnicities or other communities (Caney 2010, p. 107). Both thinkers live up to this claim, although Singer makes it clearer than Pogge does.

Another aspect the two theories have in common is their appeal to the responsibilities of affluent individuals, not only in the sense of these individuals being the "ultimate units of concern" but also in the sense of being units of action in the process of eradicating poverty. This is most clear in the writings of Singer, who directly calls upon his readers to increase their efforts to fight poverty. His work is aimed at the –in his eyes – lacking morality of citizens in affluent states. In less obvious ways, Pogge also involves these affluent citizens. He states that he hopes that

"we and our governments [...] will produce a moral leader who will make us realize our responsibilities and represent them forcefully along with our interests." (Pogge 2002, p. 25)

However, although he seems to wish for such a realisation to come from these citizens, he deems it unlikely that will actually turn out this way. The important thing here is that somehow, Pogge seems to indicate that the current morality in the affluent countries is lacking. This becomes clearer in the last part of the introduction of *World Poverty and Human Rights*:

"That we are naturally myopic and conformist enough to be easily reconciled to the hunger abroad may be fortunate for us, who can "reconcile ourselves," can lead worthwhile and fulfilling lives without much thought about the origins of our affluence. But it is quite unfortunate for the global poor, whose best hope may be our moral reflection." (Pogge 2002, p. 26)

Although this is obviously not as explicit as in Singer's theories, it is clear that Pogge also thinks that a moral regeneration is needed. However, it does not play an essential role in his argumentation or assumptions, as it does in Singer's.

Both authors also condemn the WTO and its role in global inequality. Singer argues in *One World* that it cannot be proven that the organisation increases the gap between the poor and the rich, although it does often decide in favour of the rich, at the expense of the poor. Recall Singer's three main problems with the WTO. The first is the fact that the organisation is primarily aimed at economic interests, rather than ecological or human rights considerations. Second, it undermines national sovereignty. The third problem is that it is undemocratic, which is an advantage for the big economic players – the rich countries (Singer 2004, pp. 51-105). Obviously, Pogge is also very critical about the WTO – even more so than Singer is. In fact, this critique constitutes one of the core reasons to state that the current economic order is unjust and that alternatives should be studied. Singer states that it is not proven that the WTO increases the gap between the rich and poor. Likewise it cannot be proven that the WTO harms the poor. With regard to the democratic deficit and the focus on economic interests, Singer argues that changes are needed. There ought to be global democratic institutions that are

capable of controlling and checking the WTO and that can call this organisation to account. However, with regard to the allegation that the WTO would harm the poor (which Singer does not believe to be proven), Singer makes no proposals for improvement. Pogge states that the organisation in fact *does* harm the poor. The Uruguay Round has implemented protectionist anti-dumping duties and high tariffs on manufacturing import from poor countries that are an enormous burden on the developing economies (Pogge 2002, pp. 17-25).

A last similarity worth mentioning is the idea that global poverty is not inescapable. Many might get the idea that, because of the great number of people who are extremely impoverished, helping the poor would severely damage our affluent standard of living. Both Singer and Pogge deny this conclusion. In the second sentence of his famous article, Singer states that current poverty and the suffering that results from it are not inevitable (Singer 1972, p. 229). According to Singer, the individual citizens of rich states could easily eradicate this suffering without thereby losing their high standard of living. An insightful example of this is the fact that three million people die from diarrhoea annually. This disease can be treated very easily, with a medicine made of some salt, sugar and fresh water and which costs only a couple of cents (Singer 2010, p. 86). This suffices to show that the lives of these people can easily be saved. This idea is shared by Pogge, who states that the income differences between the poorest and the richest people are so enormous that helping the least well-off would cost us barely anything. "This contrast gives us a sense of how cheaply severe poverty could be avoided: one-eightieth of our share is triple theirs" (Pogge 2002, p. 99). This similarity between the two theorists is remarkable. Singer's theory is largely based on this idea: he simply asks (or: demands of) affluent citizens to give parts of their share to those who need it most. Pogge however does not particularly base his theory on this fact - he uses it merely to show that the poverty problem is not insoluble. He does not use it to convince individual citizens of the developed countries to give more to charity. Rather, he uses this information to show that the current global economic order is unjust.

#### *Main differences*

The similarities between the two theories are certainly interesting, and could provide starting points for some kind of unified theoretical framework. Even more interesting however might be to see where the two theorists differ. There is no use in analysing *all* the differences between the two, since there are many. Here, we will only consider the most principal ones.

A first important difference is obviously the backing theories of justice that form the context of their theories on distributive justice. Singer is a utilitarian, more specifically a consequentialist. This means that according to Singer, "the moral rightness of an act is determined solely by the goodness of the act's consequences" (Gaut 2001, 176). This outcome-

centred approach is obvious in Singer's work on global poverty, as becomes apparent when we recall again his second assumption as presented in chapter 2.1 of this thesis. This consequentialist approach has been criticised because of the counter-intuitive results it might provide.

One strong and well-known example in this case is the situation that is often called "Transplant".

"Imagine that each of five patients in a hospital will die without an organ transplant. The patient in Room 1 needs a heart, the patient in Room 2 needs a liver, the patient in Room 3 needs a kidney, and so on. The person in Room 6 is in the hospital for routine tests. Luckily (for them, not for him!), his tissue is compatible with the other five patients, and a specialist is available to transplant his organs into the other five. This operation would save their lives, while killing the "donor". There is no other way to save any of the other five patients." (Sinnott-Armstrong 2011, paragraph 5)

In this situation, consequentialists would choose to kill the donor, in order to save the five other patients. After all, this has the best consequences for the most people. However, it seems rather counter-intuitive to us to imagine a doctor killing a patient as being a just situation. Consequentialists could reply that the situation depicted above is a very unusual one, which might evoke some unusual result. However, this does not solve the problem entirely. Recall the critique formulated by McGinn, and the answer to this critique by Singer. Although Singer's assumptions showed some lenience and room for individual interpretation, still they have the capacity to request some rather demanding and counter-intuitive results. For some possible outcomes that are allowed by Singer (examples of which are provided by McGinn) it is hard to see why these are just. I believe that these extreme results are problematic for consequentialism in general and for Singer's theory of distributive justice in particular.

The main problem with his theory is that it is unclear when our duties towards the less fortunate end. The simple principles put forward by Singer are convincing as long as the poor are dying because of lack of food, shelter and medical care, and we are able to prevent this. But let us imagine that we are able to end this, and every human being has the opportunity to lead a life in which all basic needs are fulfilled. One might argue that there is no more suffering to prevent. However, it is equally imaginable that there are many people genuinely suffering because they do not possess cars, televisions, phones or swimming pools. According to Singer's assumptions, we would then still be morally obligated to assist them. And this is exactly where the picture gets muddy. Should we continue to send our money to those that suffer, even if these sufferings are life-endangering for the donors? Should we continue to give, as McGinn argues, until our suffering is at least equal to that of all others? It is not clear where Singer draws the line. The line of argument here is akin to a common argument against utilitarianism – how to measure happiness and suffering? As long as we are dealing with extremes like the difference between people dying because of poverty and people living in exorbitant luxury, it is clear who is

suffering. However, when these extremes disappear and the differences become smaller, the argument becomes problematic.

One could argue that Singer's theory on poverty is a utilitarian one in the sense that there is no structural, deontological basic theoretical. One could even argue that Singer's theory is not a theory of distributive justice. Indeed, the assumptions, premises and conclusions in Singer's texts point towards another strand of theory. It does not aim at constructing a just philosophical system with procedures and rules, like for example in the theories of justice from Rawls, Sandel or Dworkin. Much more, Singer's theory is a non-ideal theory, aimed at offering a solution for world poverty – one could say that it is about humanitarian aid. Singer does not aim at changing unjust systems, structures or procedures, he aims at the improvement of the lives of impoverished individuals with his (in this sense) somewhat ad hoc theory on eradicating poverty. It is thus not surprising that his theory does not take into account the ideal situation: it does not tell us what to do after poverty has been eradicated.

Pogge defends a rather different position, which he calls institutionalist. According to this position, “[n]orms of justice [...] should determine the distribution of those goods resulting from cooperation and they apply only to those who are part of that process of cooperation” (Caney 2010, 108). Institutions play an essential role in Pogge's theory. In the second part, it became clear that the WTO and the notion of sovereignty are directly linked to the poverty in developing countries. It is very clear that this approach is radically different than the one used by Singer. Pogge makes claims about direct causal relations between our affluence and others' poverty, thereby making it very clear why we can be held responsible for this poverty. Singer does not make such a causal argument. His approach focusses on a moral obligation, based on two assumptions (that *are* partly shared by Pogge) which show that we have a responsibility to aid the impoverished. These different approaches become very clear in the form of the proposals we discussed in part II.

#### *Assessment and preliminary conclusion*

Now that we have analysed, criticised and compared the two theories, we can attempt to find out if they might be merged into a larger theoretical model. If not, we might be able to argue whether one should be preferred over the other. Let us begin with a short analysis of the possible compatibility of the two theories. In the foregoing, it became clear that there are some similarities between the two. Both share the cosmopolitan core principles, the important role for individual citizens of affluent countries, the resentment of the WTO and the idea that global poverty is certainly not inescapable. Could these similarities provide a starting point for a combined theory? I do not believe this is the case. Of the four main similarities, only one is about fundamental principles (the cosmopolitan core). The other three are agreements over some

secondary issues that might be very important in practice, but that do not give any real overlapping principles to base a combined meta-theory on. If we combine this with the fundamental differences between the two, that come from two rather different philosophical and logical assumptions and principles, they seem to be hard (not to say impossible) to merge. Considering this, it seems unfruitful to force some kind of combination between the two.

The next question then is whether we should prefer one over the other. If we recall the critiques on both theories, neither of them is flawless. Singer has a strong utilitarian background, that also affects his theory on global poverty, although not as much as it does in other works. However, his theory is not able to deal with some serious critiques we saw in the foregoing. Especially the unclear boundaries and potentially absurd and highly counterintuitive results are rather troublesome for the attractiveness of the theory as a whole. In his responses to these critiques, Singer has not been able to provide truly convincing answers or solutions. Pogge's theory is much stronger, particularly because of the causal relationships that back up his normative assumptions. This also makes his theory more fitting with current moral intuitions, and therefore more convincing. Although this causality makes Pogge's theory stronger, it also makes it more dependent on empirical findings. The causality will have to be proven with empirical data and has to be logically sound. The current data and logic that Pogge provides are convincing at this moment, but one can imagine new findings that undermine the claims Pogge makes. That is why the causality makes his theory strong and dependent at the same time.

Overlooking all this, I believe it is clear that Pogge delivers us with a more sound theory on global poverty and our responsibilities therein. Although it might be very well true that parts of his theoretical frame might have to overcome some serious obstacles if they were to be implemented, logically and normatively they are more convincing than Singer's. Note that this assessment is only dealing with the theories, and not with the two proposals. The theory discussed in this thesis is needed (at least for philosophers) in order to understand and interpret the proposals under scrutiny here. However, as we shall see, much knowledge of these theories is not needed if we are to decide whether one of the two proposals is to be preferred. Laymen and regular citizens can easily comprehend and assess these proposals, without having to learn about or understand the theories from which they originated.

### 3.2 – COMPARING THE PROPOSALS

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Now that we have critically analysed the background theories of the two proposals investigated in this thesis, we can dive deeper into the proposals themselves. First, a brief recapitulation of the two proposals will be outlined after which they will be critically analysed, assessed and compared.

#### *Singer's opt-out income deduction*

While part of the globe is living in great affluence, roughly one-third of humanity suffers from extreme poverty. Moreover, a great majority of those living in affluence do not contribute to charity to relieve the poverty-struck parts of the globe. This, according to Singer, is a bad thing. Therefore, he proposes a model through which these donations to charity could be increased. As we have seen in the second part of this thesis, this proposal is to apply the mechanism of an opt-out system that is also successfully used in cadaveric organ donations.

For this proposal to function, it is necessary that both employers and employees are well-informed about the plan and its functioning. They should be aware of the problem at hand, why this scheme of income deduction is a good solution and how they can opt-out if they wish to. The percentage of one percent of the income is probably a good start. Further experience and experimenting should show if this percentage should be higher, lower or maybe progressive (higher percentage for higher incomes), in light of the highest effective results. Further nudges might also make the scheme more effective. I proposed to let the donating employees discuss and vote about the organisations they want to donate the money to, in order to make them more aware of the scheme and create the feeling that it is really 'their project'. In addition, websites, newsletters and media coverage highlighting the generous employees might help create a 'culture of giving', as Singer calls it.

The proposal is not very demanding and neither is it oppressing in any sense. A large majority of the affluent population will not get into trouble themselves if they donate one percent of their incomes. And if these people have the feeling that it might do so, they have the opportunity to opt out. The employees of a participating company are in no way forced or misled into joining the scheme, and we may therefore state that it is their free will to opt out or to participate in the arrangements. Even if employees would feel that they were being tricked into joining an arrangement that they would otherwise not have joined, it is possible to experiment with the adjusted 'neutral' version of the proposal, as briefly discussed in chapter 2.1.

A more worrying critique might be that fighting poverty this way is treating the symptoms of the problem, while the deeper cause remains untouched. Although the proposal is

probably capable of gathering a lot of money and therefore able to make a difference in the life of many poor people, the system that is now causing this poverty remains intact. Is there anything in Singer's proposal that can be brought on against this critique? The obvious reply would be that if we continue giving enough to relieve poverty, there is no need for any 'remedies' because the problem is extinguished. If we assume that in principle there are enough natural resources in the world to keep the entire human population out of poverty, we would have to conclude that we should continue donating money until we have eradicated poverty. However, if there were mechanisms at work that tend to create and increase poverty, the stream of goods that need to be donated in order to keep up with these negative tendencies would be infinite and everlasting.

What we have at hands here is a certain theoretical strategy for solving injustices. Nancy Fraser (Fraser & Honneth 2003) calls this an *affirmative* strategy, as opposed to *transformative* strategies:

"Affirmative strategies for redressing for injustice aim to correct inequitable outcomes of social arrangements without disturbing the underlying social structures that generate them. Transformative strategies, in contrast, aim to correct unjust outcome precisely by restructuring the underlying generative framework." (Fraser & Honneth 2003, p. 74)

Singer advocates an affirmative strategy in solving the problem of global poverty. As we noticed before, his solutions do not attack the root causes of the problem, but rather treats the results of these underlying structures.

It is not hard to see that there are indeed such underlying mechanisms or institutions that tend to create or increase poverty. Pogge is very clear about this, and it does not need much further elaboration. So then, the solution to poverty given by Singer (donating parts of our wealth to the less well-off) is not convenient, since it does not really solve anything. In medical terms, one could speak of the treatment of symptoms, instead of curing the disease. So does this make Singer's proposal useless? Not at all. If we recall that more than 10.000 people die every day as a result of poverty, we are again aware of the urgency of the problem at hands. Although curing the disease should obviously be the long-term aim of the fight against poverty, keeping the patient alive is the most important aim on the short term. To translate the medical language back to 'normal', it seems reasonable to state that the opt-out income deduction has the potential to produce great amounts of money on the short term that can save the lives of millions of people.

Moreover, the proposal can help to create a sense of awareness in the affluent parts of the world about the seriousness of the problem of worldwide poverty. Recall the Hegelian argument that actions and institutions indeed change norms, values and morality. This awareness might be accompanied by a change of culture, through which rich Western citizens will recognize the needs for structural change. Since governance and policy are at least partly shaped by public opinion and popular vote, such a change of awareness might very well nudge

policymakers, governments and other influential political and financial players to consider structural amendments, possibly in the forms advocated by Pogge. Therefore, in this sense it is definitely not unreasonable to think that the short-term solution brought forward by Singer is a useful mechanism to help prepare the way to more structural change.

Nevertheless, there is also a downside to the affirmative strategy that Singer advocates. Fraser points out that an affirmative strategy towards maldistribution might have the negative side effect of creating the image of the needy as “deficient and insatiable”, always in need of more help (Fraser & Honneth 2003, pp. 76-77). In turn, this might lead to negative sentiments in the affluent world regarding the fight against poverty. This is a serious problem for Singer, since his aim is to create exactly the opposite atmosphere of giving and generosity. How are we to deal with this problem? I think it is not a problem that can be solved if we only consider Singer’s proposal. Therefore, I will return on this topic in the remainder of this thesis, after I discussed Pogge’s proposal as well.

Now let us return to another problem we encountered earlier concerning the utilitarian background of Singer. I argued in the previous chapter that this utilitarianism is unable to rule out extreme or even intuitively very unjust results. The question here is whether this affects the attractiveness of the opt-out income deduction-proposal. The answer to this question depends partly on the way we look at the proposal. If we regard it as a means to gather as much goods for the alleviation or eradication of poverty, there is not an obvious problem with the backing theory. If we conceive of the proposal as a *solution* to poverty, however, we might encounter some difficulties. These difficulties coincide with the point raised earlier about the treatment of symptoms instead of the disease. If Singer’s proposal is considered *the* solution to end global poverty, the question of “how much will ever be enough” comes to mind. Is there a clear goal to achieve with the income deduction; is there an ‘end’?

Again, this depends on how we define poverty. If we treat poverty as a condition relative to other conditions, let us say the Western world, the process of giving is indeed infinite, since there will always be people with less material goods than others. However, this is not a satisfying use of the concept. As Singer argued, what we are dealing with here is not relative poverty (my old car versus my neighbour’s Maserati). What we are dealing with is *absolute* poverty, in terms of the billions of people living below the poverty line. I believe that in this case, this is the right conception of poverty, and this is important for the proposal under scrutiny here. If we speak about this kind of poverty and we assume, as mentioned before, that there are indeed sufficient goods to eradicate it, there is a clear and feasible aim or ‘end’: the prevention of absolute poverty. Therefore, the problems we encountered regarding Singer’s utilitarian basis do not affect the opt-out income deduction in any significant way.

In other ways, the influence of Singer's general theory on global justice is obvious. If we look for example at the appeal on individual morality, it is clear that the proposal is a means to 'help people to make the right decision'. Apparently affluent citizens have difficulties adjusting to Singer's demanding moral code and with this proposal we could give them that extra push to reflect on global poverty and to consciously make a decision about whether to contribute to fighting it or not. This becomes even clearer considering the creation of a culture of giving that Singer hopes to achieve as a side-effect of the income deduction. This is entirely in line with his efforts to alter the current moral tendencies. In this regard, it is clear how the proposal is embedded in his general theory.

*Pogge's Global Resources Dividend*

Thomas Pogge has an institutional approach in his theory of global justice, and this highly influences his proposal to fight global poverty. Pogge states that the current global institutions, specifically the WTO, are systematically harming the least well-off. This institutional order is shaped and maintained by the great financial and political powers, which are the affluent countries.<sup>10</sup> These countries are ruled by mostly democratically elected governments, which leads Pogge to conclude that the citizens of the affluent countries are in some sense responsible for the death of those who suffer from extreme poverty. However, it is not to be expected that these wealthy populations or their leaders will change this situation by themselves. Therefore, Pogge states, a new global order is needed. He provides this alternative global economic order.

The central aim of this new order is that the most extensive users of the world's natural resources compensate for those that are involuntarily not using that much. This could be done through the GRD, through which the current notion of sovereignty of national governments over their territory's natural resources will be partly diminished. Governments have to pay a small dividend for the natural resources they use or sell, and the goods that are collected this way could be used to fight poverty. This model would make coup d'états less attractive and therefore provide more stability. To strengthen this stability, some other reforms are necessary as well. One such reform is to implement an article in the constitution, stating that only true democratic governments can legitimately trade natural resources on the international market. Another reform constitutes a 'Democracy Panel' that controls and revises a specific country in order to ensure whether or not the ruling government is constitutionally legitimate, and thus qualified to trade natural resources. Through these reforms, young democratic states with many natural

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<sup>10</sup> Recall that Singer also acknowledges several problematic aspects of the WTO. However, unlike Pogge, he does not believe that the WTO is harming the poor or increasing the gap between the rich and the poor. Singer does make some comments about the necessity of global institutions, but does not further elaborate on this idea. Moreover, since he finds the statement that the WTO harms the poor not proven, he offers no solutions in this regard, whereas Pogge obviously does.

resources can develop in a stable context, increasing the chances of a successful (democratic and economic) development.

However, these proposals are not undisputable. Let us start with the general idea of the GRD. For example, is it feasible to expect that non-democratic countries will agree on a new global institutional order in which they are not allowed to trade their natural resources? As Pogge rightfully assumes, it is exactly the availability of natural resources that keeps these non-democratic rulers in power, so it is hard to see why these countries would give up this privileged position. Wealthy Western countries also tend to profit from the current situation. This is something that Pogge acknowledges. Therefore, these affluent countries will also have little incentive to change the current situation. The only countries that will favour this alternative order are the developing democratic countries that are now struggling to survive amidst internal political rebellion and international detrimental financial institutions. Unfortunately, these countries are a minority in the global decision making arena and have less bargaining power than other states. This leaves us with the question who is going to change the global institutional order.

I believe Pogge also acknowledges this problem, although not explicitly. His appeal to the moral conscience of his readers and their governments is specifically aimed to go around the current international status quo. This becomes very clear in Pogge's statement that his

"practical aim was strongly to motivate citizens and policy makers of wealthy countries to lend their political support to global institutional reforms and to compensate for their share of responsibility for the very substantial contribution that global institutional arrangements make to the persistence of severe poverty." (Pogge 2010, p. 181)

What is needed in order to be able to implement the GRD, is an international moral elite that is capable of influencing international decision making. What is needed is a change of morality. And this, unfortunately, does not happen overnight. However, we should not be too fast to reject the idea because of this long-term aim. For example, one hopeful development is the implementation of the Millennium Declaration by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2000. In this declaration, governments state that they aim for the eradication of poverty. Via this agreement, it might be possible to slowly force a change of morality, clearing the way for a debate about the GRD proposal. But even if this were possible (the Millennium Declaration has not functioned very well yet) it would still be a long-term solution.

Another forceful critique on the GRD proposal is that it is highly speculative. Pogge's statement that his alternative order is not very painful for the affluent countries but will make a huge difference for the poorest, is – according to some – rather unfounded. Joshua Cohen (2010) for example states that it is not at all clear why this reform proposal would not significantly harm the wealthy countries (and thus make it less likely to be implemented) or whether it would truly be capable of eradicating extreme poverty. According to Cohen, Pogge focusses too much

on international institutions, and neglects the importance of domestic orders (cf. Rawls 2008). He shows that some countries have responded rather well to the WTO agreements, while others have not. This difference results from the different domestic institutions, and not from the international institutions, that have the same influence on all these countries. Cohen argues that Pogge does not explain (deliver empirical evidence) why exactly his alternative would be able to influence these countries with bad domestic institutions.

But this critique is not entirely justified. In my opinion, Pogge *does* deliver evidence for the assumption that an alternative global order will be able to eradicate poverty, although he does this not very explicitly. Pogge shows and empirically proves that the current global order is indeed harming the poor. He also shows that this need not be the case: poverty is not inevitable. Cohen agrees with this (2010, p. 41). Then Pogge argues that his alternative will be able to eradicate this poverty, because it alters the order that is currently maintaining this severe poverty. It might be argued that this justification of the GRD is implicit and rather thin, but I believe it is certainly probable that this reform will at least be able to contribute to the eradication of global poverty. With regard to the importance of domestic institutions, I agree with Cohen that these national orders are highly influential for the odds of developing a democratically and financially just society. However, one should not forget that these domestic institutional orders are embedded within an international order. Pogge convincingly showed (indeed, also with empirical evidence) that the current global order at least partly maintains bad domestic institutions – recall the resource curse and borrowing curse Pogge elaborated on. Therefore, it is certainly not unrealistic to argue that the focus in eradicating global poverty should be on exactly these global institutions.

#### *Comparing the two proposals*

The two proposals under scrutiny in this thesis come from rather different theoretical frameworks, and although one can comprehend and support or reject the proposals without these theories, the theoretical differences are certainly noticeable in the nature of the two proposals. Whereas the opt-out income deduction does not pay any attention to global institutions, the GRD is entirely based on this global order. At first glance, this may lead one to conclude that the two proposals are incompatible. However, there also are some similarities between the two that may adjust this preliminary conclusion. The most important similarity is the fact that both proposals aim for a change of morality. In Singer's proposal, this moral adjustment is supposed to be one of the results, and his proposal is a means to get to that end. For Pogge, the adjusted morality is one of the means to a more important end, which is the implementation of the GRD. Although both theorists appeal to this change of morality in order to eradicate global poverty, in Singer's case it is closer to this goal than in Pogge's. I will argue that

it is exactly this aspect – the change in morality of affluent citizens – that can form a connection between the two proposals, making an aggregation of the two proposals possible and desirable.

We have seen that Singer's proposal is focussed on the short term. By providing the right kind of nudge, it is possible to gather rather large sums of money for charity, which in turn will be used to eradicate global poverty. What is lacking in this proposal however is a solution to the more structural, underlying causes of this severe poverty. By just aiding the impoverished through charity the roots of the problem remain untouched, so that a *real* solution is never found – it is mere a treatment of symptoms. In *One World* (2004), Singer detects some problems with the WTO, but these problems do not directly entail harming the poor. Therefore, he does not offer any solution whatsoever in this regard. Pogge does provide a more convincing solution to these core problems, with his institutional reforms. However, his proposal lacks an incentive to change the morality (something his reform proposals need in order to be implemented) and moreover lacks a solution capable of providing acute aid for those currently suffering of extreme poverty. Therefore, both proposals are in itself not able to provide a complete strategy to eradicate global poverty.

What is needed is a combined effort, in which both the acute aid to those currently suffering of extreme poverty and more structural adjustments in the global order are accounted for. Therefore, I will defend that the best way to eradicate global poverty is to start with the scheme provided by Singer. This opt-out income deduction is a very promising tool to collect sufficient amounts of money that can be used to cease the deaths from poverty-related causes. If the scheme becomes popular, it might even bring in enough money to help a lot of people that are now living below the poverty line reach an income and prospect to get above that line. One of the greatest advantages of this scheme is that it is very likely to make people more conscious of the poverty and help convince them that their efforts actually matter. If the people enrolled in this scheme notice how much can be done with only such small part of their wealth, it makes other proposals to eradicate poverty seem realistic. The expression of every day actions will influence the prevailing norms and moral intuitions, thereby constructing a culture of giving. And that is exactly what is needed for Pogge's proposal. The moral consciousness that can adjust the current morality and change our view on poverty and our role in it can produce the leaders and governments that Pogge calls for. Therefore, Singer's proposal can take care of the change of morality; it can create a culture in which it is normal to think that we have responsibilities towards the impoverished. With this change of culture, it become more feasible that

governments, also the wealthy ones, begin to take serious their responsibility in eradicating global poverty. The GRD proposal might in this context be earnestly considered and debated.<sup>11</sup>

Let us now return to Fraser's argument that an affirmative strategy towards the problem of poverty might have exactly the opposite effect: it might create a culture in which aid for the impoverished is seen as never-ending and therefore useless. What we need in order to avoid this negative effect, is a

*"via media* between an affirmative strategy that is politically feasible but substantively flawed and a transformative one that is programmatically sound but politically impracticable." (Fraser & Honneth 2003, p. 79)

This strategy in the conceptual middle between affirmative and transformative is what Fraser calls "nonreformist reforms". In the case of eradicating poverty, this would mean that the implementation of Singer's proposal should be accompanied by the preparations for more structural reforms. Two parallel movements need to be initiated at the same time: the opt-out income deduction can generate funds for poverty relief and create a shift in morality, while at the same time citizens are informed about the need for more structural reforms. By implementing these two strategies together, the negative effect that is described by Fraser can be avoided, because it is made clear what the eventual, long-term goals are. Although initially this does not advocate politically feasible reforms, it does clear the way for these reform in a later stadium.

One other issue worth investigating is the role of governments or states in the two proposals and in the combination I defend. In Singer's original plan, the government does not play any role: "this would have nothing to do with governments" (Singer 2012). The opt-out income deduction is solely a matter between employer and employees, no governmental interference is needed. However, I argued that it might be useful to strife for a mediating role for governments. One could think of some benefits that come with it. For example, it is very well possible that the government provides tax benefits for those that donate (through the opt-out scheme) to charity. In addition, to encourage employees to install the scheme it is possible that the government provides some benefits for companies that enrol in the opt-out donation arrangement, like tax benefits or some kind of bonus in another form. The Singer proposal is in no way dependent on government support (that is, if there is no such support, the proposal could still function perfectly), but this government interference might very well help increase the amount of companies that enrol in the arrangement and the amount of employees that are willing to join.

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<sup>11</sup> Obviously, this effect will be much stronger when governments play a role in the installment of the proposal, either as the lawmaker that obliges companies to initiate the programme, or as the mediator that provides benefits for companies that install the programme.

A second benefit of the involvement of governments in this proposal is that these governments that actively encourage donation to eradicate poverty, also indirectly oblige themselves to commit themselves genuinely for the following phases that need to be passed. Here I obviously have the instalment of the GRD in mind. Once the government plays a visible role in the fight against poverty, and is even encouraging its citizens to do more to relieve poverty, it will be morally obliged to negotiate adjustments in the institutions that are currently upholding this poverty. Likewise, the electoral pressure will increase as a result of the change of morality, making it harder for governments to neglect the issue of global poverty. It might therefore be a good idea to get the governments of affluent countries involved in the income deduction schemes of the companies in those countries. However, we need not wait with the introduction of the scheme until these governments have agreed to help – the arrangements can function very well without the involvement of governments.

## CONCLUSIONS

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Now that we have reached the end of our investigation, it is time to conclude. First, the general findings of this thesis will be briefly recapitulated. After this, we can look back at the central question that was posed in the introduction and formulate an answer to this question.

In the introduction and throughout the rest of the paper, I assume it has become clear that the issue of global redistribution is a very serious and acute one. Particularly illustrative in this sense is the fact that every seven months as many people die from poverty-related causes as died during the entire period of the Nazi death camps (Pogge 2002, p. 25). Both authors assessed in this thesis agree that these deaths are not inevitable, which makes the issue even more urgent and painful. The two theorists are also in agreement about the fact that global poverty cannot be solved using a nationalist theoretical approach. In the first part of this thesis, it became clear that the authors could both be situated in the cosmopolitan strand of political philosophy. Cosmopolitanism is based on three pillars, being individualism, universality and generality. Although both philosophers start from this framework, their theories on global distributive justice differ on many other important issues.

Peter Singer bases his theory of global redistribution on the well-known assumptions that (1) poverty is bad and (2) If we can prevent bad things from happening without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought to do it. These assumptions lead him to conclude that we, as affluent citizens of the wealthiest states, ought to do much more to relieve poverty than we are currently doing. The money that we now spend on dinners in expensive restaurants, cars, theatres and other luxury goods should be donated to charity. This is a moral obligation because we are in a position to prevent something very bad from happening without sacrificing anything that is nearly as important. These demands might seem demanding, but this is not a problem *per se*. As Caney states: "Perhaps poverty is highly demanding" (Caney 2010, p. 117). However, if a moral theory is considered too demanding, it might lose its attraction for the public. This might even result in a generally apathetic public, arguing that they will never be able to meet the high demands, so why bother to do anything at all? Although the phrase "anything of comparable moral importance" leaves room for some interpretation (relieving part of the pressure of the high demandingness), Singer makes no secret of his ideas about what is morally comparable to the suffering of the least well-off. These ideas are rather demanding indeed.

Thomas Pogge's theory on global redistributive justice is a completely different one. He states that our obligations towards the poor are of an institutional character. Our current global economic order is systematically harming the poor, which makes us responsible for their tragic situation. The main problem are institutions like the WTO, which make it possible for rich

countries to impose high tariffs and anti-dumping regulation to protect their own markets, at the expense of the export possibilities of the developing countries. Moreover, the current concept of national sovereignty is causing many structural problems. The Resource Privilege and the Borrowing Privilege, which are both based on the idea of national sovereignty, maintain poverty and make it hard to genuinely alter the situation for the least well-off. Based on these thoughts, Pogge states that in order to eradicate poverty, we need to grab the issue at its roots. The global institutions currently upholding the disadvantageous economic and political order need to be adjusted.

Based on these theories of global poverty, the two authors come up with two conceptually rather different proposals to eradicate global poverty. Singer's opt-out income deduction is based on his central idea that wealthy individuals should do much more to relieve poverty. The income deduction gives these individuals an extra jog to actually make these donations. The strong aspect of the proposal is that it in no way forces citizens to donate, while it does generate much more funds to improve the life of many impoverished people. Anyone can opt out of the arrangement at any time, without any further negative consequences. The shift of the default situation is common practice in many countries' organ donation systems, and the results in these countries and many other experiments are very promising. An additional advantage of this income deduction scheme is the fact that it makes people more conscious about global poverty and the role they can play to change the situation. It can create a culture in which fighting poverty becomes a moral norm.

Pogge's GRD proposal is closely linked to his theory about distributive justice. It is an alternative to the current institutional order that is doing so much harm to the least well-off. The idea is to make the sellers and user of natural resources pay a small dividend on these natural resources. This has a double effect. First, it generates money that can be used to eradicate poverty. Second, it changes the institutional arrangements that are now upholding poverty, by making it less attractive to overthrow a government, since the natural resources do no longer provide a certain base of wealth and power. This effect is increased by the additional changes Pogge proposes. Democratic developing countries should have a special article in the constitution, stating that only genuinely democratic governments may trade in natural resources and debts. This way, corrupt military elites can no longer overthrow democratic governments, sell all the countries' natural resources, and borrow infinite amounts of money on the international market, leaving the debts for the already starving population. These institutional changes should create a stable context in which developing countries can deal with their poverty-struck population much more effectively and efficiently.

In the third part of this thesis, the two theories and proposals were compared and assessed. The theories on global poverty as presented by Singer and Pogge differ a lot. The most

important theoretical difference is the argumentation that is used to show that affluent individuals have obligations towards the poor. Singer argues from a utilitarian point of reference, which is rather noticeable in his assumptions about our moral obligations. There are strong arguments against this utilitarian reasoning, and Singer does not provide satisfactory answers to all of these. Pogge has a completely different point of departure. His argument is based on causality, which makes his theory much sounder than Singer's. Pogge shows that we are directly responsible for the fact that global poverty still exists – through the global institutions that are upheld by our representatives. Based on this assessment, Pogge's theory on global distributive justice ought to be preferred over the utilitarian account Singer provides.

However, because Singer's proposal to eradicate poverty is not dependent on obvious utilitarian arguments, the problems that are apparent regarding his theory do not affect his proposal. A more serious problem with the opt-out charity donation is that it is an affirmative strategy, and thus does not *really* solve the problem of global poverty. It just treats the symptoms, as we said, but leaves the underlying cause untouched. However, if we recall the urgency of the matter at hand (approximately 2000 people have died since you began reading this thesis!) the proposal will function particularly well in gathering money to stop these unnecessary deaths and is able to provide a lot of money to fight poverty on the short term. Pogge's GRD proposal has exactly the opposite effects. Because it is a transformative strategy, it *does* attack the underlying causes of poverty (the unjust institutions upholding it) and is therefore able to cure the disease as a whole. However, the reforms are rather hard to implement and convincing governments to downplay their self-interest for the fight against poverty might be a hard task in the current international arena. While Pogge and his philosophical allies are working on this, still many die every day. Although the proposal is very promising on the long term, it has not much to offer for these short-term problems.

The central question asked in this thesis was whether one of the two proposals under scrutiny should be preferred, based on their philosophical or practical (dis)advantages. In the course of this thesis, an answer to this question has surfaced. If we consider *solely* the theoretical aspects of the two proposals, the institutional approach provided by Pogge seems far more promising than the utilitarian account given by Singer. However, the theoretical flaws in utilitarian theory do not make Singer's proposal useless. The proposal is not *dependent* on this theory, and can easily be supported without support for the utilitarian notions that are apparent in Singer's theory. In the assessment of the two proposals, we should consider two aspects. The first aspect is the ability to solve the problem of global poverty in a structural way. In this sense, we should clearly prefer Pogge's GRD, since this changes the institutional causes of poverty, instead of the superficial results of these causes that seem to be the main concern for Singer. His proposal

solely takes into consideration the current situation, without trying to find out what is the cause of this problematic situation and how this cause can be remedied<sup>12</sup>. The second aspect that should be taken into account when assessing the proposals, is the relationship between the urgency of the problem and the period of time in which a solution for the problem should be available. Whereas the GRD is more effective on the long term, the opt-out donation scheme is by far more effective on the short term. And this short term is not to be underestimated. In the case of poverty, there are in fact two different (but closely linked) issues that ask for attention. One issue is the fact that there are so many people suffering from it daily. The other issue is that the solution given to these issues should be a lasting solution. Now if we consider the first issue, Singer's proposal should be preferred, since it is capable of briefly (and with little effort) collecting large sums of money to improve the lives of those billions currently suffering from poverty. On the long term however, this is not a lasting model because of the above-mentioned treatment of symptoms. The GRD proposal should be preferred for a long-term solution to poverty. What is essential for the success of the GRD, however, is a somewhat adjusted morality. The GRD proposal in itself does not provide any means to do this. Here, the income deduction can play an essential role, since – apart from collecting large amounts of money for brief poverty relieve – it can generate this moral shift that is needed. Therefore, the answer to the central question is a complicated one.

What is needed for the two proposals discussed here to be truly convincing and attractive, is a joint effort. The two proposals should be combined to make them successful, as was also pointed out in the discussion of Frasers "nonreformist reform". The best way to realise this is to implement (preferably with the help of national governments) the opt-out income deduction, while at the same time informing and preparing citizens on the reforms that are needed on the long term. With the money that is generated from the opt-out donations, a very good start could be made to relieve poverty. However, more important is the additional effect it will have on public morality. The GRD depends on this change of morality, because the citizens and governments of the affluent states will have to form a vanguard when it comes to the alteration of global institutions. Unfortunately, the current morale in this part of the world does not seem to be in favour of alterations of this kind. On the other hand, although the income deduction proposal is able to relieve poverty on the short term, it is not able to deal with the real causes of this poverty, and therefore needs to be accompanied or followed by a more rigorous approach. This makes clear how the two proposals can and should reinforce one another. Although this interconnection might not be possible or desirable if solely the two theories are taken into account, it is very much possible and desirable where the two proposals are concerned.

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<sup>12</sup> Recall that he finds the statement that the WTO harms the poor to be unproven.

Global poverty is an urgent and delicate problem, and this has implications for philosophical theories and proposals about the issue. It is therefore hopeful to see that the two proposals discussed in this thesis are understandable and acceptable for a broad variety of philosophical and moral views, but also for regular citizens. This makes it possible to leave behind the conceptual and philosophical differences and try to work on a feasible, combined effort to eradicate poverty.

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