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From Charity to Justice

**How development INGOs can realise a paradigm shift in the
global North**

by

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Abstract

We live in an affluent world where extreme poverty could be avoided. Yet more than 700 million individuals are still struggling on under US\$1.90 per day. Following a survey of the literature on global justice and global poverty, this thesis argues that in order to eradicate extreme poverty, the affluent countries need to realise a paradigm shift from charity to justice – that is, the global North should move away from voluntary giving, institutionalize some measure of global distributive justice and endorse reforming the global political and economic structure to create a fairer global order. The thesis argues that more engaged and informed Northern publics are key to enabling the shift in their own countries. A variety of promising strategies of moral motivation are critically discussed, and a historically informed analysis of the ideas of charity and justice is conducted to reveal the important changes in public attitude and knowledge that needs to occur before a paradigm shift on global poverty takes place. This thesis then identifies development INGOs as highly suitable political agents to motivate the Northern publics, and examines the competitive INGO sector to address the severe limitations that obstruct their current public engagement efforts. It is proposed at the end of this research that the INGO sector form an Avant-garde NGO to overcome their collective action problem. Finally, this thesis advocates for a reflective public engagement approach that includes defamiliarisation, heuristic communication and deliberative sessions for this avant-garde NGO.

To my parents,
Song Guangping 宋光萍
& Fang Jie 方杰

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Introduction

The research problem

In the chilly spring of 2013, I was studying my master's degree in Sheffield. There was an Oxfam shop near where I lived, and every week, I spent half a day there at the till, serving customers and greeting donors, with a green Oxfam badge pinned to my shirt. One day at my coffee break, I was reading a brochure about how Oxfam was using the donations to help the Syrian children, when the store manager entered and started a conversation.

"I assume you are studying here? What do you study?" The kind lady asked.

I said I was studying Politics.

"Oh, that's interesting, but do you know Oxfam is an *apolitical* organisation?" She commented, with detectable pride glowing on her face.

"Huh?" I responded with a sound of disbelief. I thought I misheard what she said.

"*Apolitical*. You know what it means? Oxfam has nothing to do with politics. We don't take any side in politics." She explained patiently.

"Well I know what apolitical means, but I don't think that is true or possible." I replied.

A short debate ensued.

I had just completed an essay in my Human Rights module discussing Peter Singer and Thomas Pogge's arguments on the duties the affluent owed to the global poor. Armed with newly acquired knowledge of normative political theory, I insisted that transferring wealth from the West to relieve the suffering of the Syrian victims of the civil war was well within the realm of the political. In addition, I argued, Oxfam often worked with governments in developing countries and the United Nations. She maintained that Oxfam did not engage with the dirty politics played by Bashar al-Assad, or his armed opponents, or any foreign powers backing them. Neither of us persuaded the other, and we ended up agreeing to disagree, with the conclusion that we had different conceptions of what politics was about.

Upon reflection, there is indeed a major gap between our conceptions of politics. The Oxfam manager takes politics to be the corrupting power play between politicians that ordinary citizens and organisations are not part of and should stay clear of. On this conception, anything that is intrinsically good and idealistic, say, feeding thousands of

starving Syrian kids, is not part of politics. I do not deny that a big chunk of politics is rampant with things that cannot withstand ethical scrutiny, but my understanding of politics contains an additional, explicitly moral dimension: when we take other people's interests into account, when we see suffering and injustice and we make an instinctive or deliberate choice of which side to stand on, when we suspect questionable deals are being made by politicians behind the scenes and we call them "dirty politics", we are expressing our political opinions and being political. Some opinions are superficial; others are the results of careful deliberation. Some opinions are misguided and misinformed; others are based on solid facts and valid analysis. Nevertheless, they are all part of the extremely colourful, diverse spectrum of "the political". Recognition of what counts as political is no small matter. These personal opinions lie behind every vote; aggregated, they are the cornerstone of every demonstration, reform, and revolution, and in many cases prove to be an effective antidote to the dirtiness in the world of politics.

Severing this moral dimension from the political therefore reduces the chance to make politics less "dirty". It is particularly problematic when a manager of major humanitarian and development organisation takes its causes to be apolitical. Our globalised world is not just. Despite its unprecedented affluence, over 700 million people struggle to meet their basic needs with less than US\$1.90 a day. It is indeed laudable to make private donations to alleviate this massive suffering, but providing palliative care should not prevent one from looking for cures for the root causes. Unfortunately, these root causes lie exactly within the problematic – if not dirty, politics – the kind of politics that squanders on developing more advanced weapons to kill yet becomes stingy on meeting basic human needs, the politics that fails to sufficiently acknowledge and address the lingering legacies of colonialism, the politics that acquiesces in higher powers making international rules and poorer countries losing out in the lopsided game. Extreme poverty has its domestic causes, but these interact with, and are often enhanced by international politics.¹ Failing to recognise the political nature of extreme poverty makes its eradication, a goal shared by Oxfam and many other international development non-governmental organizations (INGOs), much less achievable.

The Oxfam manager's position on reducing poverty and alleviating distant suffering is nevertheless reflective of a prevailing and deeply entrenched charity culture in the global North. Development organisations such as Oxfam are more commonly known as "charities". Charities hire professional fundraisers to approach pedestrians and place

¹ I will discuss the causes of extreme poverty in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2.

advertisements on the internet, TV and newspapers to compete for donations, and people who donate to them are thanked for their “generous and charitable” action. In these charity appeals, extreme poverty is reduced to a problem “out there” like a natural phenomenon that private donations can apparently reduce with great efficiency and effect; politics, local or global, is deliberately left out of the picture.² It is beyond the life experience of citizens in affluent countries to imagine extreme poverty – living without adequate food, clean water, a shelter, basic education, equal respect and social recognition, a peaceful environment, or all of these combined. They have not bothered to understand more either. Why would they, when they have been told repeatedly that money out of their pocket is the quick fix? It has become a near knee-jerk response to associate imagery of poverty and suffering in exotic lands with calls for charitable donations. This impression was so hardwired since the 1982 Live Aid charity event that many people thought the Make Poverty History campaign in 2005 was another round of fundraising for Africa, – even though the latter event deliberately avoided raising funds, in order to echo its theme “Justice not Charity.”³

Indeed, charity and justice are two distinct paradigms on poverty. As a matter of charity, global poverty is about one group of individuals lacking the means to live and another group lacking the generosity to give. No question needs to be asked about the causes of poverty – if it persists, it is because the rich are not charitable enough, hence the relentless charity appeals attempting to get more donors on board. The government has little to do in this essentially depoliticised space. As a matter of justice, poverty becomes an entirely different problem: we become curious about why it exists, and we grow suspicious of the fairness of the broader political and economic system that largely determines who gets what. Through this lens, poverty in many cases turns out to be the avoidable result of exploitation, discrimination and exclusion. Setting eyes on the big picture, we discover, with great surprise, that the most commonly cited cause of poverty – laziness – pales in the face of an overwhelmingly adverse environment. Global poverty as a matter of justice calls attention to its root causes, and how the global North have benefited from and participated in causing it. It calls for critical reflection on and recognition of enforceable obligations on the part of the affluent. Most importantly, it calls for structural changes, including but not limited to

² I will discuss the problems of charity appeals in Chapter 6.

³ Andrew Darnton, "Make Poverty History end of year notes from the Public Perceptions of Poverty Research Programme," accessed 23 August 2019, <https://celebrityanddevelopment.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/andrew-darnton-make-poverty-history.pdf>

greater measures of global wealth redistribution and fairer terms of international economic cooperation. If we want extreme poverty to be perpetually eradicated, it will have to be addressed in the justice paradigm.

Finding ways to achieve a paradigm shift from charity to justice in the global North will be the central research problem in this thesis. I intend to take up the torch from the “Justice not Charity” global campaign in 2005, and explore ways to encourage citizens in the global North to recognise that extreme poverty, a problem seemingly so distant in their daily lives, is in fact, much more relevant and demands extensive actions from them. The focus of this research is not effective methods of poverty reduction, or causes of and solutions to extreme poverty. Nor is this research concerned with exactly what kind of obligations the global North owes to the South. I will overview these topics in the beginning of my thesis, but only to pave the way for my later arguments on how we can communicate ethical implications of global poverty to audiences in the global North in a more politically engaging, informative way, so that charity as a paradigm finally gives way to justice.

Methodological remarks: political theorising “getting real”

There has been much discussion around the practical impact of global justice theories, or the regrettable lack thereof, in recent years. The impression that many such theories are too abstract, utopian, and unrealistically moralistic has begun to take hold, inviting increasing critical reflections from across the field on whether global justice theories should “get real”. As Jonathan Floyd notes, three factors motivate this internal reflection: political ambition (we want to be more relevant!), philosophical curiosity (we haven’t thought much about this before) and a crisis of confidence (is there any point to what we’re doing?).⁴

Attempts to “get real” tend to go in two directions, following David Miller’s survey of the debate.⁵ In one direction, global justice political theorists are urged to join the “non-ideal movement” – they are encouraged to quit their unhelpful musings on developing a theory of perfect justice built on the assumption of perfect compliance. Instead they should turn to theorise for the real world brimming with non-compliance, moral failures and collective

⁴ Jonathan Floyd, "Should global political theory get real? An introduction," *Journal of International Political Theory* 12, no. 2 (2016): 95.

⁵ David Miller, "How ‘realistic’ should global political theory be? Some reflections on the debate so far," *Journal of International Political Theory* 12, no. 2 (2016): 217-233.

action problems.⁶ Non-ideal theories, as is often argued, must be better informed by empirical findings from social sciences on human psychology and behaviour, as well as cultural, political and institutional constraints before entering the normative terrain and prescribing realistically achievable changes in actions and institutions that we ought to pursue.

Down the other “get real” pathway, it is recommended that theorists better incorporate the long-standing realist tradition into their thinking. Political theory should not be treated as applied moral philosophy, it is argued, as political outcomes are not just determined by what is just and right – but also by might. To achieve real impact, political theorising should give more recognition to the perpetual disagreement, pursuit of power, conflicts of interest, and differing perceptions of legitimacy that mark the real world of political struggles, and accordingly reduce the weight assigned to moral claims. In particular, proponents of global justice should recognize that their moral doctrine, cosmopolitanism, is not universally accepted but “contested and controversial” in a world of competing moral first principles.⁷ Self-righteous cosmopolitans can ask as many moral actions from individuals, politicians and states as they want, but the plain truth is that “if they may only ask, none need listen.”⁸ It is therefore insufficient, from the political perspective, to merely provide arguments on what is morally right to do; such recommendations must be accompanied by considerations on why the particular political agents will act accordingly, or how they could be persuaded, motivated, accustomed, coerced, or even intimidated to comply.

In conceiving, designing and completing this essentially theoretical project, I have drawn on both strands of recommendations, in order to maximize its practical potential. The framing of the research problem, to begin with, is informed by the realist assumption that to seek change in a system, we must locate and influence the key political actors who wield more power. We could establish from existing literature that a wide variety of proposals on reducing extreme poverty has been discussed, from radically reforming global economic order, to improving governance in poor countries, to establishing a global redistributive

⁶ The concept of “non-ideal movement” is mentioned in Shmuel Nili, “Global justice and global realities,” *Journal of International Political Theory* 12, no. 2 (2016): 200-216. Amartya Sen is another influential advocate for political theory to go non-ideal.

⁷ Matt Sleat, “The value of global justice: realism and moralism,” *Journal of International Political Theory* 12, no. 2 (2016): 174.

⁸ Geoffrey Hawthorn, “Running the World through Windows.” In *Debating Cosmpolitics*, ed. Daniele Archibugi (London: Verso Books, 2003): 20.

system, to better the current foreign aid regime.⁹ While some measures focus on local reforms in poor countries, others with greater potential impact take aim at the economic and political interactions between poor and affluent countries or target the global system that acts as the institutional background of said interactions. Who are the key political players in the latter case? It does not even take a degree in politics to know that the global North, or the developed countries, exert political power disproportionately large to their geographical size and population. To seek change that has the maximum impact, one must therefore seek to change these Northern countries. Are they obligated to change? Yes, for various compelling reasons if we look at the normative global justice literature that examines the moral duties owed by the global North to the global poor. However, here emerges the realist concern about the moralistic global justice literature. On the issue of extreme poverty, the global North *could* achieve immense impact, and *should* strive to do so, but they are not acting as we would have wished. Foreign aid expenditure remains meagre and contested, and there is little detectable intent to push for a fairer global order or global redistribution of any kind. Hence the general question: How can we get the global North to do what is morally expected? Phrased specifically for the problem of global poverty, it becomes my research questions: How can a paradigm shift in the global North from charity to justice be achieved with regards to extreme global poverty?

In addressing this research question, I am informed by both realist and non-ideal methodological recommendations: I pay continued attention to both how practical constraints could thwart our attempt to seek change, and how social science insights could inform and facilitate this attempt. In Chapter 3, I conduct a survey of various strategies for motivating cosmopolitanism. While I do not reject more moralistic strategies and agree that a sense of justice can indeed lead to political action, I also elaborate on how coercive institutions can align self-interest with the discharge of otherwise neglected duties of justice. I argue that the various economic, ecological, and military risks that individuals pose to each other beyond borders can be staged in a way that exploits selfish interests in the service of global justice demands. On this basis, I recommend that we further explore a strategy of building a Hobbesian global community. In the same chapter, I also identify a crucial practical constraint on the motivational strategies proposed so far: we have yet to find suitably motivated and resourced political agents to test and perform these strategies. I call this problem the “agency gap”. Similarly, in Chapter 4, after examining the historical

⁹ I will discuss these solutions in the first chapter.

evolution of the ideas of charity and justice, I draw attention to how mature and capable bureaucracies enable coercive taxation for redistributive justice. I further discuss how a community of fear – the better off social members’ fear of the poor taking their property through violence and revolution – sustains redistributive justice. Rejecting a moralistic account that regards the nation as a solidary community of mutual care, I am able to identify other factors that have contributed to the welfare states we see today.

In Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 I argue that development INGOs are suitable agents to fill the agency gap. I acknowledge their ambition, motivation, and effort to mobilise citizens in the global North to join the cause of ending extreme global poverty. However, I caution against the notion that INGOs are motivated purely by their ideals. Rather, they are deeply mired in a competitive development sector and many of their highly criticised actions result from seeking organisational survival. Despite efforts to overcome this constraint and better engage the Northern publics, they have only achieved rather limited success. I examine this collective action problem in depth in Chapter 6. Based on social science research on this classic issue, I propose that the multiple INGOs join hands to build a single avant-garde NGO tasked with public engagement.

A key realist insight is that rights and duties of justice are only empty talk if they are not guaranteed by and discharged through a coercive authority. In seeking to transform theoretical duties of global justice into real actions, we must then recognise the role of the one and only political entity that enjoys legitimate coercive power – the state. Therefore, in Chapter 7, I defend what Ypi calls a “statist” account of cosmopolitanism with the argument that the most plausible way to realise global justice is to change the state to gradually live up to cosmopolitan values. To do this, the avant-garde NGO bears the important responsibility of mobilising citizens behind its cause. However, I reject Ypi’s intellectual optimism about global justice, arguing that cosmopolitanism has been waning in recent years, and that ordinary citizens oppose this sensible moral doctrine not based on considered judgments but because of their lack of informed thinking on politics. Based on this diagnosis, I develop an account of public engagement that aims to disengage the publics from their unreflectively received political opinions and re-engage them to think about ideological alternatives. Much of this discussion draws on social sciences research – in particular, social psychology. For instance, as it is widely agreed that human beings do not respond in a friendly and reasoned way to explicit attempts of persuasion, I develop a strategy called “heuristic communication” that aims to provide various kinds of assistance

or cues for individuals to form or discover more considered alternative political beliefs for themselves.

These are the major “realist and non-ideal moments” in my research. While both methodological directions remain contested and the debate ongoing, I believe they are credible suggestions that anyone interested in global justice should bear in mind, particularly in the course of theorising.

Mapping the thesis

In Chapter 1 I give an overview of the problem of extreme global poverty. I start with introducing the achievements the global community has made so far and the remaining challenges and the criticisms they face. This introduction is followed by a discussion around the nature and causal explanations of poverty. I then move on to discuss how and why the affluent countries, or the global North (I use the two terms interchangeably), could play a much bigger role in the eradication of extreme poverty. I demonstrate that structural reforms and more extensive redistribution of wealth will be needed, and that these changes require far more than the current charity model could accommodate. I conclude by arguing that an informed, active citizenry in the global North could motivate their governments to take more radical political actions to address this avoidable massive suffering.

Having established that the Northern states could play a crucial role in eradicating global poverty by initiating or supporting structural changes domestically and globally, I turn to the global justice literature in Chapter 2 to show that these states are morally obligated to do so. I examine five competing philosophical positions on the question of “what, if anything, is owed by affluent countries to people living in extreme poverty?”. The five theories, which are based on different moral values and understand extreme poverty differently, give varying answers to the question. However, as I will show, from a public policy perspective, they converge on agreeing that the current charity approach is far from enough, and that the North needs to make radical political changes to discharge their moral obligations to the global poor. I argue that this convergence gives us a strong mandate to demand actions from the Northern states.

Cosmopolitan theorists make persuasive and sound arguments on why individuals beyond our borders deserve equal moral concern, but these theorists invariably find it difficult to translate these ideas into action. Theorists have grappled with the so-called “motivational

gap” of cosmopolitanism and have proposed different solutions. In Chapter 3, I critically engage with these arguments on moral motivation. I show that these arguments touch on different aspects of moral motivation and could work together to complement each other or cater to individuals of different moral beliefs. However, I argue in the last section that, to fully address the very practical issue of motivation, what we need is not only plausible strategies but agents to employ them. On global justice issues, there is a significant “agency gap”: because of global power disparities and physical distance, often the people whose interests are harmed (the global poor in the case of extreme poverty) lack the necessary political conditions to force change in a world divided into sovereign states, whereas those who benefit from the current global order (the global rich) have vested interests in maintaining the status quo. I argue that we need to fill the agency gap first, by identifying suitably motivated agents in the global North, before we can fill the motivational gap.

In Chapter 4, I digress to look at the historical development of the ideas of charity and justice. By exposing the different positions that political thinkers take on charity and justice as competing approaches to the issue of domestic poverty, I attempt to draw lessons from history in hope that we can find guidance for a similar paradigm shift on global poverty. I identify four factors that seem to have contributed to the historical transition from charity to justice, and I argue that they provide direction that potential political agents keen on a paradigm shift on global poverty should follow.

I continue to discuss the issue of political agency in Chapter 5, contending that international development NGOs (INGOs) would appear to be the perfect candidate to fill the “agency gap”. They have decades of experience in combatting poverty in the global South, they are adaptive to changing times, they have successfully mobilised millions of citizens in the global North to express concern over global poverty, and they are committed to bringing extreme poverty to an end. However, towards the end of the chapter, I point out the fact that INGOs have been trying to realise a paradigm shift to little avail, and having realised this problem, they are going through a period of reflection and change themselves.

In Chapter 6, I examine the INGO sector more closely in order to find out why their public engagement efforts have been unsuccessful at bringing about a shift to the justice paradigm. I offer a Collective Action explanation, arguing that the highly competitive INGO sector makes individual INGOs indisposed to radically change their current approach, which favours soliciting private donations immensely over development education. Under the pressure to survive, INGOs have not been able to communicate extreme global poverty to

the Northern publics in a way that challenges and changes the existing stereotypes, nor build strong solidary ties or motivate political actions. I conclude the chapter with a call for a sector-wide reform to join hands and form an “Avant-garde NGO” that could perform genuine public engagement.

In Chapter 7, I develop a theory of the “Avant-garde NGO”. I first critically engage with Lea Ypi’s account of statist cosmopolitanism and avant-garde political agency, arguing that reforming the state from within to gradually meet the demands of global justice is a highly plausible practical strategy, and that to achieve this, the cosmopolitan avant-garde agents need to maintain and strengthen their political influence. I then put the problem into the contemporary political context and contend that the major challenge the cosmopolitan avant-garde must address is resistance to global justice, spawned by a widespread thoughtlessness on political issues and political apathy. Meaningful public engagement, therefore, must prioritise this challenge, if the cosmopolitan avant-garde agent wants to gain growing power to shape the state policies and institutions. I move on to develop a three-pronged strategy tailored for this Avant-garde NGO to push for changes in Northern states. To begin with, I argue the Avant-garde NGO needs to defamiliarize Northern citizens from their entrenched attitudes on everyday political issues, by challenging them with novel perspectives using a variety of creative techniques. Second, I draw on research from social psychology to argue that the Avant-garde NGO needs to engage in what I call “heuristic communication”, in order to facilitate ordinary citizens to form ideas favourable to cosmopolitanism and global justice. As more citizens change their attitude, the Avant-garde NGO will need to consolidate their growing influence with the third task: to conduct public deliberative sessions and to pass changing popular opinion to decision-makers, so as to gradually effect genuine political change at the state level.

1. Extreme poverty as a problem for the global North

Introduction

I introduce in this chapter the state of extreme global poverty, its causes and possible solutions. I also argue that the eradication of global poverty will require affluent countries to commit to reforming their own institutions and practices and promote a fairer global order. I first present two competing narratives of global poverty to examine what has been achieved and what remains to be done to end global poverty. I move on to discuss different ways of conceptualising and measuring poverty, followed by brief discussion of earlier explanatory theories of poverty. I proceed to examine the concept of “global poverty” more closely, arguing that this term allows us to see the causes of and solutions to extreme poverty that go beyond national borders. I then introduce poverty-reduction approaches that have proven to be effective and promising, further establishing that ending global poverty requires global changes, and that the Northern countries have a significant role to play in this process. In particular, I highlight the transformative potential of the Northern publics that has remained largely dormant so far. I conclude the chapter arguing that extreme global poverty requires political changes from Northern countries, and that to achieve this, their citizens must change how they view the issue. Global poverty is not an issue of charity, but rather one of justice that merits significant political attention and urgency.

1.1. A tale of two narratives of global poverty

Two very distinct narratives, one encouraging and optimistic, and the other critical, pessimistic and alarming, compete to shape our knowledge of extreme global poverty. Neither narrative alone suffices to give a complete and well-contextualised picture of the current state of global poverty, as well as what remains to be done; it is therefore necessary to examine both.

1.1.1. The positive narrative

The positive narrative tends to chronicle the impressive milestones humanity has surpassed as we approach a world without extreme poverty. A historical look at poverty does vindicate some degree of optimism. For most of human history and for most individuals,

struggling in destitution for basic life necessities or scraping by with highly limited resources had been the norm rather than the exception. Until 1000 AD, the per capita income of the world was estimated to be \$450 a year in 1990 purchasing power dollars. In fact, on average the commoners probably earned far less than that, if we take into consideration the disproportionate amount of wealth owned by monarchs, feudal lords and the nobility.¹⁰ In the ensuing hundreds of years, thanks to a string of historical events – the scientific revolution, the emergence of capitalism and industrial revolutions – the human condition has improved, but still the ascension from mass poverty had been slow – in the 1820s, 84% of the global population lived under \$1.50 a day.¹¹ Later, the poverty statistics underwent a drastic change: by the 1980s, the percentage of people living under \$1.50 a day declined sharply to less than 40% in terms of head count ratio, whereas in terms of the number of poor people, the figure shot up from about 900 million to a peak of 1.589 billion in 1982 due to a surge in population growth.¹²

In the aftermath of World War II, severe poverty became one of many issues that, having plagued humanity for so long, was now considered within reach to be defeated with concerted international effort. Seven years after President F. D. Roosevelt included “freedom from want” into his famous Four Freedoms, the United Nations passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, setting goals that all its member countries agreed they should strive to achieve. Article 25 concerns poverty:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

In the post-war period, ambition to battle extreme poverty grew as the world became ever more affluent, and vows of ending poverty from politicians were commonplace. American President Truman, for example, famously declared in his 1949 inaugural address that “more than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery...For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and the skill to relieve the suffering of

¹⁰ Deepak Lal, *Poverty and Progress: Realities and Myths about Global Poverty* (Washington, United States: Cato Institute, 2013): 9-12.

¹¹ Surjit Bhalla, *Imagine There's No Country: Poverty, Inequality, and Growth in the Era of Globalization* (Washington, United States: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2002): 144-146. Note that \$1.5 is 1993 Purchase Power Parity price.

¹² Bhalla, *Imagine There's No Country*, 144-6.

these people.”¹³ Similarly, John F. Kennedy said that “the world is very different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty...”¹⁴

These ambitious statements translated into more concrete policy commitments by the end of the millennium. In 2000, 189 member countries of the UN rallied behind the UN *Millennium Declaration*, in which they vowed to “spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanising conditions of extreme poverty”.¹⁵ Policy-wise, the world leaders pledged to eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the first of which was to halve extreme poverty (defined then as below US\$1.25 a day, 2005 purchasing power parity [PPP] U.S. dollars) by 2015.¹⁶ The MDGs were hailed as an unprecedented international effort to reduce global poverty and improve human welfare: the conference that preceded the MDGs consulted the poor countries and gave their concerns more weight; rich countries and major international institutions such as the WTO, the OECD and the World Bank, were assigned specific roles; and the eight MDGs were broad enough to constitute a relatively integrated approach to tackling poverty.¹⁷

The MDGs are portrayed by the UN and aid agencies as “the most successful anti-poverty movement in history.”¹⁸ The first goal – halving extreme poverty – was been achieved five years ahead of the 2015 deadline. Data shows that more than one billion people have been lifted out of extreme poverty.¹⁹ The proportion of undernourished people in developing countries has dropped by almost half to 12.9 percent and the mortality rate of children under five has declined by more than half.²⁰ Economic growth across developing countries has, in general, been impressive: from 1950 to 2007, thirteen developing countries have experienced “economic miracles” – defined as average growth of 7 percent or more for at least 25 years, and 16 more developing countries, including some of the poorest – Ethiopia,

¹³ Harry S. Truman, “Truman's Inaugural Address, January 20, 1949,” Harry S. Truman Presidential Library & Museum. Accessed 4 March 2019.

https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/50yr_archive/inagural20jan1949.htm

¹⁴ John F. Kennedy, “John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address,” Wikisource, accessed 4 March 2019,

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/John_F._Kennedy%27s_Inaugural_Address

¹⁵ United Nations, “United Nations Millennium Declaration,” accessed 4 March 2019,

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

¹⁶ This line has been lifted twice, from US 1 dollar a day introduced in 1990 to US\$1.25 as revised in 2005, and now upped to \$1.90 (PPP 2011).

¹⁷ Jennifer Brinkerhoff, Stephen Smith and Hildy Teegen eds, *NGOs and the Millennium Development Goals: citizen action to reduce poverty* (Springer, 2007), 3-5.

¹⁸ United Nations, “MDG Momentum,” accessed 4 March 2019,

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/mdgmomentum.shtml>

¹⁹ United Nations, “Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty & Hunger,” accessed 4 March 2019,

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/poverty.shtml>

²⁰ United Nations, “The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015,” accessed 4 March 2019,

http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/MDG/english/UNDP_MDG_Report_2015.pdf

Laos and Rwanda, are projected to join this list.²¹ An important source of funding for this global effort to fight extreme poverty – official development assistance (ODA) from OECD countries, has been on the rise for decades, reaching US\$147.68 billion in 2016 and 2017.²² Spurred by optimism, world leaders gathered again in 2015, “resolved to free the human race within this generation from the tyranny of poverty and want, and to heal and secure our planet for the present and for future generations”.²³ They agreed upon an ambitious set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in which the first goal was to “end poverty in all its forms everywhere” by 2030.²⁴

1.1.2. The critical narrative

These success stories aside, the figures of extreme poverty are still daunting. The extent of this difficulty could be shown in several ways. To begin with, we have a “last-mile problem”:²⁵ eradicating the remaining portion of extreme poverty will be much harder than before. This is partly due to the uneven progress in the past. China and India have contributed nearly three quarters to the total reduction in extreme poverty head counts, lifting 770 (680 million in China and 90 million in India) million people above the extreme poverty line.²⁶ The poor people in other regions, by contrast, have been left far behind.²⁷ Currently, about 80 per cent of the extremely poor, estimated at around 736 million, is concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia.²⁸ Against the declining trend globally, the number of people below the international poverty line (IPL) in sub-Saharan Africa has actually increased.²⁹ Worse still, unlike the 85 million people who now live *just below* the IPL and could be lifted above it with relative ease, many in sub-Saharan Africa

²¹ Laurence Chandy, Hiroshi Kato and Homi Kharas, “From a Billion to Zero: Three Key Ingredients to End Extreme Poverty,” in *The Last Mile in Ending Extreme Poverty*, edited by Laurence Chandy, Hiroshi Kato and Homi Kharas (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), 10.

²² OECD, “Net ODA”, accessed 6 March 2019, <https://data.oecd.org/oda/net-oda.htm#indicator-chart>

²³ United Nations, “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” accessed 4 March 2019, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

²⁴ United Nations, “Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere,” accessed 4 March 2019. <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/>

²⁵ *Economist*, “Fewer, but still with us,” 30 March 2017, <https://www.economist.com/news/international/21719790-going-will-be-much-harder-now-world-has-made-great-progress>

²⁶ United Nations, “The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015,” accessed 4 March 2019. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

²⁷ *Economist*, “Towards the end of poverty - The world's next great leap forward,” 1 June 2013, <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21578665-nearly-1-billion-people-have-been-taken-out-extreme-poverty-20-years-world-should-aim>

²⁸ World Bank, “Taking on in Equality,” accessed 4 March 2019, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/25078/9781464809583.pdf>

²⁹ *Economist*, “Fewer, but still with us.”

live *far below* the line, with an average daily expenditure of only about 70 cents.³⁰ Among the extremely poor, more vulnerable groups – for example, children, women and the disabled – are hardest hit by destitution, and find it more difficult to alleviate their plight. Children are more than twice as likely as adults to find their basic needs under-fulfilled. Among the 385 million children below the poverty line, 16,000 children die every day while over 90 million children are underweight due to poor nutrition and face greater risks of infections.³¹ The “feminization of poverty” has also raised much concern. Women in poorer regions are less likely to find paid jobs, or, even if they do, are often paid less than men; they are often denied rights to social welfare and holding property as well. As a result, they are more likely to live in extreme poverty than men.³² In addition, people with disabilities – often underestimated in numbers, suffer from “multiple deprivations” at higher rates and “in higher breadth, depth, and severity” than persons without disabilities, and they also tend to have lower levels of education and lower employment rates.³³

It could be suggested that China has set a great example for other countries to follow, and if this miracle is repeated, eradicating extreme poverty by 2030 is by no means unrealistic. However, few countries are likely to follow China’s path. A few features highlight its uniqueness: China’s strongly effective state, led by a single political party that enjoys a high level of popular support,³⁴ was able to plan population growth and devote substantial resources to developing the primary sector, which helped raise a large rural population out of poverty;³⁵ it has a state-led gradual opening of the market while retaining many key industries in state ownership; it has remarkably little reliance on external aid and natural resources in its poverty reduction;³⁶ its economic boom happened in a peaceful geopolitical context; and it is not haunted by a colonial past. By contrast, many other developing countries are situated in conflict zones, have relatively fragile and less legitimate states, live

³⁰ *Economist*, “Poverty: Not always with us,” 1 June 2013, <http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21578643-world-has-astonishing-chance-take-billion-people-out-extreme-poverty-2030-not>. The figure of 70 cents was calculated with the older IPL, USD1.25 a day.

³¹ United Nations, “The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015.”

³² Sylvia Chant, “Re - Thinking the ‘Feminization of Poverty’ in Relation to Aggregate Gender Indices,” *Journal of Human Development* 7, no. 2 (2006/07/01 2006): 201-20.

³³ Sophie Mitra, Aleksandra Posarac, and Brandon Vick, “Disability and Poverty in Developing Countries: A Multidimensional Study,” *World Development*, 41 (1// 2013): 1-18.

³⁴ Although in the eyes of intellectuals the Chinese Communist Party lacks adequate legitimacy, repeated polls show it has enjoyed a high level of popular support. See Jinghan Zeng, “The Debate on Regime Legitimacy in China: Bridging the Wide Gulf between Western and Chinese Scholarship,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 23, no. 88 (2014/07/04 2014): 612-35.

³⁵ Jose G. Montalvo and Martin Ravallion, “The Pattern of Growth and Poverty Reduction in China,” *Journal of Comparative Economics*, 38, no. 1 (3// 2010): 2-16.

³⁶ Linda Yueh, “Is it possible to end global poverty?” *BBC*, 27 March 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-32082968>

with social institutions left by a colonial history, and are troubled by environmental degradation or cursed with rich natural resources that local warlords vie for.³⁷ While I will leave discussion of the causes of extreme poverty for the following two sections, these aforementioned differences should suffice to show that the last mile of poverty eradication will be particularly treacherous. Not only is the remaining part of the problem much thornier, but the experience of China – the exemplary country, is not easily replicable. Some economists estimate that the global poverty rate will likely drop to 8 percent in 2030, which equates to about 664 million people out of a projected 8.3 billion global population³⁸, while more optimistic projections put the number at 5.4 per cent, or 386 million people.³⁹ In either case, the SDG goal to end poverty by 2030 will not be met.

Not only is the future of eradicating global poverty bleaker than one might extrapolate from the news, but past achievements are also less impressive when examined more critically. Thomas Pogge, an outspoken critic of the MDGs, points out that the final version of MDG-1 of halving global poverty rates is the result of triple dilution following some shrewd manoeuvring in wording. MDG-1 superseded a much more ambitious commitment made by world leaders in the *1996 Rome Declaration*, which aimed to reduce “the number of extremely poor people to half its present (1996) level”.⁴⁰ By replacing “number” with *proportion*, by shifting the denominator from the *world’s people* to the *population of the developing world*, and by backdating the starting point of MDG-1 to 1990 from 2000, the watered-down MDG-1 was much easier to achieve, considering the faster population growth in developing countries, and the already-established historical poverty reduction in China between 1990 and 2000.⁴¹

Another recurrent criticism concerns the international poverty line (IPL). One would expect that as a widely used international benchmark to measure poverty, the IPL reflects a minimum nutritional and material standard that is scientifically informed. However, the IPL

³⁷ For discussion of these problems see Laurence Chandy, Hiroshi Kato and Homi Kharas eds, *The Last Mile in Ending Extreme Poverty* (Brookings Institution Press, 2015). Also Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can be Done About It* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). discusses these reasons in length.

³⁸ Yueh, “Is it possible to end global poverty?”

³⁹ Veronika Penciakova, Natasha Ledlie and Laurence Chandy, “The Final Countdown: Prospects for Ending Extreme Poverty by 2030,” *Brookings Institution*, April 2013, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/The_Final_Countdown.pdf

⁴⁰ Thomas W. Pogge, *Politics as usual: what lies behind the pro-poor rhetoric* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), 60. Emphasis in original.

⁴¹ Pogge, 60-1. And a similar criticism by the economist Martin Sandbu, “Critics question success of UN’s Millennium Development Goals,” *Financial Times*, 15 September 2015, <https://www.ft.com/content/51d1c0aa-5085-11e5-8642-453585f2cfcd>

was drawn rather arbitrarily. In 1990, the World Bank set the first IPL in history upon finding that the value of the national poverty lines in six of the poorest countries converged around \$1 (PPP 1990); the subsequent revisions (\$1.25 and \$1.90) were made with the same methodology.⁴² This line is regarded as unacceptably low – moving slightly above it will statistically exclude one from the extreme poor, but it by no means magically transforms destitution into sufficiency.⁴³ Some suggest the line should be doubled to \$2.50 per day, a standard that enables a person to achieve normal life expectancy, but this would see the population living in extreme poverty spike to about 3.1 billion – a number too inconvenient and embarrassing for the purpose of self-congratulation in the world of politics.⁴⁴

Having introduced the achievements in global poverty reduction and some critical voices and concerns, I now turn to discuss some common conceptualisations of poverty, and give a brief overview of the various explanations of extreme global poverty in the next two sections.

1.2. Understanding poverty: conceptualisation, measurements and causes

Although poverty is obvious enough to the eye, conceptualising it has never been easy nor without controversy. The understanding of poverty has undergone many changes and shifts that attempt to give more precision to measurability and include more dimensions; often, the changes adopted in official measurement and policy formulations are a result of global and national institutions jockeying out of political considerations.⁴⁵ This section is not able to document all the changes, but it will attempt to distinguish the most widely used approaches to understanding poverty today, and in this process, emphasise the multidimensionality of poverty. It also introduces how, traditionally, people believe poverty is caused.

⁴² World Bank, “FAQs: Global Poverty Line Update,” accessed 4 March 2019.

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/brief/global-poverty-line-faq>

⁴³ Peter Edward, "The Ethical Poverty Line: A Moral Quantification of Absolute Poverty," *Third World Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (2006): 377-93.

⁴⁴ Jason Hickel, “Exposing the great 'poverty reduction' lie,” *Aljazeera*, 21 August 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/08/exposing-great-poverty-reductio-201481211590729809.html>

⁴⁵ Robert Walker *et al*, "Poverty in Global Perspective: Is Shame a Common Denominator?" *Journal of Social Policy*, 42 (Apr 2013): 15-31.

1.2.1. What is poverty, and how is it measured?

The most widely adopted conceptualisation of poverty is income-based. This approach simply requires reliable statistics of a population's income level, which is often gathered through surveying based on scientifically designed sampling that asks a household's income and/or expenditures. The famous \$1-a-day, and the subsequent \$1.25 and \$1.90 poverty lines that appear in UN and World Bank reports and global development conferences are all income-based. There is an important distinction within this approach between absolute and relative poverty. Absolute, or extreme poverty as has been discussed so far, refers to the condition of people whose incomes are too low to satisfy basic human needs; relative poverty refers to the condition of people who are lower in the income scale. Thanks to the efforts of the World Bank, we have an international absolute poverty line that allow us to have a general picture of how many members of humanity still struggle to fulfil the most basic needs. Given the lack of a strong sense of global citizenship and community, the idea of relative poverty and its reduction which often requires a much more substantive redistributive commitment than the mere supply of basic goods, is confined to nation-states only, and the line differs significantly between countries.⁴⁶ Normally, the richer a country is, the higher the relative poverty line is drawn.

The income-based understanding of poverty is easier for quantification and data collection purposes, and also more convenient for producing eye-catching appeals that call for action. However, it is not satisfactory for reflecting the many dimensions of deprivation that people in poverty face but cannot easily be quantified in monetary terms – to name a few, lack of access to clean water and health care, poor education and illiteracy, a decent home, a sense of security, inclusion and respect. A more comprehensive understanding of poverty is needed to facilitate actions that reduce these non-monetary deprivations. It is for this purpose that the Human Development Index (HDI), informed by the Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen's capabilities approach, was created. Sen rejects the traditional ways of conceptualising human well-being, which are either resource-based (measuring income and asset) or utility-based (measuring happiness or desire fulfilment), and proposes another paradigm featuring "human functionings" – the various states of being and activities that a person can undertake, ranging from the most basic ones like being nourished and healthy, to more advanced ones such as taking part in community life and having a fulfilling

⁴⁶ David Hulme, *Global Poverty: Global governance and poor people in the Post-2015 Era* (Routledge, 2015), 62.

career.⁴⁷ Capabilities, in Sen's framework, refer to the real freedoms to achieve a list of functionings.⁴⁸ The HDI measures life expectancy, education and GNI per capita, which reflect the most basic human capabilities and highlights the social aspects of development, rather than merely looking at economic growth.

The capabilities approach offers a broader conceptualisation of poverty than the income-based approach, and both are suitable for setting measurable policy goals and evaluating progress. In recent years, a rights-based approach, which conceptualises poverty as a violation of human rights, has gained prominence.⁴⁹ The human rights approach is not meant to propose a better way to replace the existing measurable frameworks; rather, as an explicitly political perspective, it strengthens and complements them, advancing poverty reduction efforts by offering political and legal ammunition. Drawing on the human rights norms that enjoy a high level of international legitimacy, this approach has important advantages. The language of rights implies duties and duty-bearers. When legal obligation to reduce poverty is established and mass poverty still exists, the idea of accountability comes into play. Also, the human rights approach empowers the poor, by shifting what traditionally is regarded as their "needs" to "unfulfilled rights", and ensures that the principles of equality and non-discrimination are embodied.⁵⁰ Linking human rights to poverty further prioritises extreme poverty reduction on the policy agenda of states and the international community. In addition, framing absolute global poverty as a violation of human rights is a powerful political rhetoric. A famous argument is that since extreme poverty is a foreseeable and avoidable violation of human rights committed by our social and economic institutions, it is a crime against humanity that is comparable to the Holocaust but causes even more human deaths and suffering on a daily basis.⁵¹

⁴⁷ David A. Clark, "Capability Approach," in *The Elgar Companion to Development Studies*, ed. David Clark, (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2006), 32-44.

⁴⁸ Amartya Sen, "Development as Freedom (1999)," in J. Timmons Roberts, Amy Bellone Hite, and Nitsan Chorev eds. *The Globalization and Development Reader: Perspectives on Development and Global Change*, (John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 525-541.

⁴⁹ See how poverty can be conceived in the human rights approach see Willem Van Genugten and Camilo Perez-Bustillo, *The poverty of rights: human rights and the eradication of poverty* (Zed Books, 2001). and Thomas Pogge ed., *Freedom from poverty as a human right: who owes what to the very poor?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁵⁰ OHCHR, "Principles and Guidelines for a Human Rights Approach To Poverty Reduction Strategies," December 2006, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/PovertyStrategiesen.pdf>; also see OHCHR, "Human Rights and Poverty Reduction: A Conceptual Framework," January 2004. <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/PovertyReductionen.pdf>

⁵¹ Thomas Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights: cosmopolitan responsibilities and reforms*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity, 2008). Gwilym David Blunt has tried to find support for this argument in international law in "Is global poverty a crime against humanity?," *International Theory* 7, no. 3 (2015): 539-571.

Findings from other disciplines like sociology, anthropology and psychology contributed their unique insights to a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of being poor. For example, echoing Sen's argument that shame is at the "irreducible absolutist core of poverty", studies across cultures have found that failing to live up to the social expectation in material terms takes a heavy psychological toll – universal feelings of shame, stigma, embarrassment and low self-worth plague poor adults and children alike. Moreover, poverty creates a social distance – a powerful "us and them" binary that impedes better mutual understanding between social classes and erodes social capital.⁵² It is also found that contrary to the disparaging yet popular myth that poorer people owe their unfortunate situation to lower intelligence and laziness, the causal link is the other way around: the never-ending concern about material scarcity takes up considerable brain space and attention, and reduces the cognitive resources available to make well-informed long-term plans.⁵³

1.2.2. What causes poverty?

It is naturally controversial and difficult to explain why a problem as complex as poverty exists. The identification of different causal factors and the weight attributed to each is influenced by one's ideological position and the historical context, and until today, there is still no consensus on what causes global poverty. Katz's archaeology of the idea of poverty through the literature usefully points to six factors:⁵⁴

- Persons. Poverty is the outcome of the failings of individuals or families.
- Places. Poverty results from toxic conditions within geographic spaces.
- Resources. Poverty is the absence of money and other key resources.
- Political economy. Poverty is the by-product of capitalist economies.
- Power. Poverty is a consequence of political powerlessness.

⁵² Elaine Chase and Grace Bantebya-Kyomuhendo eds., *Poverty and Shame: Global Experiences*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁵³ Sendhil Mullainathan and Eldar Shafir, *Scarcity: Why having too little means so much*, (Macmillan, 2013). Anandi Mani, Sendhil Mullainathan, Eldar Shafir, and Jiaying Zhao, "Poverty Impedes Cognitive Function," *Science* 341, no. 6149 (2013-08-30 00:00:00 2013): 976-80.

⁵⁴ Michael B. Katz, "What Kind of Problem Is Poverty? The Archeology of an Idea," in *Territories of Poverty*, eds. Ananya Roy and Emma Shaw Crane (University of Georgia Press, 2015), 39-78. The 'political economy' category and the 'markets' category might seem to be similar, but note that whereas the 'political economy' category sees the poor as casualties of a vigorously competitive capitalist economy, the 'markets' category treats poverty as the result of insufficiently vigorous markets.

- Markets. Poverty reflects the absence of functioning markets or the failure to use the potential of markets to improve individual lives.

The six factors underpin the majority of theories that attempt to explain extreme poverty and propose solutions. Here, I will briefly look at some highly influential theories that give relatively simplistic explanations as well as solutions, and in the next section I turn to accounts that prescribe more nuanced solutions.⁵⁵ None of the theories are immune to criticism, but I do not intend to evaluate their validity in detail. Rather, the purpose of this overview is to provide a deeper understanding of poverty, and more importantly, to lay the groundwork to introduce several kinds of poverty-reduction approaches in section 1.5, where I shall argue that informed and active citizens in developed countries could play an indispensable role in almost all these solutions.

Traditionally, theories of poverty were underpinned by a narrow individualism that could trace its intellectual roots to the industrial revolution. According to classical economists, poverty is caused by idleness, improvidence, insobriety, problematic parental upbringing, and its solutions lie in repairing these individual defects and cultivating discipline and new attitudes.⁵⁶ In the second half of the 20th century, three strands of “grand theories” went beyond the “persons” factor, and elements such as the structure of labour market, the different social expectations and rights of men and women, and the national redistributive mechanisms were brought into consideration by neo-Keynesian theorists, feminists, Marxists and development theorists.⁵⁷ Modernisation theory, popular from the 1950s to the 1960s, argued that poverty was the result of traditional social structures and the failure to adopt more modern practices and technologies; the solution to underdevelopment lies naturally in quickening the transition from the “traditional” to the “modern”.⁵⁸ However, many believe this process is held back by cultural factors, such as religion, attitude to work, wealth and justice, tolerance of corruption and nepotism in politics.⁵⁹ Modernisation theory was critiqued by dependency theorists, who observed that the developing countries were integrated into the world economic system in a way that allowed them – the periphery, to be exploited by the core – the developed countries. To correct the problem, the state needs to use economic instruments such as tariffs in order to develop a more autonomous

⁵⁵ Hulme’s *Global Poverty* offers a rather detailed overview of major theories of global poverty in Chapter 2.

⁵⁶ Peter Townsend, *The International Analysis of Poverty* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 97-101.

⁵⁷ Townsend, *The International Analysis of Poverty*.

⁵⁸ For example, Henry Bernstein, "Modernization Theory and the Sociological Study of Development." *Journal of Development Studies* 7, no. 2 (1971): 141-60.

⁵⁹ Lawrence E. Harrison, "Culture matters," *National Interest* 60 (2000): 55-65.

domestic economy.⁶⁰ Dependency theories later faded as the socialist economies collapsed, giving centre stage to neo-liberal theories, which argue that poverty results from a lack of economic growth, typically when markets are controlled or distorted by the state; the solution, correspondingly, is to open up market to let trade revive economy, which will then trickle down to address poverty.⁶¹ Neo-liberal theories became rather dominant in the 1980s and 1990s, and led the US, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to advocate for a “Washington Consensus growth model” that championed policies in favour of free market and against state regulation.⁶² However, the model received increasing criticism, due to both Russia’s quick economic downturn in the 1990s after adopting free market policies, and China and India’s economic rise after a state-controlled, gradual opening-up of markets.⁶³

These theories primarily look to individual and domestic factors to explain and propose solutions to poverty in developing countries. In the next section, after I discuss the potential problems the term “global poverty” could bring, I argue that its usage beneficially highlights the international causes and directs attention to the moral side of the issue.

1.3. The idea of “global poverty”

The idea of global poverty is, upon reflection, a curious notion. After all, we do not live under a cosmopolitan world state, and poverty connotes vastly different things in different nations, with each nation having its unique political, economic, cultural and historical contexts that combine to cause it. It is true that poor people across all cultures share similarly dire need for food, clean water and other necessities, but drawing an arbitrary poverty line globally, pooling these populations together and declaring war on a heavily de-contextualized “global poverty” as if it were one single chunk of a problem seems to mask the complexity and diversity of poverty in different places and forms. After all, culture and poverty have been shown to be intricately related. Cultural values and practices in different communities play important roles in formulating causal explanations of poverty, and conversely, poverty produces varying social consequences in different cultural contexts,

⁶⁰ Matias Vernengo, "Technology, Finance, and Dependency: Latin American Radical Political Economy in Retrospect," *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 38, no. 4 (2006): 551-68.

⁶¹ Lal, *Poverty and Progress*.

⁶² Hulme, *Global Poverty*, 72-3.

⁶³ Hulme, 72-3.

which may in turn exacerbate, perpetuate, or be used to alleviate poverty.⁶⁴ Using the concept of global poverty, therefore, can be problematic as it invites over-simplifications in both explaining extreme poverty and making policy prescriptions to reduce it. Additionally, it tends to over-emphasise the role of global institutions while giving too little attention to national institutions.⁶⁵ Critical scholars even argue that it is exactly because of such disadvantages that the idea of global poverty gained momentum: in the late 1990s, global institutions of neoliberal tendencies, exemplified by the World Bank and IMF, pushed the problem of global poverty to the political agenda of the UN and dominated the discourse, so that other social and political alternatives remain shadowed by the neoliberal global order.⁶⁶ The concept of global poverty, for many critics, is “a product that is intimately related to structures of power and overt and covert processes of political contestation”.⁶⁷ St Clair’s critique nicely captures the problem with this concept:

Global poverty is highly contested and politicized. It is an ill-structured and complex social problem able to be defined in different ways, the problem space changing with time and location, and the causal arguments being slippery and difficult to establish. Poverty definitions are not accounts of fact, but rather are “fact-surrogates” [, which] are partial pictures drawn with the cognitive tools of particular disciplines.... In addition, not only are descriptions of what poverty is value laden, but so also are prescriptions as to what are the best possible ways to reduce it.⁶⁸

While global poverty could be a problematic concept, it does not necessarily follow that we should avoid its usage – rather, we could use it, bearing these concerns in mind, as long as the concept brings unique advantages. As I will try to demonstrate, putting poverty in the global context does have two important benefits that merit the concept’s quick ascent in popularity in recent decades.

One advantage is methodological. Social sciences research has been dominated by what some sociologists call “methodological nationalism”, which naturalises nation-states and

⁶⁴ For a good discussion on the relationships between culture and diversity see Michèle Lamont and Mario Luis Small, "Cultural Diversity and Anti-Poverty Policy," *International Social Science Journal* 61, no. 199 (2010): 169-80.

⁶⁵ Hulme, *Global Poverty*, 58-9.

⁶⁶ Heloise Weber, “Reconstituting the Third World: Poverty Reduction and Territoriality in the Global Politics of Development,” *Third World Quarterly* 25 (1): 187-206; also see Alain Noël, "The new global politics of poverty," *Global Social Policy* 6, no. 3 (2006): 304-333.

⁶⁷ Hulme, *Global Poverty*, 56.

⁶⁸ Asunción Lera St Clair, "Global Poverty: The Co-Production of Knowledge and Politics," *Global Social Policy* 6, no. 1 (2006): 59-60.

confines the study of social issues like inequality and migration within nations.⁶⁹ However, the boundaries between what is national and international are increasingly blurred, and the nation-state is no longer a homogeneous unit. As a result, social sciences need a more “cosmopolitan outlook” to re-examine its fundamental concepts like family, social inequality, power and so on, in order to release them from the “fetters” of methodological nationalism.⁷⁰ This critique, applied in the case of poverty, is similar to the objections Thomas Pogge raises against “explanatory nationalism” – the tendency to see nation as the natural unit in which poverty can be explained and addressed. Poverty is analysed by empirically collecting and comparing local and national factors such as environmental and natural resources, economic policies, culture and history, but inadequate attention is given to international factors.⁷¹ As has been shown, two of the three “grand theories” attribute poverty to national causes: modernisation theory blames a country’s slow adaption to the modern world, and neo-liberal theory blames a country’s lack of market freedom; although dependency theorists sees a problem in the power imbalance in the global economic system, some believe the solution is still a national one.⁷² Political theorists have similar tendencies. For example, John Rawls, in his influential *The Law of Peoples*, proposes that the political culture of a nation, which he understands to include “the political virtues and civic society of the country, its members' probity and industriousness” and their innovative spirit, is a crucial determinant of a country’s affluence.⁷³

Explanatory nationalism is deeply problematic. In a world where “the traffic of international and intra-national economic transactions is profoundly shaped by an elaborate system of treaties and conventions about trade, investments, loans, patents, copyrights, trademarks, double taxation, labour standards, environmental protection, use of seabed resources, and much else”, it is hard to believe that a different institutional arrangement among an infinite range of possible alternatives would still permit hundreds of millions of people to live in absolute poverty.⁷⁴ The concept of global poverty has the merit of directing the explanatory focus of poverty to international causes. To do so is not to deny

⁶⁹ For example, Ulrich Beck, "Cosmopolitanism as imagined communities of global risk," *American Behavioural Scientist* 55, no. 10 (2011), 1346-1361; Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, "Methodological nationalism, the social sciences, and the study of migration: An essay in historical epistemology," *International Migration Review* 37, no. 3 (2003): 576-610.

⁷⁰ Ulrich Beck and Natan Sznaider, "Unpacking cosmopolitanism for the social sciences: a research agenda," *British Journal of Sociology* 61 (2010): 381-403.

⁷¹ Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, 17, 116-8.

⁷² Vernengo, “Technology, Finance, and Dependency.”

⁷³ John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples: with The idea of public reason revisited* (Harvard University Press, 1999), 108.

⁷⁴ Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, 18.

the significant causal role of national factors, but to push the explanation to a deeper level and ask: admittedly, the national factors such as corrupt and oppressive governance contribute to poverty, but how do they take shape and perpetuate themselves? Do the global institutions provide incentives for and safeguard these national factors⁷⁵? As Townsend argued as early as 1993, more complex theories that account for both national and international factors are needed:

International institutions do more than provide a context...they initiate, guide, influence, and determine as well. A full account has also to be given of the national as well as international institutions which (i) produce, disseminate and control resources and (ii) establish the norms of social association and activity.⁷⁶

Recent theories of global poverty do exhibit a higher level of sophistication, in that they (1) identify multiple causal factors, (2) do not blame or praise global capitalism one-sidedly, (3) give more attention to historical factors and (4) consider the roles of the state, domestic institutions and/or class relations.⁷⁷ Given the limited space and the purpose of the chapter, I could not examine these complex theories. Instead, I will only mention two points. First, over two decades after the concept of global poverty was first adopted, a consensus has now formed within academia that the international economic order, largely formulated and advanced by the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO, “is a major contributor to the persistence of poverty, and even a cause of it”; more specifically, the asymmetry of power in determining priorities of global economic institutions, the free market model of economic growth, unfair trade agreements and intellectual property rights regimes are the main culprits.⁷⁸ Second, although the international economic order is problematic, its impact on individual countries is different. Consequently, eradicating extreme poverty needs to consider the interaction between local, national, and international factors, and requires an “organized assault”.⁷⁹ I shall leave more specific approaches to combat poverty till the next section though, and now continue to discuss the merits of the conception of global poverty at this point.

⁷⁵ Pogge, 117-8

⁷⁶ Townsend, *The International Analysis of Poverty*, 102.

⁷⁷ Hulme, *Global Poverty*, 78; he surveys a range of recent books on global poverty

⁷⁸ Alberto D. Cimadamore and Lynda Lange, "The Global poverty consensus report," *Academics Stand Against Poverty (ASAP) & Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (CROP)*, September 2015, <http://academicsstand.org/wp-content/uploads/2015-09-GPCReport.pdf>

⁷⁹ Hulme, *Global Poverty*, 71.

The second merit of using the concept of global poverty is that it has a strong normative implication, extending the spheres of our moral obligation beyond national borders. For the comfortable residents in the global North, poverty, in the absolute sense, is hardly ever a part of their life. It sounds like a distant issue that should be the concern of economists and political scientists, who study it with value-neutral methods and produce policy recommendations to politicians and local governments. The modifier “global” adds an extra ethical perspective to poverty that used to elude our attention – it reminds people of the simple yet often ignored fact that we are all members of humanity, regardless of race and nationality, that despite different cultural traditions and values, we all share basic human needs, which some of our fellow members find seriously under-fulfilled. It may seem misplaced to invite a middle-class American or a Norwegian to reflect on his moral duties to help an extremely poor Congolese, but it makes much more sense to ask a person of reasonable wealth to consider if he owes duties to help a fellow impoverished human being who happens to be born in a country in sub-Saharan Africa. The ethical pull grows even stronger when issues of justice are taken into consideration. As Pogge notes, one important reason for our continued acquiescence in mass poverty is that poverty, when attributed to national and local factors alone, does not seem to be anything more than a charity issue. But once we see how global institutions, from which well-off individuals benefit, harm the poor and perpetuate their destitution, the duty of the well-off to the extremely poor becomes more demanding: it changes from a combination of weak positive duty to help and a negative duty not to harm, to remedial duties to make up for past wrongs and prevent avoidable harms.⁸⁰

1.4. Reducing global poverty: the one common factor underlying different approaches

It is a familiar claim to residents in developed countries that they can make a difference and save lives. Such claims are often made by humanitarian NGOs and are normally understood as a solicitation for private donations. While donating money to support humanitarian causes does help the needy and save lives, it is neither the only, nor the most important way Northern citizens can make a difference. There is far more they could achieve. In this section, I will introduce effective and potentially effective approaches to combat global poverty and argue that one common factor underpins many of these approaches: active,

⁸⁰ Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, 2008; More of Pogge’s arguments will be discussed in the next chapter.

supportive, informed and critical publics. I shall roughly divide the poverty-reduction approaches into three categories, and within each discuss how the Northern publics could be a positive, sometimes crucial, influence. Then, I discuss a fourth category, where other issues such as climate change affect poverty reduction efforts.

1.4.1 Approaches that have proven to work well

- Economic growth and gainful employment

It has been empirically established that economic growth is a necessary but insufficient factor for poverty reduction.⁸¹ Economic growth creates jobs that become a major source of income for households. These jobs then raise tax revenue, enabling the state to provide better basic education, health care, treated water, and a variety of employment programs; furthermore, sustained, strong economic growth produces virtuous cycles where society becomes more cohesive with a more employed population and pressures the government to improve institutions and governance. In turn, this stimulates further economic growth.⁸² In developing countries, 57 percent of the extreme poor are of working age (aged 15-64). These people are not completely unemployed and idle all the time. Rather, they predominantly hold vulnerable jobs (e.g. own-account workers, family workers and informal or casual workers) instead of stable wage and salaried jobs.⁸³ It is clear from these statistics that more wage and salaried jobs need to be created that offer more stable income flows to permanently lift households above poverty lines. While local and national economic policies and labour market regulations are important in generating more jobs, individual entrepreneurship and a reliable source of investment could also be key. This is where northern publics could become influential: they could invest in the microfinance industry that provides funds to help start and expand micro-enterprises.⁸⁴ Also, those with rich entrepreneurial experience may have a better knowledge of low-income and middle-income countries and may spot gaps in the local market, start businesses and create jobs.

⁸¹ International Labour Organization (ILO), *World Employment and Social Outlook 2016: Transforming Jobs to End Poverty*, 19 May 2016, https://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/weso/2016-transforming-jobs/WCMS_481534/lang--en/index.htm

⁸² ILO, 94.

⁸³ ILO, 11; Chandy, Kato and Kharas, *From a Billion to Zero*, 15.

⁸⁴ Emmanuel K. Tetteh, Godfred Frempong, Nelson Obirih-Opareh and Omari Rose, "Does Microcredit Create Employment For the Poor? The Case of the Microcredit Scheme of Upper Manya Krobo Rural Bank in Ghana," *Business and Economics Journal* 7, no. 190 (2015): 1-9.

- Empowerment and active citizens:

Mere economic growth does not equate to more jobs that offer stable and decent wages. The informal economy, characterised by lack of contracts and benefits, meagre or unstable wages and lack of labour law coverage, has boomed in recent years.⁸⁵ Due to a lack of legal contract and formal means of remuneration, the state is often unable to tax the informal economy, and workers have weaker bargaining power when their rights are infringed.⁸⁶ Besides vulnerable workers in the informal sector, marginalised groups, such as women, ethnic and cultural minorities, and the disabled, tend to experience different kinds of discrimination, and could be left out of economic growth. Since their poverty is at least partly due to powerlessness – the lack of ability to control one’s life, the effective measure is empowerment. Different conceptualisations of empowerment share the common feature of allowing a marginalised group to improve its position and to gain more agency.⁸⁷ One important strategy of empowerment is to exercise civil and political rights, form associations and participate in decision-making.⁸⁸ For example, workers in the informal economy can join trade unions, which can then collectively pressure the state to better regulate the labour market and secure better working conditions.⁸⁹ Women have been the exemplary beneficiaries of empowerment strategies. In 2004, for example, women in Morocco won an important legislative battle after years of civil movement when the parliament unanimously passed a new Islamic family law that granted women the right to decide legal matters without male guardianship.⁹⁰

What could Northern publics do to help with empowerment of marginalised groups in developing countries? The road to securing civil and political rights is often fraught with resistance – religious and cultural pressure, and political and legal risks are not uncommon. In a world where information flows across borders instantly, transnational human rights alliances have proved to be effective in overcoming these obstacles. Global campaigns against apartheid and use of landmines, for instance, have achieved considerable success by channelling media exposure and public attention into political and diplomatic pressure.

⁸⁵ Brock, "Global Poverty, Decent Work, and Remedial Responsibilities."

⁸⁶ Brock, 128; ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook 2016*.

⁸⁷ Trommlerová, Klasenb and Leßmann, "Determinants of empowerment in a capability-based poverty approach: Evidence from The Gambia." For a more in-depth discussion on the definition of empowerment, see Ibrahim and Alkire, "Agency and empowerment: A proposal for internationally comparable indicators."

⁸⁸ Green, *From poverty to power: How active citizens and effective states can change the world*.

⁸⁹ Gillian Brock, "Global Poverty, Decent Work, and Remedial Responsibilities," *Poverty, agency, and human rights* (2014): 128.

⁹⁰ Duncan Green, *From poverty to power: How active citizens and effective states can change the world*, (Oxfam, 2012), 55.

Such transnational activism cannot thrive without active citizens committed to human rights in the global North. Granted, transnational advocacy groups need to compete for limited attention and some lament that this is a “zero-sum game”, with some issues getting noticed and others overlooked.⁹¹ However, what if we expand the “sum”, i.e., drawing more otherwise indifferent citizens into the game? With an increasing number of concerned citizens desiring more information, media would be incentivized to give more coverage to human rights issues in poor countries, which in turn attract more public attention. In addition to transnational alliance, the northern publics could be a part of international efforts to empower specific groups through their consumption choices. For example, they could identify and support businesses they are part of the Ethical Trading Initiative, which protects the rights of workers in global supply chains.⁹² The northern publics could support poverty-reduction strategies that specifically target those groups as well, through direct donations.

- Reducing intra-societal inequality

In some cases economic growth fails to incorporate the worst-off in society, leading to widening inequalities that distort the economic institutions and policies to the disadvantage of the poor as the rich and powerful seek to advance their interests.⁹³ It is now widely believed that reducing inequality should become an integral part of development for two reasons:⁹⁴ on one hand, abundant evidence shows that narrowing income inequality, coupled with economic growth, proves to be the most successful solution to poverty, and that less inequality promotes further economic growth; on the other hand, now that a rather large proportion of the extreme poor live in middle-income countries such as India, China and Nigeria,⁹⁵ the critical strategy to help them escape extreme poverty is to reform the

⁹¹ A. Trevor Thrall Dominik Stecula, and Diana Sweet, “May We Have Your Attention Please? Human-Rights NGOs and the Problem of Global Communication,” *International Journal of Press/Politics* 19, no. 2 (April 2014): 135–59.

⁹² Brock, “Global Poverty, Decent Work, and Remedial Responsibilities,” 129.

⁹³ Roger Riddell, “Navigating between extremes: Academics helping to eradicate global poverty,” *Ethics & International Affairs*, 26, no. 2 (2012): 217-243.

⁹⁴ An MDG summit held in 2010, which consulted 27 participants from the UN, national governments and development NGOs concluded that “inequalities are the drivers of vulnerability and poverty.” See Dolf Te Lintelo, “Inequality and Social Justice - Roundtable Consultation,” *Institute of Development Studies*, September 2011, <http://www.mdgfund.org/sites/default/files/Inequality%20Roundtable%20report.pdf>

⁹⁵ Data in 2015 shows that 457 million of the extreme poor are located in middle-income countries whereas 256 million are in low-income countries, primarily in sub-Saharan Africa. See Rohini Pande, Vestal McIntyre and Lucy Page, “A New Home for Extreme Poverty: Middle-Income Countries: Aid doesn’t reach the majority of the poor,” 28 January 2019, *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/28/opinion/inequality-poverty-global-aid.html>

domestic economic system, so that it no longer unfairly benefits the better off, but prioritises the interests of the poor.⁹⁶

Reducing domestic inequality in development may seem out of reach for the Northern publics, but this is not so. As Riddell points out, official development aid provided to these middle-income countries could encourage them to “perpetuate prevailing public finance allocation priorities and the funding of non-poverty-reducing activities”.⁹⁷ Local consultation in recipient countries should in general be preferred when determining aid expenditure. However, in cases where local political participation is limited, informed citizens in developed countries could work together with the poor and marginalised in developing countries to urge the donor states to distinguish between aid given to low-income countries and aid to middle-income countries, and require the latter to be used to produce policies that benefit those most in need. This is only one of the problems with official aid, and more will be said on this subject later.

- Effective state

Having an effective state is key to poverty reduction for a variety of reasons. It provides key goods like health care, education, and infrastructure over the long run; it ensures the rule of law and maintains a legitimate police force to guarantee social stability; it regulates the economy, and its policies affect economic growth and determine who benefits.⁹⁸ But how does building an effective state relate to citizens in the North? A large proportion of poor people live in fragile states, which are characterised by poor governance, lack of a peaceful environment, weak rule of law, and underdeveloped institutions.⁹⁹ The OECD countries have, over the past fifteen years, included the building of “effective, legitimate and resilient states” as one of its central objectives in development.¹⁰⁰ However, as Riddell points out, fragile states pose an acute dilemma for aid. It is in these states that aid is needed the most, yet it is also there that aid tends to be less effective. If state-building is indeed a priority task, donor countries should *expect* and allow for some degree of ineffectiveness.¹⁰¹ In reality, such expectations cause reluctance on the part of policy makers in rich countries to aid the most fragile states. Consequently, about 60 percent of all

⁹⁶ Riddell, “Navigating between extremes,” 217-243.

⁹⁷ Riddell, 225.

⁹⁸ Green, *From poverty to power*; Brock, “Global Poverty, Decent Work, and Remedial Responsibilities.”

⁹⁹ Green, *From poverty to power*, 281; Chandy, Kato and Kharas, “From a Billion to Zero,” 14.

¹⁰⁰ Bruce Jones *et al*, “Concepts and dilemmas of state building in fragile situations: from fragility to resilience,” *OECD Journal on Development*. 9 (2008): 61-148.

¹⁰¹ Riddell, “Navigating between extremes,” 226.

ODA is given not to the poorest countries, but to middle-income countries whose better governance, rule of law and more vigorous private sector make aid more effective.¹⁰² If the northern publics understand well that there is no quick fix to extreme poverty in low-income, fragile states, they can be expected to have a healthy dose of patience. Official development agencies will also be more willing to invest in state building in fragile states, if they know doing so is not likely to spark public outrage and be accused of wasting aid money.

1.4.2 Approaches that could work better: foreign aid

Against the rather common perception that aid does not work, evidence does show that the impact of aid is in general positive. About 75 per cent of aid projects achieve their intended, immediate objectives, despite the fact that a sustained input of aid equivalent to about 10% of recipient-country gross domestic product (GDP) only raises its GDP by 1%.¹⁰³ I have already mentioned two problems with aid so far in this section. To recapitulate, much of ODA is not given to the poorest and most fragile countries, because of concern over ineffectiveness; the ODA that goes to middle-income countries could end up failing to reach the worst off and perpetuate domestic inequality. These two problems are part of, or related to, other problems of the foreign aid system, which I discuss in more detail now.

One major problem with the current foreign aid system is its volatility and unpredictability.¹⁰⁴ With foreign aid being a system of voluntary giving, it is the donor countries who decide the volume of aid, and the criteria is not based on needs nor the extent of poverty, but often on their own political and economic interests.¹⁰⁵ Foreign aid therefore often comes with conditions attached, the most notable one being aid in exchange for support for the donor country's foreign policy. According to a recent study of European Union's aid, if donor country's political interests were excluded and poverty reduction had been indeed the sole consideration, 70% of aid should have been re-allocated.¹⁰⁶ The volatility and unpredictability of aid makes it hard for developing countries to incorporate aid funds into their expenditure and decreases its efficiency and beneficial impact.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Roger Riddell, *Does foreign aid really work?* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 104.

¹⁰³ Roger Riddell, "Does foreign aid really work? An updated assessment," *Development Policy Centre Discussion Paper 33*, March 1, 2014: 7.

¹⁰⁴ Riddell, "An updated assessment," 24-6.

¹⁰⁵ Riddell, 24-6.

¹⁰⁶ Arne Bigsten and Sven Tengstam, "The aid effectiveness agenda: The benefits of going ahead," *Turin: SOGES SpA for the European Commission* (2011).

¹⁰⁷ Bigsten and Tengstam, "The aid effectiveness agenda."

The unorganised, voluntary system of foreign aid also results in donor proliferation and fragmentation of aid into discrete projects.¹⁰⁸ This increases the administration costs for recipient countries produced by receiving frequent visits from donor countries, participating regularly in conferences and writing reports. One study shows that in 2005, Vietnam had to receive on average two donor missions per day and in some parts of Tanzania, 25 percent of health workers' working time went towards writing reports.¹⁰⁹ Inefficiencies caused by proliferation in donor numbers and the fragmentation of aid projects exert a cost between two and five billion euros, estimated by an EU report that examined 65 percent of all ODA.¹¹⁰

Another problem with aid is short-termism. Longer-term projects that could produce the most overall benefits do not necessarily have positive short-term impacts.¹¹¹ Aid projects used to be long-term, typically 10 years in length before the 1990s; yet in recent years, aid programs tend to be much shorter and in order to implement the MDGs, public service delivery was prioritised over institution building.¹¹² The excessive focus on short-term output has impeded long-term development, and the aggregate of aid projects that have immediate positive impact end up having perverse effects on local institutions, as is evident in several recent studies.¹¹³

The last problem with aid is corruption, or more accurately, a largely unsubstantiated concern regarding corruption. In fact, there is a lack of concrete evidence to show aid funds are misappropriated except for a few exposed cases.¹¹⁴ Yet corruption is still a dominant concern for donor countries, and a major reason underlying the northern publics' distrust of foreign aid.¹¹⁵ This partly explains the reluctance of giving aid to the most fragile states, which are often more likely to be corruption-ridden. It must be admitted that many states of developing countries are not genuinely democratic – their leaders may not be elected into office, or if there are elections, the democratic procedures might be severely compromised by cronyism and corruption, or there may not be adequate mechanisms to hold the political

¹⁰⁸ Riddell, "An updated assessment," 26-8.

¹⁰⁹ Riddell, 26-8.

¹¹⁰ Riddell, 26-8.

¹¹¹ Riddell, 34.

¹¹² Andrew Natsios, "The clash of the Counter-bureaucracy and Development." *Centre for Global Development*, July 2010, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/118483/file_Natsios_Counterbureaucracy.pdf

¹¹³ See Riddell, "An updated assessment," 34-5 for more details on these studies.

¹¹⁴ Riddell, 22.

¹¹⁵ Monika Bauhr, Nicholas Charron and Naghmeh Nasiritousi, "Does corruption cause aid fatigue? Public opinion and the aid-corruption paradox," *International Studies Quarterly*, 57(3), (2013): 568-579.

elites accountable. While political change toward the democratic direction should be the preferable option in the long run, in the short run Northern countries cannot avoid handing out aid or forming development partnerships with dictatorships and corrupt governments. There have been some measures to tackle this issue. For example, donor countries have required recipient countries to follow the development paths they design, rather than enabling the developing countries to take charge. In other cases, the donor countries control the funds themselves. More recently, aid tends to be channelled into projects that are more likely to be free of corruption and could produce immediate, material effects, such as handing out bed-nets, universal immunisation programs, or clean water initiatives.¹¹⁶ However, all these measures have important deficiencies, the most important being that the whole aid system is still “owned” by donor countries, while the recipient country lacks adequate power to implement development strategies more suited to the local conditions.¹¹⁷ However, one simple and pragmatic approach could both give the recipient country more control of aid funds, and reduce the public concern for the misappropriation of funds: transparency. As Raymond Baker suggested, a quick fix to corruption is simply to “publish the contract”.¹¹⁸ It is far from costly for recipient countries to make details of how the money is planned to be spent and how it is spent transparent. Some degree of public pressure is necessary to achieve the desired transparency.

The above discussion has shown that aid is ridden with problems and requires change or even radical reform. Active participation of the Northern publics in this process could pressure official aid agencies into a variety of things: meet their foreign aid target of 0.7 percent of gross national income (the average figure stands around 0.31 percent in recent years),¹¹⁹ design longer development programs, ensure a more steady flow of aid into specific recipient countries, allocate more funds to fragile states, earmark aid funds that go to middle-income countries to reduce inequality, and exert pressure on developing countries – democratic or not, to maintain transparency. A more efficient and better coordinated aid system could surely be a big step forward in eradicating extreme poverty.

1.4.3 Transformative changes that have yet to happen

¹¹⁶ Riddell, “An updated assessment,” 16-21.

¹¹⁷ Riddell, 16-21.

¹¹⁸ Cimadamore and Lange, “The Global poverty consensus report.”

¹¹⁹ OECD, “Net ODA.”

The overview of theories of poverty in the last two sections have shown that extreme global poverty is caused both by local, national and global factors. Therefore, it is not enough to focus only on improving or reforming the national economy, empowering individuals, or better allocating aid. Fully eradicating extreme poverty requires some effort to change the international institutions, which serve as background conditions that tolerate, enable and even promote causes of poverty at more local levels.

Thomas Pogge has given two well-known examples of the problematic global economic order: the international resource privilege and the international borrowing privilege. I will summarise these two examples quickly and leave a more detailed discussion of his arguments to the next chapter. Both issues perpetuate extreme poverty at a local level in the following ways. The current international system recognises any group in control of predominant coercive means in a country as its legitimate government, regardless of how it acquires and exercises power. Consequently, the ruling group is conferred with the privileges to borrow in the country's name and to dispose of natural resources in its territory. These privileges then create the incentives for coups and civil wars in attempts to seize power.¹²⁰ Over time, as these countries try to develop, they are unjustly burdened with heavy debts borrowed by previous illegitimate governments and find the ownership rights of their natural resources transferred to other groups.¹²¹ Besides these two examples, another instance of the unjust global economic order is the international intellectual property regime, which problematically prioritises the legal protection of profiting from pharmaceutical patents over the dire medical needs of hundreds of millions of poor people.¹²²

Radical reforms of the global economic or financial order that are both feasible and relatively inexpensive to implement have been proposed by some to raise adequate revenue to meet basic human needs. The Nobel Laureate James Tobin proposed a 1 percent currency transaction tax that levies all speculative currency transfers and could better stabilise the financial environment for smaller countries;¹²³ Thomas Pogge has proposed a Global Resources Dividend, which, regarding natural resources as the property of all humanity, requires all countries to pay a dividend for extracting them in their territories;¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Pogge, *World poverty and human rights*, 118-123.

¹²¹ Pogge, 118-123.

¹²² Pogge, 222-261.

¹²³ James Tobin, "A currency transactions tax, why and how," *Open economies review* 7, no. 1 (1996): 493-499. On the effectiveness of Tobin Tax and other similar transaction taxes, see Neil McCulloch and Grazia Pacillo, "The Tobin tax: a review of the evidence," *IDS Research Reports* 2011, no. 68 (2011): 1-77.

¹²⁴ Pogge, *World poverty and human rights*.

Tom Campbell believes a Global Humanitarian Levy, which progressively taxes the income of all wealthy individuals, is an appropriate way to force the better-off population to fulfil their humanitarian duties.¹²⁵ Any of these proposals, if translated into concrete policies, would raise a sizeable and sustainable amount of money to eradicate poverty for good. However, given that the developed countries and wealthy individuals would be inclined to protect their immediate economic interests, such revolutionary reforms can never even be considered by Northern states unless there is strong public demand from informed citizens.

1.4.4 Other issues: Peace, climate change, immigration

The complex and multidimensional nature of poverty means it is far from a stand-alone issue. Here, I briefly look at the relationship between poverty and three other issues – peace, immigration and climate change, before concluding this section.

- Peace: there is clear evidence that poor countries tend to be less peaceful.¹²⁶ Poverty directly triggers conflict as groups vie for limited resources; for those who have nothing to lose, poverty lowers the opportunity cost of resorting to violent means.¹²⁷ Conflict, in turn, destroys infrastructure and other valuable natural and human resources that are vital for economic prosperity; they also create uncertainty, thus inclining people towards shorter time horizons and discouraging investment.¹²⁸
- Immigration: An increasing number of skilled workers now leave developing countries to settle in Northern countries in search of a better life. While skilled migration may be beneficial from an individual perspective, and despite some of its positive impacts, mass emigration of skilled workers might not be in the interest of global justice, when it leads to financial losses (training cost and tax revenue), loss of important skills and services, and loss of institution-building assets in their home countries.¹²⁹ This makes sustainable economic growth harder. This “brain drain”

¹²⁵ Tom Campbell, “Poverty as a violation of Human Rights: Inhumanity or Injustice,” in Thomas Pogge ed. *Freedom from poverty as a human right—Who owes what to the very poor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 55-74.

¹²⁶ James D. Fearon, “Governance and Civil War Onset,” *World Bank*, 2011, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/9123>.

¹²⁷ Chandy, Kato and Kharas, “From a Billion to Zero,” 12-5.

¹²⁸ Chandy, Kato and Kharas, 12-5.

¹²⁹ Gillian Brock, “Debating brain drain: An overview,” *Moral Philosophy and Politics* 3, no. 1 (2016): 11

phenomenon often unjustly benefits developed countries at the expense of developing nations and requires effort from both sides.¹³⁰

- Climate change: Climate change, it seems, has become an unavoidable reality. We can try to adapt to it on the one hand, and strive to make quick, substantial cuts in greenhouse gas emissions in the future and on the other hand, to stabilise the climate. A warmer Earth is likely to see agricultural output reduce, which affects millions of poor people whose limited income comes from farming; climate change-induced extreme weather conditions – more frequent droughts, hurricanes and floods will harm the most vulnerable the hardest.¹³¹

These are all important yet deeply divisive political issues, and individuals concerned with global poverty, or global justice in general, need to make well-informed decisions on which side to take. Collectively, they could pressure their own democratic governments to behave more ethically in these issues and many others, and also to assess the impact of their policies more broadly, in a way that give the interests of non-nationals more weight. Consider how American citizens could have opposed the invasion of Iraq, or supported devoting more resources into building a legitimate, stable and democratic government after the Saddam regime rather than leaving a power vacuum; or how citizens in developed countries could fight back against climate change sceptics or nationalist zealots. There is no doubt that the attitudes and actions in the North can have global impact.

1.5 “Politics, politics, politics”

I have tried to show in this chapter that while we have made significant progress in reducing extreme global poverty, its eradication in the coming decade, as promised in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, will require considerable changes on multiple fronts to address the intricacies of this avoidable calamity in an affluent world. In a globalised

¹³⁰ Gillian Brock, *Global justice: A cosmopolitan account* (Oxford University Press, 2009):198-207. She discusses the imperfect code in UK against actively recruiting health care professionals from developing countries. However, the potentially harmful effects of high skill migration can, and could be defensibly be eliminated by implementing various policies. It is important to note that Brock proposes that certain conditions such as regime legitimacy and urgent needs have to be satisfied for developing to regulate emigration. See Brock, “Debating brain drain,” and Gillian Brock and Michael Blake, *Debating brain drain: May governments restrict emigration?*(Oxford University Press, 2014) for some of these.

¹³¹ For the relationship between climate change and poverty, see Lael Brainard, Abigail Jones, and Nigel Purvis, eds. *Climate change and global poverty: a billion lives in the balance?* (Brookings Institution Press, 2009).

world, institutional reforms in the poor states would be necessary but not sufficient to bring an end to extreme poverty – the global North has an indispensable role to play as well, from strengthening the governance capacity of Southern states to reforming their own foreign aid scheme and building a fairer global order. However, the Northern states are ultimately accountable and responsive to the preferences and demands of their own constituencies, and such wide-ranging, substantive actions could hardly become a reality without public awareness and support.

It is lamentable that the Northern publics so far have stayed largely uninformed and uninterested on the matter of extreme global poverty, essentially treating it as a politically irrelevant or apolitical matter of charity.¹³² As a result, any mention of extreme poverty sparks the knee-jerk response of giving charitable donations – a solution that is deeply individualised and de-politicised and thus forestalls advocacy for institutional reforms that will, as discussed in this chapter, be essential to ending extreme poverty. Leaving aside the complex and controversial issue of whether private donations are used effectively, and assuming for now that they are, consider the following statistics. A report from OECD published in 2015 estimates that civil society organizations in all DAC countries raised at least US\$29.7 billion from private sources¹³³. This is certainly a sizeable figure (in comparison to the US\$ 34.5 billion ODA given by the US in 2017¹³⁴). However, imagine if the US alone, pressured by its concerned citizens, met the ODA target of 0.7 percent of GNI rather than just giving 0.18 percent as it did in 2017: there would be an increase of aid funds by nearly 100 billion US dollars. DAC countries on average allocate between 0.30 percent and 0.32 percent of their GNI to foreign aid. No imaginable increase of private donations could come close to matching the increase of ODA, *if* the DAC countries all meet the 0.7% ODA/GNI target.

It must be noted that I am not discrediting the honourable act of making a donation. Donations do matter – the money from Northern citizens' pockets pays for vital medicines, clean water, education and so on that both save lives immediately and benefits the poor in the longer term. However, if the goal is to eradicate severe poverty, charitable donation is not, and will never be, enough. After all, as Vaurun Gauri, a World Bank economist says,

¹³² Andrew Darnton and Martin Kirk, *Finding Frames: New ways to engage the UK public in global poverty*. (London: Bond, 2011).

¹³³ OECD, "Aid for CSOs," December 2015, https://www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/Aid%20for%20CSOs%20in%202013%20_%20Dec%202015.pdf

¹³⁴ OECD, "DAC Aid at a glance by donor", accessed 1 April 2019, https://public.tableau.com/views/AidAtAGlance/DACmembers?:embed=y&:display_count=no?&:showVizHome=no#1

the solutions to global poverty are “politics, politics, politics.”¹³⁵ We ultimately will need a radical shift from the current charity paradigm, which centres on goodwill-based private and official donations, to a justice paradigm, where it is widely recognised that extreme poverty is a grave injustice in an affluent world and requires extensive institutional reforms, active civic participation and possibly global wealth redistribution to be eradicated. It is time that Northern citizens be mobilised, and recognise the tremendous yet still latent power they possess in helping eradicate extreme poverty.

¹³⁵ Cimadamore and Lange, "The Global poverty consensus report," 22.

2. The moral demands of extreme poverty

Introduction

I have established in the first chapter that the eradication of extreme global poverty requires strong political commitment from Northern countries, and that their citizens' informed support and active participation will be key to bringing about institutional reforms. This chapter examines this issue from a moral perspective, asking what moral obligations, if any, northern citizens and/or states owe to people struggling in extreme poverty. I will survey five prominent strands of normative global justice theories in this chapter to answer this question. The five theorists, departing from different philosophical premises and providing differing arguments, represent the major positions on what moral demands those suffering extreme poverty can legitimately make on the global North. As I will endeavour to show in the last section, from a policy perspective, these theories arrive at a broadly similar conclusion: that global poverty should be a major moral concern that warrants radical reform of the current charity paradigm. I argue that political philosophy is expected to have a social impact, and to achieve this, we need to see beyond the philosophical dispute to focus on the common elements that these theories would practically endorse.

2.1 The utilitarian approach: Singer's Principle of Sacrifice

The most famous account of the duties owed by individuals in affluent countries comes from the utilitarian philosopher Peter Singer. On this account, positive duties are justified by consequentialism, which holds that the morally right thing to do is to bring about the best outcomes – often measured by general utility, happiness, or human welfare. In his seminal essay *Famine, Affluence and Morality*, Singer argues that the rich people in affluent countries like the US have a strong moral obligation to give much more than they currently do to relieve the suffering of distant strangers.¹³⁶ Singer begins his reasoning with the widely held assumption that “suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care are bad.”¹³⁷ He moves on to discuss what would later be called the Principle of Sacrifice, which seems equally uncontroversial: “if it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance,

¹³⁶ Peter Singer, "Famine, affluence, and morality," *Philosophy & public affairs* (1972): 229-243.

¹³⁷ Singer, 231.

then we ought, morally, to do it.”¹³⁸ It seems uncontroversial because this principle does not ask us to actively promote what is considered good, nor does it require us to prevent badness when doing so incurs a significant cost.¹³⁹ To further illustrate the self-evidence of this principle, Singer asks us to imagine a scenario in which I am walking past a shallow pond and see a child drowning. Intuitively, the morally right thing would be to rescue the child, because the death of the child, morally speaking, is a much worse thing than the small cost of muddying my clothes or wasting a bit of my time.¹⁴⁰

Uncontroversial and undemanding as this principle appears, Singer argues that it can fundamentally change our lives and common-sense morality if we consider two hidden premises this principle operates upon. First, the principle takes “no account of proximity or distance”; second, the number of agents who are capable of helping has no moral relevance.¹⁴¹ To justify the first premise, Singer argues that the globalised world with “instant communication” and “swift transportation” has made it possible to help relief work in distant areas just as effectively as in local areas;¹⁴² as for the second, the number of available agents might make “a psychological difference”, but does nothing to lessen our moral obligations.¹⁴³

Unveiling these two premises of the Principle of Sacrifice has radical consequences for our moral system that ordinary people unreflectively accept. Traditionally, giving money to help people in dire need is seen as a laudable, morally supererogatory act of charity, for which one receives thanks for being generous, while not giving is not a thing to be condemned or feel ashamed of.¹⁴⁴ Accepting Singer’s principle, however, means the line between charity and justice needs to be redrawn – in the face of mass famine and poverty, to give substantial amounts of one’s earnings is the morally right thing to do, and refusing to do so and spending the money on things beyond our essential needs is plainly wrong.¹⁴⁵ Although believing the Principle of Sacrifice is right and well justified, Singer does recognise that it may be too demanding for ordinary people. He thus proposes a moderate version, which stipulates that we ought to prevent morally bad things from happening if

¹³⁸ Singer, 231.

¹³⁹ Singer, 231.

¹⁴⁰ Singer, 231.

¹⁴¹ Singer, 231-2.

¹⁴² Singer, 232.

¹⁴³ Singer, 233.

¹⁴⁴ Singer, 233.

¹⁴⁵ Singer, 235.

doing so does not involve “sacrificing anything else morally significant.”¹⁴⁶ Sticking to this moderate version of the principle rather than the strong version would not require that we give until we reach the “level of marginal utility,” where giving anything more would “cause as much suffering to myself or my dependents as I would relieve by my gift.”¹⁴⁷ But even the moderate version would appear extreme to many, and Singer has in recent years lowered this recommended level of donations to around 5 percent of income. This takes into account the “bounds of human nature”, and proposes other realistic actions for ordinary individuals, such as asking one’s corporation to set up a 1 percent salary donation mechanism that one could freely opt out.¹⁴⁸

2.2 The Human Rights Approach and Campbell’s Principle of Humanity

We are used to seeing poverty presented in figures. It would be abnormal to read a United Nations report on development issues without seeing some statistics. However, for many critics, to quantify poverty in the form of figures waiting to be improved was not the best course of action. Seeing poverty as a “quantitative, natural deficit to be made up” means that “the political will to reduce it will not be energised”, and furthermore, the fundamentally moral question of “can persistent poverty be tolerated at all?” remains untouched.¹⁴⁹ By contrast, the proposal that we ought to view poverty as a violation of human rights has garnered increasing support. This human rights approach can have far-reaching and radical implications:

If, however, poverty was declared to be abolished, as it should with regards to its status as a massive, systematic and continuous violation of human rights, its persistence would no longer be a regrettable feature of the nature of things. It would become a denial of justice. The burden of proof would shift. The poor, once they have been recognised as the injured party, would acquire a right to reparation for which governments, the international community and, ultimately, each citizen would be jointly liable. A strong interest would thus be established in eliminating, as a matter of urgency, the grounds of liability, which might be

¹⁴⁶ Singer, 235.

¹⁴⁷ Singer, 241

¹⁴⁸ Peter Singer, *The life you can save: How to do your part to end world poverty* (Random House Incorporated, 2010).

¹⁴⁹ Pierre Sane, "Poverty, the next frontier in the struggle for human rights," *International Social Science Journal* 56, no. 180 (2004): 271-275.

expected to unleash much stronger forces than compassion, charity, or even concern for one's own security, are likely to mobilise for the benefit of others.¹⁵⁰

However, seeing poverty as a human rights violation could overcomplicate things. On this approach, poverty *per se* is often confused with its effects and causes. Poverty can infringe civil and political rights, cause disrespect, discrimination, and even social exclusion. In addition, violations of human rights such as unlawful confinement can often lead to poverty.¹⁵¹ Unlike the case of torture as a violation of human rights where the torturer and other culpable agents can be easily identified and held accountable, the “causes and cures of poverty are much more elusive, much more controversial, and challenging than most other human rights deficits.”¹⁵² Linking poverty with multiple human rights in this interactive way does help illustrate the evil of poverty, but it could risk neglecting the very core of the issue – material deprivation. In order to truly see poverty itself as a violation of human rights violation, Campbell argues we ought to understand it paradigmatically and primarily as “lacking the basic material provisions to support a minimally acceptable way of life.”¹⁵³ Conceptualising poverty as such refocuses the attention back on the right to subsistence, which is identified as a positive human right in Article 25.1¹⁵⁴ in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), as well as in Article 11.1¹⁵⁵ in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

But conceptualising poverty as violating the right to subsistence still leaves open the question of whether the source of the violation can be traced to injustice or a lack of benevolence. These are two distinct perspectives: on the injustice perspective, the violation lies in the culpable acts of other people; on the benevolence perspective, the inactivity of people who are capable of alleviating poverty constitutes the violation.¹⁵⁶ The former perspective is founded on the idea of justice, which is about “fairness, desert and merit”,

¹⁵⁰ Sane, 271-275.

¹⁵¹ Campbell, "Poverty as a violation of Human Rights: Inhumanity or Injustice."

¹⁵² Campbell, 58.

¹⁵³ Campbell, 60.

¹⁵⁴ “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.”

¹⁵⁵ “The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent.”

¹⁵⁶ Campbell, “Poverty as a violation of Human Rights,” 61.

while the latter is founded on the idea of humanity, which is about benevolence, altruism, and caring.”¹⁵⁷ While acknowledging that the justice and humanity perspectives can coexist, Campbell argues that a principle of humanity should take precedence over justice (narrowly construed) when we try to determine the nature and ground of the duties to alleviate poverty, and identify the duty bearers. His reasoning is as follows.

Humanity grounds a general type of duty that is applicable to all cases of severe poverty, whereas justice grounds a special type of duty for the wrongdoer to take remedial actions. On the humanity account, poverty is an evil to the poor because of all the suffering – hunger, pain, sickness and death – caused by the lack of basic means of subsistence. Relieving such human suffering is an end in itself – a “core intuition” fundamental to not only utilitarian ethics, but to “any plausible system of moral thought.”¹⁵⁸ On the justice approach, in contrast, the focus is shifted to who is responsible for poverty, and thus bears the duties to compensate. Justice in the daily moral and political discourse is deeply connected with the ideas of merit and desert.¹⁵⁹ To say that justice is the overriding moral foundation of duties to relieve poverty is to imply that all poor people are the objects of harm or unjust exploitation and deserve assistance, an implication that is not true for “deserved, self-inflicted and perhaps fortuitous suffering.”¹⁶⁰ If we adopt this justice perspective, it would follow that we ought to prioritise the kind of poverty inflicted by identifiable individuals and/or institutional orders while leaving other kinds of poverty aside. It is then obvious that the humanity approach, as a “desert-free” moral foundation, can be applied to poverty caused by culpable human action as well as poverty arising from factors like natural disaster or “innocent individual acts whose unforeseeable cumulative effects result in economic harms”, whereas the justice approach is only suitable for the former.¹⁶¹

For Campbell, humanity taking precedence over justice produces an important political advantage. In the current complex global economic system, it is difficult to reach agreement on which actors are responsible for poverty to what extent. Such impasse can at least partly

¹⁵⁷ Campbell, 62. Note that Campbell in fact distinguishes between two conceptions of justice: in the broader sense, justice includes “all morally relevant criteria of distribution and even all principles of social morality”, and is “indistinguishable from ‘rightness’”; in the narrower sense, justice is a distribution principle concerned with “the merits and demerits of the distributees”. He adopts the latter conception in his argument.

¹⁵⁸ Campbell, 63-4.

¹⁵⁹ Tom Campbell, “Humanity before justice,” *British Journal of Political Science* 4, no. 1 (1974): 2, 16.

¹⁶⁰ Campbell, 16.

¹⁶¹ Campbell, “Poverty as a violation of Human Rights,” 62; for a similar view see Simon Caney, “Global poverty and human rights: the case for positive duties,” in Thomas Pogge ed. *Freedom from poverty as a human right—Who owes what to the very poor* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 275-302.

explain the inaction to advance global justice.¹⁶² The principle of humanity, however, has the potential to solve this impasse, because it “renders some considerations of justice irrelevant and is certainly not dependent on justice for triggering an obligation to take steps to eradicate it.”¹⁶³ The priority of humanity over justice thus plays the pragmatic role of “blocking exculpatory rationale used to excuse people from their obligations to do something about it.”¹⁶⁴ Echoing Luban, who thinks that human right is a right “whose beneficiaries are all humans and whose obligators are all humans in a position to effect the right,”¹⁶⁵ Campbell believes humanity mandates a “universal humanitarian obligation to participate in the relief of extreme suffering”, and what each political actor ought to contribute is “relative to the capacity of the person or collective to contribute to the reduction of poverty.”¹⁶⁶ This principle of humanity should not be regarded as “mere charity”; rather, it justifies enforceable legal obligations, and entails the creation of radical global redistributive institutions.¹⁶⁷

2.3 Rawls: duty of assistance

Singer and Campbell both stress the positive duties of individuals to alleviate poverty. Rawls, by contrast, takes a different route and argues for the duty of assistance of nation states – or in his terms, “peoples”. To understand this duty, a brief look at the context in which Rawls makes his argument is necessary.

Rawls’s argument for the duty of assistance is part of *The Law of Peoples*, a book which elaborates his stance on international justice more than two decades after his groundbreaking *A Theory of Justice*, which focuses largely on principles of distributive justice within a closed society. In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls revived the contractualist tradition in political philosophy by reasoning from what he calls the Original Position, where equally situated individuals, ignorant of morally relevant biases such as their social class and race, deliberate on just principles to distribute the basic goods.¹⁶⁸ Rawls concludes that they would first secure basic liberties and agree on equality of opportunity; more importantly, they would then accept an egalitarian “difference principle”: “Social and economic

¹⁶² Campbell, 63.

¹⁶³ Campbell, 63.

¹⁶⁴ Campbell, 63.

¹⁶⁵ David Luban, "Just war and human rights," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* (1980): 174.

¹⁶⁶ Campbell, “Poverty as a violation of Human Rights,” 67.

¹⁶⁷ Campbell, 67.

¹⁶⁸ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, (Harvard University Press, 1999 [1971]).

inequalities are to be arranged so that they are to be of the greatest benefit to the least-advantaged members of society.¹⁶⁹ Inspired by Rawls, cosmopolitan-minded theorists such as Charles Beitz¹⁷⁰ and Thomas Pogge¹⁷¹ tried to adopt the Rawlsian method to derive similar principles of justice to apply globally, and believed that Rawls himself would have done the same, given his firm commitment to individual rights and liberties that is central to liberalism.

However, to the surprise of many cosmopolitan theorists, when it comes to global economic justice, Rawls is much less egalitarian. He divides the world into two tiers: the first tier is called the society of well-ordered peoples, and consists of reasonable liberal peoples and non-liberal decent peoples, who uphold a particular set of human rights that notably excludes some of the ones liberal people recognise – the right to democratic participation, for instance; the second tier consists of outlaw states, societies burdened by unfavourable conditions, and benevolent absolutisms that fail to live up to the list of human rights.¹⁷² Rawls rejects an egalitarian principle to redistribute the wealth globally, arguing instead that the well-ordered peoples have a duty of assistance towards the burdened societies. He provides three reasons for this argument. First and most importantly, Rawls believes poverty is mainly caused by domestic factors, most notably the “political culture”, the “religious, philosophical, and moral traditions” behind the “basic structure”, and “the industriousness and cooperative talents of its members.”¹⁷³ It is believed from this diagnosis that he does not view poverty as caused by unjust international structures.¹⁷⁴ However, interestingly, Rawls does leave open the possibility that international structures need reform to reduce poverty, but I will leave this discussion to the last section.

Second, unlike Beitz¹⁷⁵, Rawls does not see nation states’ exclusive ownership of the natural resources that are arbitrarily situated in their territory as justificatory grounds for global redistribution; rather, he goes back to emphasise the importance of political culture, and believes the “arbitrariness of the distribution of natural resources causes no difficulty.”¹⁷⁶ Third, Rawls seems to believe his duty of assistance has a richer content and

¹⁶⁹ Rawls, 53.

¹⁷⁰ Charles Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

¹⁷¹ Thomas Pogge, *Realizing Rawls* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

¹⁷² Rawls, *The law of peoples*, 4.

¹⁷³ Rawls, 108.

¹⁷⁴ David Miller, “Collective Responsibility and International Inequality in The Law of Peoples,” in *Rawls’s Law of Peoples: A Realistic Utopia?*, eds. Rex Martin and David Reidy (Blackwell, 2006), 191-205.

¹⁷⁵ Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations*.

¹⁷⁶ Rawls, *The law of peoples*, 117.

can be more effective than mere egalitarian redistribution of wealth. Rawls states repeatedly that the clear target of the duty of assistance is to help burdened societies become qualified members of the Society of Well-ordered Peoples.¹⁷⁷ This target means more than just “throwing funds”: to establish the basic just or decent basic structure, an “emphasis on human rights” is also crucial, as respecting human rights have been proved to be effective in preventing famines and relieving population pressure (by improving women’s status).¹⁷⁸ This again reflects Rawls’s belief in the close causal link between political culture and a country’s wealth.

Although Rawls does not directly tackle the question of what grounds his duty of assistance, he does suggest one existing ground and one potential ground. The existing ground is each people’s *self-interest* in living in “a world in which all peoples have a well-ordered regime”, for “such regimes are not dangerous but peaceful and cooperative.”¹⁷⁹ In other words, by helping burdened societies become well-ordered, the already well-ordered peoples are less prone to violence, and can benefit economically. The potential ground is an *international solidarity* between peoples, or in Rawls’s word “affinity.”¹⁸⁰ As international cooperation increases, peoples will start to be moved by “mutual concern for each other’s way of life and culture, and they become willing to make sacrifices for each other”, and finally will all act on their “ideals and principles.”¹⁸¹

2.4 Pogge’s harm principle and ecumenical approach

One thing Singer, Campbell and Rawls share in common is that they all believe that the nature of the duty owed by affluent countries and their citizens toward the poor is positive – the rich are morally required to do something. As has been shown, the strategy to substantiate the positive duties is fairly simple and straightforward – all that is needed is to show that the poor are badly off and invoke a certain conception of morality to establish that those capable ought to alleviate the suffering of the poor. However, the international community’s reluctance to fully commit to eradicating extreme poverty suggests that there are weaknesses in the positive duty approach. For one thing, the straightforwardness of justifying positive duty leads many to believe its moral reasons are “weak and

¹⁷⁷ Rawls, 106, 107, 118.

¹⁷⁸ Rawls, 109-111.

¹⁷⁹ Rawls, 113.

¹⁸⁰ Rawls, 113.

¹⁸¹ Rawls, 113.

discretionary”, and that they are entitled to support less costly good causes of their choice, rather than helping distant strangers.¹⁸² For another, stressing positive duties leaves one critical question untouched: are the affluent countries and their citizens morally implicated in causing the severe poverty? If the answer is yes, then only focusing on positive duties is also misleading, as by causing poverty, the rich have violated a more stringent negative duty to avoid harming others and are therefore morally obligated to remedy the harm.¹⁸³ These claims have profoundly transformed the debate about global justice by both reframing the issues of global poverty and the responsibilities of individuals and affluent countries, and offering “alternative moral diagnoses.”¹⁸⁴

Pogge ambitiously adopts what he calls an “ecumenical approach”, aiming to convince “adherents of all the main views now alive in Western political thought” that the affluent countries harm the poor.¹⁸⁵ His ecumenical approach contains three strands of arguments. One strand of argument ascribes the harm to “a common and violent history”: the historical process that leads to the current situation “was pervaded by massive, grievous wrongs”, and was filled with “conquest and colonization, with severe oppression, enslavement, even genocide, through which the native institutions and cultures of four continents were destroyed or severely traumatized.”¹⁸⁶ Note that Pogge is not arguing that the descendants of these historical wrongdoers bear reparative responsibility towards the descendants of the historical victims; rather he is contending that the current radical global inequality, with billions of people struggling in extreme poverty, is not justifiable given such a “morally deeply tarnished history.”¹⁸⁷

However, some people would not accept that the injustice of actual history dictates the injustice of the current global order, because it is possible that a different, morally sound historical path would still have resulted in the same current global order.¹⁸⁸ In other words,

¹⁸² Pogge, *World poverty and human rights*, 204.

¹⁸³ Thomas Pogge makes this claim in a number of places, for example, in “Priorities of global justice,” *Metaphilosophy* 32, no. 1 - 2 (2001): 6-24; “Moral universalism and global economic justice,” *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 1, no. 1 (2002): 29-58; and “Responses to Critics,” in Alison Jaggar ed. *Thomas Pogge and His Critics* (London: Polity Press, 2010), 175–250.

¹⁸⁴ Alison Jaggar, “Introduction,” in Alison Jaggar ed. *Thomas Pogge and His Critics* (London: Polity Press, 2010), 2.

¹⁸⁵ Thomas Pogge, “A cosmopolitan perspective on the global economic order,” in Gillian Brock and Harry Brighouse eds. *The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism* (Cambridge University Press, 2005):92-109, 95.

¹⁸⁶ Pogge, *World poverty and human rights*, 209.

¹⁸⁷ Pogge, 209.

¹⁸⁸ Mathias Risse, “Do we owe the global poor assistance or rectification?,” *Ethics & International Affairs* 19, no. 1 (2005): 9-18 and “How does the global order harm the poor?,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 33, no. 4 (2005): 349-376.

the (in)justice of the history is irrelevant in evaluating the (in)justice of the present.¹⁸⁹ Some sympathisers with Risse's argument would think, following John Locke, that the present order is justifiable if everyone, after rationally comparing it with the state of nature, agrees that it at least does not make anyone worse-off.¹⁹⁰ For Lockeans, the baseline of comparison is the state of nature, where all persons are entitled to appropriate the natural resources to accumulate wealth provided they leave "enough, and as good" for others. Put otherwise, everyone is entitled to a proportional share of all the natural resources.¹⁹¹ If the Lockeans want to justify the current global order, the least they need to show is that the worst off in our world – those in extreme poverty – enjoy the benefits brought about by their proportional share of the natural resources. This is not the case, according to Pogge's second line of argument, which focuses on the "uncompensated exclusion" of the poor from the use of the natural resources on Earth.¹⁹² Pogge observes that the billions of poor people are "born into a world where all accessible resources are already owned by others", and that their extremely limited educational and employment opportunities forbid their chance to secure a proportional share of the global natural resources.¹⁹³ To exacerbate this unfairness, the poor share the burden caused by environmental degradation and watch money paid by the affluent to use the natural resources flow into the pockets of those who rule poor countries and take control of these resources.¹⁹⁴ Pogge concludes that "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."¹⁹⁵

The two strands of argument just covered have shown that from either the perspective of actual history (of colonialism) or imagined state of nature, the current economic order cannot be deemed just or harmless to the poor. But those who endorse neither view would remain unconvinced. A common view is that the global order is in fact benefiting the poor – why otherwise would the poverty figures keep decreasing over the years? These people invoke what Pogge calls the diachronic conception of harm, which compares the current state of poverty with earlier states.¹⁹⁶ But this approach is problematic for three reasons. First, the reliability of world poverty figures is dubious. It is reported by the World

¹⁸⁹ Risse, "Do we owe the global poor assistance or rectification?," 14.

¹⁹⁰ Pogge, "A cosmopolitan perspective on the global economic order," 98.

¹⁹¹ Pogge, *World poverty and human rights*, 209.

¹⁹² Pogge, 207.

¹⁹³ Pogge, 208-9.

¹⁹⁴ Pogge, 208-9.

¹⁹⁵ Pogge, 208.

¹⁹⁶ Pogge, 19-23.

Bank that extreme poverty has been in decline, but the poverty line is set so implausibly low that a positive trend inevitably follows.¹⁹⁷ The second problem with the diachronic approach is that it is unclear if the decline of extreme poverty can be causally attributed to the global economic order led by the World Trade Organization, the IMF and the World Bank, as it is possible the decline happened “*despite*, rather than because of the new WTO regime”; the fact that the global poor did not share proportionately in the global economic growth, but rather lagged behind facing increasing global inequality seems to lend support to this point.¹⁹⁸ Third, and most fundamental, the diachronic approach is not “morally relevant” in cases that involve massive and extreme suffering: it wrongly assumes that when something contributes to improving people’s situation, it is benefiting instead of harming them.¹⁹⁹ To assume so is to hold that by the same logic, a man benefits his family members by beating them up less often than he used to.²⁰⁰

Rejecting the diachronic conception, Pogge argues that we ought to invoke a subjunctive conception of harm – one which compares the foreseeable consequence of the current global order against “the background of its feasible alternative.”²⁰¹ A supporter of this approach is Rawls, who considers a domestic economic order to be just when no feasible alternatives would further benefit the least disadvantaged.²⁰² This approach opens up a world of hypothetical global orders one can compare reality against. Indeed, no single hypothetical order would satisfy everyone. Pogge, again in his ecumenical spirit, gives a minimally just subjunctive baseline based on human rights: “any institutional design is unjust when it foreseeably produces an avoidable human rights deficit.”²⁰³

Having established the baseline to measure harm, the next tasks would be to show that (a) the current global order is causally responsible for massive poverty, and (b) global poverty could be avoided by making feasible institutional reforms. A common misinterpretation of Pogge, as he tries to prove (a), is that he attributes extreme poverty *mainly* to global institutional harm while ignoring local causal factors such as bad governance, corruption, violent conflicts, etc.²⁰⁴ To clarify, Pogge believes that world poverty is caused by both local and global factors that entangle and enhance each other – the relationship between the

¹⁹⁷ Pogge, 19-20; in addition, see Pogge, “Severe poverty as a human rights violation,” 39-41.

¹⁹⁸ Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, 20-21.

¹⁹⁹ Pogge, 23.

²⁰⁰ Pogge, 23.

²⁰¹ Pogge, “A cosmopolitan perspective on the global economic order,” 100.

²⁰² Pogge, 100.

²⁰³ Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, 25.

²⁰⁴ Pogge, “A cosmopolitan perspective on the global economic order,” 102.

two sets of causes are “not so much as additive as multiplicative”, with the worsening of either set aggravating the harm caused by the other.²⁰⁵ As the analysis in the first chapter shows, this multi-causal diagnosis is a more appropriate explanation of global poverty, avoiding the problem of “explanatory nationalism” that focuses only on noticeable and methodologically comparable national factors while ignoring the relatively unchanging global institutions working in the background.²⁰⁶

Some causal factors Pogge identifies in the global order are independent of local factors – for example, how the design of global order, in a world of competing autonomous states with unequal bargaining power is skewed in favour of the more powerful.²⁰⁷ His other examples of how the global order harms the poor, by contrast, nicely illustrate how the global factors multiplicatively magnify, perpetuate and incentivise the harm done by local factors. He provides two well-known examples: the “international resource privilege” and the “international borrowing privilege”. It is the norm of the existing global order that “any group controlling a preponderance of the means of coercion within a country is internationally recognised as the legitimate government of this country’s territory and people – regardless of how this group came to power, how it exercises power, and the extent to which it may be supported or opposed by the population it rules.”²⁰⁸ As a result of this international recognition, any group in power has the “legal power to confer globally valid ownership rights in the country’s resources” to a foreign corporation; the purchaser then is analogous to a “fence” who purchases and possesses the “loot” from a group of burglars or robbers, the only difference being that it is typically illegal to knowingly buy stolen goods, whereas purchase of natural resources from unelected governments leads to legally recognised full ownership.²⁰⁹ This resource privilege creates strong incentives for attempting coups and fighting civil wars in resource-rich countries, and has led economists with the assumption of explanatory nationalism to argue that rich resources within a country encourage coups and civil wars, and increase the possibility of corruption.²¹⁰ These economists overlook the crucial “global background factor” of international resource privilege, without which “a poor country’s generous resource endowment would not handicap its progress toward democratic government, economic growth, and the eradication

²⁰⁵ Pogge, 103.

²⁰⁶ Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, 17-8, 145-150.

²⁰⁷ Pogge, 9, 26-7.

²⁰⁸ Pogge, 118

²⁰⁹ Pogge, 118.

²¹⁰ Pogge, 119-120.

of poverty – certainly not to the same extent”²¹¹. Similarly, the international borrowing privilege allows any unelected, often corrupt ruling group to borrow funds in the name of the country, often in a larger amount at a cheaper interest rate than they can borrow in their own name. This privilege helps these rulers stay in power despite popular opposition and provides incentive to coup. More seriously, it is a curse on the country’s future: a succeeding “fledgling democratic government” that wants to implement reforms and improve the economy will be gravely burdened and incapacitated by the huge debts, and thus less likely to be as successful and stable if there were no debts to repay.²¹² These two examples show how the global order incentivises corruption and usurpation in developing countries.

It is not enough to merely establish that the current global order is one major cause of the misery of the poor – adopting the subjunctive conception of harm, Pogge also needs to prove that feasible alternative institutions exist that can largely avoid the current harm. One of Pogge’s most widely discussed proposals of institutional reform is the *global resource dividend* (GRD).²¹³ In light of his diagnosis of the uncompensated exclusion of the poor from using natural resources, Pogge proposes a modern form of the Lockean proviso: “One may use unlimited amounts of natural resources”, but one must share some of the economic benefit.”²¹⁴ The institutional form of this proviso is to set up a tax on any resources a country chooses to extract, pushing up the prices of crude natural resources, and to let the owner of the resources along with the purchasers and users all share the burden. The proceeds of GRD would be used “toward the emancipation of the present and future global poor”, fulfilling their basic needs of education, health care and means of production.²¹⁵ Pogge believes that this reform is only a modest proposal, as it leaves “each government in control of the natural resources in its territory”, rather than assuming the whole natural resource base belongs to all of humankind.²¹⁶ Besides, it is modest because only a small GRD would be sufficient in the long-term to eradicate poverty: Pogge estimates that the annual amount of a mere 0.67 percent of the 2005 global product (about \$300 billion), “if

²¹¹ Pogge, 120.

²¹² Pogge, 120-1.

²¹³ This proposal appears in a number of places, for example Thomas Pogge, "An egalitarian law of peoples," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 23, no. 3 (1994): 195-224; *World Poverty and Human Rights*, 210-221.

²¹⁴ Pogge, "An egalitarian law of peoples," 201.

²¹⁵ Pogge, 200-1.

²¹⁶ Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, 210-1.

well targeted and effectively spent”, can significantly reduce poverty within just a few years.²¹⁷

To sum up this section, Pogge believes the citizens of affluent countries harm the poor by “shaping and enforcing the social conditions that, foreseeably and avoidably, cause the monumental suffering of global poverty.”²¹⁸ A more eye-catching phrasing of this verdict is that we are all “active participants” in the largest crime against humanity, and no less guilty than the Germans whose complicity sustained the Nazi rule.²¹⁹ Guilty as they are, it is not feasible to radically change one’s lifestyle to make daily economic decisions in order to avoid aggravating severe poverty. The modern world is far too complex to predict with certainty the impact of our daily actions on distant others; an innocuous change in fashion in wealthy countries can save hundreds of lives in one place as easily as impoverish hundreds of others in another place in the meantime²²⁰. Pogge recommends two courses of action: on the one hand, the citizens from affluent countries can “advocate for changes in national policies or global institutions, by publicising their unjust nature and harmful impact and by developing reform proposals”; on the other hand, they can “volunteer for or contribute money to effective humanitarian organizations.”²²¹

2.5 David Miller: National responsibilities in the global context

Pogge powerfully illustrates how the current global economic order, which developed countries benefit from and largely shape, aggravates extreme poverty and harms the poor by acquiescing in and even incentivising local factors that were traditionally believed to be the sole explanation for domestic poverty. However, there are still unresolved questions when we put aside the long-term problem of global institutional reform and dig deeper into allocating responsibilities for coping with specific, immediate cases of poverty. David Miller’s example of the impoverished and malnourished Iraqi children after 2002 demonstrates this difficulty: no one denies that their misery is of great moral concern, but tracing back the causal chain that leads to their poverty, we can find multiple agents who took part: United Nations imposed economic sanctions; Western powers initiated the

²¹⁷ Pogge, 211

²¹⁸ Pogge, "A cosmopolitan perspective on the global economic order," 93.

²¹⁹ Pogge, 93; also see Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, 141-2, 151; Pogge, *Politics as usual: what lies behind the pro-poor rhetoric*, 1-2.

²²⁰ Pogge, "Severe poverty as a human rights violation," 16-7.

²²¹ Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, 150.

sanction, and invaded Iraq; Saddam Hussein spent an enormous part of Iraq's budget to purchase weapons; Iraqi people themselves failed to look after their own business.²²² How do we reasonably hold each agent accountable for their role in contributing to Iraqi children's suffering? Or consider a case in which natural causes such as crop failure leads to massive starvation: had relevant agents made a different decision – for example, had the national government implemented a new irrigation system – the crop failure would not have happened. Different counterfactuals would seem to link the responsibility to different agents.²²³ Facing such complex real-life scenarios, we obviously lack an overarching set of principles to justifiably allocate responsibilities to alleviate harm. To deal with this problem, Miller coined the term remedial responsibility to refer to the special responsibility that certain agents must remedy a bad situation – even though the situation cannot be attributed to these agents.²²⁴ With this concept, the problem with allocating responsibility in complex situations now becomes one of finding a set of principles to “connect a particular agent A to a particular patient P in such a way that A is singled out as having a remedial responsibility towards P that others, in general, do not have.”²²⁵ Miller's principle identifies six factors.

To begin with, Miller distinguishes between three distinct backward-looking responsibilities – moral responsibility, outcome responsibility and causal responsibility.²²⁶ Moral responsibility focuses on if an agent's action “displays moral fault”: “he must have deprived P deliberately or recklessly, or he must have failed to provide for P despite having a pre-existing obligation to do so”. Outcome responsibility is a broader concept than moral responsibility – it is about “whether a particular agent can be credited or debited with a particular outcome.”²²⁷ To see how outcome responsibility is not necessarily a moral responsibility, consider how an agent's fair competition with another agent causes the latter to go bankrupt – nothing on the part of the former agent is morally blameworthy, and therefore he is only outcome responsible for the latter agent's loss.²²⁸ Normally outcome responsibility is weaker than moral responsibility and does not trigger remedial responsibility, but if the costs are particularly heavy with all other things being equal, the

²²² David Miller, *National responsibility and global justice* (Oxford University Press, 2007): 2-3.

²²³ Miller, 2-3, 236-7.

²²⁴ Miller, 81-109

²²⁵ David Miller, "Distributing responsibilities," in Andrew Kuper ed. *Global Responsibilities: Who must deliver on human rights?* (Routledge, 2012):117-138.

²²⁶ Miller, *National responsibility and global justice*, 81-102.

²²⁷ Miller, 87.

²²⁸ Miller, 100.

agent who bears the outcome responsibility is expected to take certain remedial actions.²²⁹ Causal responsibility, by contrast with the other two, focuses on why something happened. Distinct from outcome responsibility, it is indifferent to the role of human agency in the causal link.²³⁰ As a result, causal responsibility applies well to cases where “the causal link between action and result is so bizarre and unpredictable that it would be unreasonable” to hold an agent outcome responsible – as when a person casually steps back and causes another person to fall down from a ladder.²³¹

In addition to considering backward responsibilities, Miller identifies three other criteria to facilitate the determination of remedial responsibility: benefit, capacity and community.²³² It is possible that an agent plays no role in causing deprivation, but his status as “an innocent beneficiary” is sufficient for holding him remedially responsible for the deprived patient.²³³ Capacity as a criterion of remedial responsibility is similarly straightforward: it would be nonsensical to assign responsibility to an agent incapable of helping. The final criterion of community is based on Miller’s long-standing normative belief in the value of nationality. Although Miller acknowledges that communitarian relationships are normally “independent of and prior to” deprivation, he considers special bonds between fellow members of a cultural community morally worthy to ground a special kind of obligation.²³⁴

Miller admits that the six criteria invoke different considerations that sometimes may come into conflict with each other. For example, it is still difficult to give determinate normative advice as to who, between one agent morally responsible for deprivation and another agent with much greater capacity to remedy, should bear the remedial responsibility.²³⁵ However, this is how real life is, and this is why we ought to establish formal mechanisms to assign responsibilities – without formal procedure, everyone would want to “shift the burden of responsibility elsewhere.”²³⁶ But these six criteria of remedial responsibility do shed light on what the citizens of affluent countries owe to the global poor. First, the three kinds of backward-looking responsibilities show that citizens of affluent countries, due to “past injustices that left its victims in continuing poverty,” should be picked out to remedy the

²²⁹ Miller, 101.

²³⁰ Miller, 102.

²³¹ Miller, 101.

²³² Miller, 102-4.

²³³ Miller, 103; for discussion on this issue also see Daniel Butt, "On benefiting from injustice," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 37, no. 1 (2007): 129-152.

²³⁴ Miller, *National responsibility and global justice*, 104.

²³⁵ Miller, 105.

²³⁶ Miller, 107.

effects of past injustice.²³⁷ Second, Miller argues that affluent countries owe the poor societies a responsibility to offer fair terms of cooperation. Many developing countries are “vulnerable to exploitation and other forms of injustice by powerful states, corporations and other agencies”, and again because of the three kinds of responsibilities, citizens of rich countries ought to ensure a fair international order that allows poor countries “adequate opportunities to develop.”²³⁸ Third, the “bare fact of poverty itself, independently of any prior interaction between rich and poor countries” is a reason to justify remedial duties that should be imposed upon the “capable” agents “most strongly connected” to the poor.²³⁹ These remedial duties, once clearly identified with certain agents, must be “discharged as a matter of justice.”²⁴⁰ This is so even when the citizens of affluent countries presumably do not participate in violating the basic rights of the poor and lowering their lives “below some absolute standard of decency,” because by being able to act yet failing to help, they have already infringed the rights of the poor.²⁴¹

2.6 Normative theory and practical change

The five normative theories I have surveyed cover the main positions in contemporary debate on the supranational ethical implications of extreme global poverty. Behind these theories lie numerous more nuanced variations. These theories obviously differ vastly in their conception of poverty – as an unfortunate human misery, as a national problem that is nevertheless entitled to foreign assistance, or as a complex, avoidable state of affairs that exists as the result of both national and global causal factors. The theories also differ significantly on their philosophical grounds – we have seen the utilitarian imperative to maximise the good results, the human right to subsistence, human solidarity, and the negative duty to refrain from harming others. Indeed, there is a great degree of philosophical dispute surrounding the question “What is owed by the affluent to the global poor.”

Why do we have so many conflicting global justice theories in the first place? As possibly the longest-standing discipline, philosophy exists to uncover truth, or knowledge. On complex social issues like poverty, philosophers departing from different premises and

²³⁷ Miller, 249.

²³⁸ Miller, 251-3.

²³⁹ Miller, 249; 254-5.

²⁴⁰ Miller, 255.

²⁴¹ Miller. 255.

giving varying weight to different values are naturally led to find different “truths”, or different aspects of the one and final “Truth”. But unlike the kind of knowledge that enables a better understanding of natural or social phenomena, the knowledge produced by normative political philosophy has an additional function: to explicitly guide human action. Singer, for instance, is well-known for trying to use his ideas to lead social movements and transform lifestyles.²⁴² The starting paragraphs of Leo Strauss’s seminal essay *What is Political Philosophy?* captures this role of political philosophy nicely:

...All political action aims at either preservation or change. When desiring to preserve, we wish to prevent a change to the worse; when desiring to change, we wish to bring about something better. All political action is, then, guided by some thought of better or worse. But thought of better or worse implies thought of the good. The awareness of the good which guides all our actions, has the character of opinion: it is no longer questioned but, on reflection, it proves to be questionable. The very fact that we can question it, directs us towards such a thought of the good as is no longer questionable – towards a thought which is no longer opinion but knowledge. All political action has then in itself a directedness towards knowledge of the good: of the good life, or the good society. For the good society is the complete political good...If this directedness becomes explicit, if men make it their explicit goal to acquire knowledge of the good life and of the good society, political philosophy emerges....²⁴³

If we could indeed derive knowledge of the good that is “no longer questionable”, such knowledge would likely lead to actions that are equally unquestionable. But reality is messier. When competing conceptions of “good” all jostle to lead actions, how should we act? With such philosophical dispute on the nature and extent of the moral duties of people in the global North to those in extreme poverty, this is the problem we are facing. Some may argue that the lack of philosophical consensus would disqualify these competing theories in providing *practical* guidance and these philosophers will need to work harder to find agreement amongst themselves. After all, it may be asked, if the philosophers who

²⁴² For instance, after the ground-breaking publication of his *Animal Liberation*, Singer has been a vocal advocate for animals’ welfare. For his ideas on animal rights and social movement, see Animal Charity Evaluators, “Interview with Peter Singer,” accessed 9 June 2019, <https://animalcharityevaluators.org/advocacy-interventions/advocacy-advice/learn-from-professionals/interview-with-peter-singer/>

²⁴³ Leo Strauss, "What is political philosophy?," *The Journal of Politics* 19, no. 3 (1957): 343.

have thought long and hard on this issue and are expected to be the experts could not even agree on what is owed to the global poor, should not we wait until a consensus surfaces in case we act too hastily and go into the wrong direction?

In response to this concern, I argue that despite their philosophical differences, these theories have already given a rather clear mandate on where the practice should be heading. In order to see this, we need to refrain from over-exaggerating the implications of this ongoing philosophical dispute. As Weinstock argues, although the theorists adopting different approaches argue and disagree with each other, they do not regard other theories as *unreasonable*; rather, they believe the others are understandably *mistaken* due to their epistemic burdens of judgment.²⁴⁴ We could see this mutual recognition of reasonableness as “a form of endorsement.”²⁴⁵ In a way, these differences mirror the diverse worldviews we have in real life, or, to use Rawls words, they reflect “a plurality of conflicting reasonable comprehensive doctrines” that citizens in modern democracies naturally carry, due to their different cultural and religious backgrounds.²⁴⁶ Putting aside the philosophical differences, we see the theories converge on one crude conclusion – what is owed to the global South is more extensive and profound than the current charity paradigm could accommodate.²⁴⁷ From a policy perspective, a global economic and political order fairer to poor and developing countries, an obligatory international redistributive scheme, a more coordinated and transparent system of development assistance that specifies the responsibilities of relevant agents would be among the changes that global justice theorists tend to endorse. Yes, these policy recommendations still appear rather general. But considering the complexity of both extreme poverty and the real-world political dynamics, more specific measures would depend on political feasibility of a given situation. The philosophers will continue to disagree on many issues, but more practically-minded people will see, as I have said, that they have agreed on the direction for change – away from the scheme of voluntary and meagre official aid and private donations towards more systematic, institutionalised, obligatory, and redistribution-based solutions, or, put more succinctly, away from charity towards justice.

The above claim of mine will need some defence, especially when it comes to positive duties, which are sometimes believed to resemble or equate to duties of charity. For

²⁴⁴ Daniel Weinstock, "Motivating the global demos," *Metaphilosophy* 40, no. 1 (2009): 103-4.

²⁴⁵ Weinstock, 104.

²⁴⁶ John Rawls, "The idea of public reason revisited," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 64, no. 3 (1997): 766.

²⁴⁷ Weinstock, "Motivating the global demos."

example, Andrew Kuper in his critique of Singer says explicitly that “charity is never enough”, and that applauding charitable donations as the sole solution can even be “highly likely to harm the poor.”²⁴⁸ But champions of positive duties clearly want to distance themselves away from charity. Singer has stressed, from his earliest essay to later publications, that his approach opposes the idea of charity: “to do so (give money away rather than buy unnecessary luxuries) is not charitable, or generous”, nor is it “supererogatory”; rather, it is wrong not to give money away.²⁴⁹ Elsewhere, he similarly argues that making inadequate sacrifices on the part of the rich individuals “is not simply the absence of charity, let alone of moral saintliness”; rather, it is wrong and “ethically indefensible” to sit back and watch people die from poverty-related causes.²⁵⁰ It is also worth pointing out that although Singer seems to be an ardent proponent of private donations, as a utilitarian he never rejects other solutions to poverty – for example, more government aid and campaigning for policy changes.²⁵¹ Supporters of the principle of humanity seem equally eager to distance themselves from the charity paradigm: it is argued that the principle of humanity is not the product of “a sympathetic concern” or “generous response” to suffering. Rather, it is a “core element of justice.”²⁵² Campbell mentions that humanity is distinct from charity, which “carries with it ineradicable overtones of supererogation” and is seen as “an optional extra of the moral life.”²⁵³

Rawls has not directly engaged in the debate on charity and justice, but a closer reading of his duty of assistance would demonstrate it is far more demanding than our current charity scheme. The idiosyncratic list of human rights Rawls prescribes for any country to become a Well-Ordered Society contains the right to life (to the means of subsistence and security). This should not be taken lightly. Burdened societies falling short of fulfilling these basic rights will be deemed entitled to assistance, which may stop when these societies are qualified to join the ranks of the well-ordered peoples, i.e., when they are able to fulfil these human rights. Linking the duty of assistance to the right to the means of subsistence and other human rights would greatly expand the content of the seemingly simple idea of

²⁴⁸ Andrew Kuper, "More than charity: cosmopolitan alternatives to the 'singer solution'," *Ethics & International Affairs* 16, no. 1 (2002): 107-120.

²⁴⁹ Singer, "Famine, affluence, and morality."

²⁵⁰ Peter Singer, "Poverty, facts, and political philosophies: response to 'more than charity'," *Ethics & international affairs* 16, no. 1 (2002): 121-124.

²⁵¹ Singer, "Famine, affluence, and morality."

²⁵² Marcelo Alegre, "Extreme poverty in a wealthy world: What justice demands today," in Thomas Pogge ed. *Freedom from poverty as a human right—Who owes what to the very poor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 237-54.

²⁵³ Campbell, "Humanity before justice," 6.

“assistance”: the well-ordered societies will be obligated to help the burdened societies build education, strengthen civic ties, enhance and/or reform domestic economic infrastructure, ensure the rule of law, and improve basic service delivery by the government; they might even need to “effect structural changes in the financial and economic environment in which formerly burdened societies interact with wealthier and more technologically advanced societies.”²⁵⁴ Rawls’s proposal on the duty of assistance would add up to a “new Marshall Plan”, requiring grand overhaul of the international aid system.²⁵⁵

Having substantiated the claim that positive duty theorists support the move away from charity to justice-based solutions, I would like to address a remaining issue. It appears, from Kuper’s criticism of Singer, that theories endorsing positive duties are more vulnerable to the charge of charity. Why is this? This issue has important practical implications because if we want to achieve a paradigm shift, we will need to understand how the core elements of charity differ from those of justice, and devise strategies accordingly to motivate such a shift. A closer reading of critics of charity suggests two most salient contrasts between charity and justice.

First, calls for charitable donations often mirror a wrongly simplistic view of the world, suggesting a “false picture of a uniformly affluent Western world and a uniformly poor and hungry Third World,”²⁵⁶ leading to the unwanted neo-colonialist implication that the private donors in Western countries are the “Powerful Giver” with full agency, superior over the passive “Grateful Receiver” in the developing countries.²⁵⁷ This simplicity obstructs people from reflecting on both the complex moral relationships between the affluent and the poor, and the causes of extreme poverty. In fact, charity suggests that the givers and receivers are only randomly related – as shown in Singer’s analogy with the drowning child. Put otherwise, the charity approach is “acontextual and ahistorical”, giving the impression that citizens from affluent countries are “merely distant witnesses of a problem unrelated to

²⁵⁴ Rex Martin, “Rawls on International Distributive Economic Justice,” in Rex Martin and David Reidy eds., *Rawls’s Law of Peoples: A Realistic Utopia?* (Blackwell, 2006): 226-242. But note that there is controversy around how we should understand this duty of assistance. For an overview of the debate see Gillian Brock, “Recent work on Rawls’s Law of Peoples: Critics versus defenders,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (2010): 85-101.

²⁵⁵ Martin, “Rawls on International Distributive Economic Justice,” 238.

²⁵⁶ Radhika Balakrishnan and Uma Narayan, “Combining justice with development: Rethinking rights and responsibilities in the context of world hunger and poverty,” *World Hunger and Morality. New Jersey: Prentice Hall* (1996), as quoted in Hennie Lotter, “Poverty,” in Darrel Moellendorf and Heather Widdows eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Global Ethics* (Routledge, 2015), 158.

²⁵⁷ Darnton and Kirk, *Finding Frames*; Kirk, “Beyond charity.”

ourselves, with a weak, positive duty to help.”²⁵⁸ By contrast, the justice perspective takes better account of the causes of global poverty in effort to change the global economic structure.²⁵⁹

Second, charity demands only voluntary actions and therefore lacks the moral stringency that justice commands. A common claim about charity is that it implies only imperfect duties, which are “indeterminate both with respect to the recipient of aid and the amount and kind of aid”; imperfect duties understood this way cannot be enforced, as any such attempts would be “arbitrary and subject to abuse.”²⁶⁰ Duties of justice, by contrast, are perfect duties, with determinate content and objects. The practical implication of this distinction is that the charity approach cannot sustain long-term aid, partly because of an overreliance on voluntary actions driven – often by people’s compassion, could backfire eventually, leading to “fatigue, aversion, even contempt.”²⁶¹ Another reason why voluntary donation entailed by the charity perspective would fail in the long-term has to do with fairness: a corollary of the unenforceable nature of duties of charity is that some affluent citizens and their governments would “rally to the cause again and again while knowing full well that most others similarly situated contribute nothing or very little, that their contributions are legally optional, and that, no matter how much they give, they could for just a little more always save yet further children from sickness or starvation.”²⁶² By contrast, the moral stringency of duties of justice requires institutions to enforce all eligible social members to perform these duties, regardless of one’s willingness to do so, as Pogge’s proposal of GRD shows.

The two key differences suggest that the argumentative strategies of positive duty theories are probably less suitable than those of negative/remedial duty theories to produce a paradigm shift in the real world. In general, positive duty theories spare less effort on illustrating international causal mechanisms of extreme poverty, identifying culpable agents and demanding institutional reforms based on the causal diagnosis. By treating poverty as a

²⁵⁸ Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, 217; Judith Lichtenberg, "What is charity?," *Philosophy & Public Policy Quarterly* 29, no. 3/4 (2009): 16-20.

²⁵⁹ Kuper, “More than Charity”; for relevant discussion see Andrew Kuper, "Global poverty relief: More than charity," in Andrew Kuper ed. *Global Responsibilities: Who Must Deliver on Human Rights* (Routledge, 2015): 155-172; Dale Jamieson, "Duties to the distant: Aid, assistance, and intervention in the developing world," in Gillian Brock and Darrel Moellendorf eds, *Current debates in global justice* (Springer, Dordrecht, 2005): 151-170; Anthony Langlois, "Charity and justice in global poverty relief," *Australian Journal of Political Science* 43, no. 4 (2008): 685-698.

²⁶⁰ Allen Buchanan, "Justice and charity," *Ethics* 97, no. 3 (1987): 561.

²⁶¹ Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, 218.

²⁶² Pogge, 218.

problem simply “out there” and recommending generic positive duties, the theories risk sounding like the predominant charity paradigm they want to distance themselves from. I will not say too much here on the topic of practical strategy of bringing about a paradigm shift, as this will be a dominant theme in the rest of the chapters. In particular, I will conduct a more in-depth discussion on the difference between charity and justice in Chapter 4, tracing how response towards *domestic* poverty evolved historically from the charity paradigm to the justice paradigm.

In this chapter, I have examined five prominent normative theories on extreme global poverty. They appear vastly different in their causal understanding of the issue and provide prescriptions that contain essentially different values. However, in the last section, I have established that despite their philosophical differences, the theories would converge on the practical conclusion that extreme poverty demands much more beyond charity. The current charity paradigm is not only unhelpful, as I suggested in Chapter One, but unjustifiable as well. There is compelling reason to seek a paradigm shift.

3. From the motivational gap to the agency gap

Introduction: the conundrum of motivating cosmopolitanism

Eradicating extreme global poverty shares two important demands with other global justice projects: that ordinary citizens transcend parochialism and give more consideration to the essential interests of people beyond borders, and that the global economic and political institutions be reformed in such a way that countries cooperate under fairer terms and each individual is given their just due, or failing that, a sufficient amount of basic goods to lead a decent life. As far as these two demands go, eradicating global poverty also shares one major, widely-acknowledged weakness with global justice projects – cosmopolitanism’s lack of motivational power.

The issue of cosmopolitan moral motivation concerns the circumstances under which human beings could reliably and consistently perform their moral duties as prescribed by cosmopolitanism. Simply put, it asks: if cosmopolitanism is indeed a sensible moral doctrine, why doesn’t everybody act like a cosmopolitan and support global justice projects? The issue becomes most manifest and perplexing if we consider a simple fact: the once widely-held opinion – that strangers outside our political community deserve less moral attention, has long given way to the predominant belief that all individuals, regardless of their nationality, gender or ethnicity, are morally equal.²⁶³ Ancient Athenians find it obvious that slaves are not human beings and women are inferior beings; a perpetrator in one of the major genocides in the 20th century would live comfortably with the idea that his victim is, despite their biological similarity, far less human; by contrast, few people today would deny a group of their human rights, or declare a group deserving of certain misery in virtue of their different political, religious or ethnic affiliation. It is in this sense that Michael Blake announces “we are all cosmopolitans today”, living “in a moral universe in which cosmopolitanism has won.”²⁶⁴ But if we have all turned cosmopolitan and universal human rights do enjoy universal recognition, why haven’t our actions demonstrated this change of belief? Why have we continued to give disproportionate attention to marginally improving the wellbeing of those near and dear to us while allowing millions of people to live amidst absolute yet completely avoidable suffering? Examining our superficial

²⁶³ Michael Blake, "We are all cosmopolitans now," in Gillian Brock ed. *Cosmopolitanism versus Non-Cosmopolitanism: Critiques, Defenses, Reconceptualizations* (Oxford: OUP, 2013): 35-54.

²⁶⁴ Blake, 53.

cosmopolitan commitment from a practical perspective, Lenard administers a dose of cold reality: “We are clearly not cosmopolitans, if by ‘cosmopolitan’ we mean that we are willing to prioritize equally the needs of those near us and those far away from us.”²⁶⁵

It is indeed demanding to require individuals to give the needs of strangers due regard. The existence of the modern welfare state, if we do not take it for granted, is an admirable political achievement, in the sense that it makes possible the continued sacrifice of wealth on the part of better-off individuals to support their worse-off compatriots, most of whom are, and will remain, lifetime strangers. In their attempt to justify and explain the welfare state, liberal nationalists have argued that there is something distinctive about the nation, such as the national identity, a shared past, common language, and strong reciprocity within the closed community;²⁶⁶ lacking all these, cosmopolitanism in their eyes is but a “castle in the air”, an ideal without feasibility. Abstract moral commitments can only come to fruition when human beings are embedded in substantive communities, liberal nationalists would argue, and the hollowness of humanity can never compare with the nation in terms of motivating ordinary people to make genuine sacrifice. In response to this critique, cosmopolitan theorists have come up with various strategies to fill this motivational gap. In the following section, I will provide a critical discussion of these strategies. This discussion will show that this gap is not as liberal nationalists would claim; despite the complexity of human nature, cosmopolitans have developed a variety of tools which, if used well, would move, shame, incentivise and/or intimidate ordinary citizens into “doing cosmopolitanism”. But filling the motivational gap, I argue, will lead cosmopolitans to a thus far overlooked gap – the lack of motivated, well-resourced political agents to experiment and deploy all the proposed motivational strategies. Given that we already have a considerable number of motivational strategies, I argue that it is time for cosmopolitans to consider the even more practical issue of what agents would lead the change for which we have waited, and how.

3.1. The rationalist approach

I start my discussion of the motivational gap with perhaps the most straightforward of all the approaches: the rationalist strategy. It appeals merely to the evolving human sense of

²⁶⁵ Patti Tamara Lenard, "Motivating cosmopolitanism? A skeptical view," *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 7, no. 3 (2010): 346-371.

²⁶⁶ Prominent theorists who have argued for this position include Miller in his *On Nationality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Yael Tamir in *Liberal Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) and Will Kymlicka in *Liberalism, community, and culture* (Oxford University Press, 1991).

justice. Against the nationalist contention that a shared national identity is essential in motivating distributive justice, some global justice theorists pin their hopes on the progress of morality, which will someday bring us beyond the parochial focus on compatriots to embrace humanity as a whole. Simon Caney, for instance, argues that the nationalist conception of moral motivation is “too static” and ignores the fact that our moral principles are jointly produced by “political institutions, the behaviour of others, and prevalent social norms.”²⁶⁷ Citing struggles against apartheid, use of landmines and animal abuse, where there is little to no identity overlap between movement participants and the oppressed, Caney believes that a “commitment to universal rights” itself is adequate to motivate substantive actions of justice.²⁶⁸ Underlying this argument is the Kantian belief that human beings inherently act in accordance with the moral law, or, as Brian Barry puts it, a fundamental human desire to “be able to justify our conduct in an impartial way.”²⁶⁹ If this premise is true, our current inaction can only be explained by a significant experiential knowledge gap about global poverty, as Pogge suspects:

We live in extreme isolation from severe poverty. We do not know anyone earning less than \$30 for a 72-hour week of hard, monotonous labour. The one-third of human beings who die from poverty-related causes includes no one we have ever spent time with. Nor do we know anyone who knows and cares about these deceased – someone scarred by the experience of losing a child to hunger, diarrhoea, or measles, for example. If we had such people as friends or neighbours, we would think harder about world poverty and work harder to help end this ongoing catastrophe.²⁷⁰

The solution to cosmopolitan apathy is rather uncomplicated then: we simply need to alert more people to the fact that millions of their fellow human beings are living in severe deprivation, which is not only the result of gravely unjust political and economic institutions, but is in itself a serious violation of basic human rights. It should be noted that such knowledge could not remain at an abstract level. For citizens who live in affluent countries and take health care, education, clean water and other social services for granted, the fact that 10 percent of global population live under US\$1.90 per day probably goes beyond their life experience to the point of being incomprehensible. To leave a genuine

²⁶⁷ Simon Caney, *Justice beyond Borders: A Global Political Theory* (Oxford University Press: 2005): 133.

²⁶⁸ Caney, 133.

²⁶⁹ Barry, *Theories of justice: a treatise on social justice ((Vol. 16)* (University of California Press: 1989): 363-4.

²⁷⁰ Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, 4.

impression in their minds, as Pogge comments above, the knowledge must, take the form of specific instances of individuals combatting daily challenges – possibly through feature stories and documentaries. Hopefully, more such quasi-experiential knowledge would motivate moral actions, either in the form of providing more direct aid or working towards building an international distributive scheme. It is perhaps this rather undemanding view of moral motivation that led Caney to boldly accord much more weight than other theorists to positive duties of justice to eradicate extreme poverty.²⁷¹

The simplicity of the rationalist approach, however, renders it unlikely to make a clear distinction between the nature of obligation and the motivational source of obligation.²⁷² Whereas Caney is right to point out that moral principles, artificial in nature, could change over time to include an expanding group of people, it is problematic for him to simply assume that moral actions would follow naturally from moral principles. To say so means he “fails to offer an account of what it means to motivate in the first place.”²⁷³ In the liberal nationalist account, nationality – which typically implies a shared culture and identity, strong reciprocal relationship by virtue of living in the same society under laws written by all members – accomplishes two separate tasks: it *grounds* the duties members owe to each other in virtue of their membership in an ethically meaningful community, and, in the meantime, provides a potent sentimental pull, a “social cement” that makes willing and ongoing sacrifice possible.²⁷⁴ By contrast, to expect justice to both *ground* and *motivate* moral duties at the same time is to confuse the issue of moral justification with that of finding a practical means to channel duties into action. In fact, even in the fights against apartheid and use of landmines that Caney cited, it is dubious to claim that the activists are motivated by rationally derived moral principles and their sense of justice. Anyone who has witnessed a demonstration could sense the strong emotions behind it – feelings like indignation, anger and sympathy are always at play. Failing to elaborate how, in the case of global poverty, a sense of justice might translate into feelings equivalent to the nationalist “social cement” shows Caney fails to appreciate the force of liberal nationalist argument or grasp what is at stake in the debate about cosmopolitan moral motivation.

²⁷¹ Caney, “Global poverty and human rights: the case for positive duties.”

²⁷² Lenard, “Motivating cosmopolitanism?,” 357.

²⁷³ Lenard, 357.

²⁷⁴ David Miller, “Nationality: some replies”, *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (1997): 70; Lenard, “Motivating cosmopolitanism?,” 357.

3.2. The sentimentalist approach

If cosmopolitanism is so often perceived as advocating for a cold, rootless ethical principle “fated to a world of superficiality, far from the real world of blood and belonging,”²⁷⁵ the rationalist strategy of motivation should take the blame. Yet this perception does little justice to the richness and diversity of cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitan theorists are not blind to the motivational value of sentiments, whose role in moral reasoning has found much support in recent findings in neuroscience and psychology.²⁷⁶ Indeed, many intend to address the liberal nationalist challenge head-on, building their accounts on the power of sympathy. For sympathy to work its magic, the first step is to acknowledge that humanity is united not in pursuit of higher ideals, but in their mortality and frailty, in being “a wretched, feeble and pitiable existence, marked by uncertainty, insecurity and eventually death.”²⁷⁷ Recognition of human frailty produces a common distaste for cruelty, hence the possibility of “putting our sentient aspect to the fore, the feeling rather than thinking human being.”²⁷⁸ Sympathy evoked through this path would enhance the solidarity we have with distant others, if our commitments to a more just world already coincide; but even when ideas of justice clash, sympathy thus derived would also cement a united front for the minimal goal of eliminating suffering, and open the door to further mutual understanding.²⁷⁹ It is only with sympathetic ears that we can understand the “specifics of others’ situation” and “imaginatively construct for oneself their feelings and needs.”²⁸⁰ Since the central element of sympathy is the capacity to imagine other people’s pain, Nussbaum recommends that civic education, on the one hand, give more weight to arts, which could cultivate our “imaginative abilities”, and on the other, be more multicultural so that students through imagination become participants in the struggle of distant others.²⁸¹ This is essentially a

²⁷⁵ Catherine Lu, "The one and many faces of cosmopolitanism," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 8, no. 2 (2000): 250.

²⁷⁶ For a review of recent scientific findings on this, see Renee Jeffery, "Reason, emotion, and the problem of world poverty: moral sentiment theory and international ethics," *International Theory* 3, no. 1 (2011): 143-178.

²⁷⁷ Lu, "The one and many faces of cosmopolitanism," 253-4.

²⁷⁸ Lu, 256.

²⁷⁹ Carol Gould, "Transnational solidarities," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 38, no. 1 (2007): 148-164.

²⁸⁰ Gould, 148-164.

²⁸¹ Martha Nussbaum, "Compassion: The basic social emotion," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 13, no. 1 (1996): 50-1.

strategy of “habituation”, conditioning citizens to extend their moral sights outward, with the ultimate goal of producing a “xenophilia” – an aptitude to “encounter the foreign.”²⁸²

Recent psychology experiments have demonstrated that thinking from others’ perspectives is an important factor in promoting beneficent behaviours.²⁸³ However, the sentimentalist approach still has its limits. Whereas rationalist cosmopolitanism, with the aid of reason, is able to prescribe a set of principles with universal applicability, supporters of the sentimentalist approach may struggle to maintain the global reach of their cosmopolitanism. After all, sympathy arises not from the abstract and general recognition of the human condition, but from encounters with the “particular strangers.”²⁸⁴ As a result, the once dreamed-of “global solidarity” must be conceded as a “horizon of possibility” and give way to more realistic “transnational solidarities” – various inclusive networks to unite individuals across borders.²⁸⁵ On Gould’s optimistic account, such networks, driven by sympathy and a “readiness to help”, might initially focus on providing aid only, but over time, they have the potential to develop a political dimension through discursive construction, as the networks grow and participants concern themselves more with the injustice of oppression and exploitation, converging on a shared view of justice.²⁸⁶ Gould delineates a plausible path of how transnational social movements that start out as particularist could end up universalist in principle – if not in actual scope. But how far transitional networks could grow along this path remains to be tested in reality.

3.3. Effective altruism

Peter Singer, who famously drew the analogy between rescuing a drowning child from a shallow pond and saving people dying from famine afar, argues that the line between charity and justice needs to be re-drawn, and that that people from the affluent world are morally required by justice to give a substantial proportion of their money to alleviate global poverty. Failing that, they should contribute their income to the level where further donation would “cause as much suffering to myself or my dependents as I would relieve by

²⁸² Chris Durante, "Toward a cosmopolitan ethos," *Journal of Global Ethics* 10, no. 3 (2014), 317; Graham Long, "Moral and sentimental cosmopolitanism," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 40, no. 3 (2009): 317-342 discusses cosmopolitan education as well.

²⁸³ Nicholas Faulkner, “‘Put Yourself in Their Shoes’: Testing Empathy's Ability to Motivate Cosmopolitan Behaviour,” *Political Psychology* 39, no. 1 (2018): 217-228.

²⁸⁴ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006):98.

²⁸⁵ Gould, “Transnational Solidarities.”

²⁸⁶ Gould, 148-164.

my gift.”²⁸⁷ Despite Singer’s good intent, these recommendations are more likely to scare off people from doing good than motivating them. Having realised the gap between moral belief and practice, Singer has in recent decades toned down his appeal to the point where the “financially comfortable” only need to donate roughly 5 percent of their annual income while the richer are expected to go higher above this line.²⁸⁸ Now a vocal advocate of the “effective altruism” movement, Singer has shifted his focus away from the total amount of giving. Instead, based on reason and evidence, he identifies and advocates for effective aid programs that we should support financially, for the purpose of achieving maximum utility of the donations. The rise of Give Well and Charity Navigator, organisations devoted to compiling and providing data of charity performance to recommend the most efficient and, more importantly, effective, charities, is testimony to the success of the “effective altruism” movement in recent years.

As for how effective altruism motivates its followers and attract new recruits, Singer points to a three-pronged strategy. He acknowledges the power of reason in the first place, citing the fact that a *New York Times* article with UNICEF and Oxfam telephone numbers listed at the end led to \$600,000 more in donations than usual.²⁸⁹ Second, reason would be reinforced by a positive psychology, or the “warm glow” effect – donors, knowing their actions make a difference in other people’s lives, would feel happier and more fulfilled.²⁹⁰ Singer does recognise that there are practical obstacles to giving selflessly, some of which are deeply wired in our brains, such as the parochial preference to favour those we know, or the tendency to stand by, hoping others will lend a helping hand.²⁹¹ However, he also reminds us that we are fundamentally social animals and tend to follow suit when others around all behave in a certain way. The third prong, therefore, is to develop a culture of giving, which is perhaps still inchoate at this stage but will snowball with the magic wand of conformity, coupled with appropriate ways to condition people’s behaviour.²⁹² Singer identifies several effective “nudges”: putting names and faces to the people helped could bring a stronger human touch (a tactic we are familiar with from charity appeals); being more open about the size of donations, setting a bar for other potential donors to live up to; an “opt-out” donation-from-income system would also be effective, by setting the default

²⁸⁷ Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality,” 241.

²⁸⁸ Singer, *The life you can save*, 152.

²⁸⁹ Singer, 61-2

²⁹⁰ Singer, 168-173.

²⁹¹ Singer, 45-62

²⁹² Singer, 63-8.

choice to donate a certain percentage of salary but also allowing employees to opt out of it.²⁹³

Singer's motivational strategies rest on the assumption that effective giving is the proper solution to global poverty. It is this assumption that is the target of many critics. For one thing, effective altruism, utilitarian and consequentialist in nature, could dismiss important values such as rights and equality as only instrumental to the ultimate purpose of improving overall welfare, and therefore might, for this purpose, endorse unjust arrangements such as sweatshops.²⁹⁴ The methodologies adopted by supporters of effective altruism are not flawless either, often giving more weight to fields where the impact could easily be observed, favouring quantifiable data over less tangible goods.²⁹⁵ However, while these criticisms could be dealt with, effective altruists will find it difficult to defend against the charge that the movement is an improved version of the traditional charity model: it is deeply de-politicised, and unlikely to bring about genuine structural change.²⁹⁶ Satisfying thoughts like "my small donation today buys 10 more bed nets that will shield children from mosquito bites" precludes further inquiry into why these children are exposed to such danger in the first place. Extreme poverty and its various related malaises, as I have argued in the first two chapters, are often the result of problematic, if not fundamentally unjust, political and economic institutions which could not be cured by technologised solutions. Even if Singer's motivational strategies successfully habituate everyone to charitable donations, how much closer it would bring us to the global justice ideal remains highly doubtful.

3.4. The "thick cosmopolitanism" approach

So far, we have seen that the rationalist approach lacks strong sentimental motivation, the sentimentalist approach is restricted in scope by its emphasis on the specific, and effective altruism is too detached from the essentially political project of global justice. The fourth approach, what Dobson calls "thick cosmopolitanism" and elaborated by other theorists²⁹⁷

²⁹³ Singer, 68-78.

²⁹⁴ Jason Gabriel, "Effective altruism and its critics." *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 34, no. 4 (2017), 458-462.

²⁹⁵ Gabriel, 462-264.

²⁹⁶ For such criticisms, see Kuper, "Facts, theories, and hard choices," 125-126, and Kuper, "More than charity"; Gabriel, "Effect altruism and its critics."

²⁹⁷ For theorists who hold similar positions, see Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*; Andrew Linklater, "The harm principle and global ethics," *Global Society*, 20(3), (2006): 329-343 and Iris Marion Young, "Responsibility and global justice: A social connection model," *Social philosophy and policy* 23, no. 1 (2006): 102-130.

in different terms, seems to address all three flaws at once – it offers a sentimental dimension, covers a global range, and has a strong focus on justice. It therefore merits much attention as a more promising strategy. Treating thick cosmopolitanism as a broad approach, I base my discussion on Dobson’s elaboration and, in the meantime, compare it against other theorists’ versions.

The idea of “thick cosmopolitanism” is offered as a cosmopolitan counterpart to liberal nationalism. Dobson acknowledges that members of a nation, bound by thick ties of common culture and identity, do feel the ethical pull more strongly, and in this regard, the thin ties of humanity are no close match. Indeed, cosmopolitanism that merely expects individuals to empathise with distant others based on their common humanity amounts to nothing more than the “universalisation of Samaritanism”, with duties of beneficence, not justice, at its core.²⁹⁸ But, two facts, one empirical and one moral, would work in combination to “thicken” the ties of humanity. The empirical fact is that our world is increasingly and inextricably globalised, and as participants in the world economy, we unavoidably become a link in the complex chains that causally produce much of the suffering around the globe. The moral fact is that we have an indisputable duty, except under certain special circumstance, to avoid harming others; a natural extrapolation from this fact is that if harm is already done, either intentionally or unintentionally, justice demands remedial actions from us. Since in a globalised world, the suffering of distant others in most cases can be diagnosed as the result of exploitation, unfair economic or political arrangement or consumption/power imbalance between the rich and poor, the two facts together produce a “thick cosmopolitanism”, connecting members of humanity with thick causal ties of “materiality rather than culture.”²⁹⁹

The nature of the ties could be illustrated through two examples. Today, major natural disasters such as floods or droughts that threaten the livelihood of millions in developing countries, for instance, are often attributed to global warming and climate change. But anthropogenic climate change is the result of a long history of unrestrained carbon emission from industrialised regions. Having undeniably benefited from industrialisation, individuals from affluent countries are implicated in the causal chain and, consequently, would bear duties of “compensatory justice.”³⁰⁰ Similarly, in her account of the “social connection

²⁹⁸ Andrew Dobson, "Thick cosmopolitanism," *Political Studies* 54, no. 1 (2006): 172.

²⁹⁹ Dobson, 174

³⁰⁰ Dobson, 174.

model”³⁰¹ of global justice, Iris Young analyses another case of the global material ties – sweatshops. Garment workers continue to toil under harsh working conditions at minimal wages because of a “structural injustice”, or unjust “background conditions”, to which many people contribute by shopping from brands that subcontract their production to these sweatshops.³⁰² For Dobson, the motivational power of such causal material ties is salient and powerful enough to even make “sympathy” and “identification” redundant considerations³⁰³ Additionally, thick cosmopolitanism applies at a genuinely global level, due to each individual’s deep ecological and social embeddedness in the close-knit world: few things we possess and consume are not the result of complex chains of global production, and therefore nobody is exonerated from participating in global harm.³⁰⁴

Dobson tries to distinguish his account from Pogge’s. On the latter account, citizens of the affluent world are complicit in an unjust economic and political order that impoverishes the poor. Dobson, by contrast, focuses on individual responsibility as opposed to Pogge’s “thoroughgoing focus on ‘institutional arrangement.’”³⁰⁵ Granted, institutions do have far-reaching impact, but in terms of motivation, they might “seem too remote for complicit individuals to feel that they can do much about changing their direction, so the call for action quickly degenerates into a set of reasons for inaction.”³⁰⁶ Thick cosmopolitanism, by contrast, regards individuals as “links in the chains of causal responsibility”, and the actions required of them include efforts to advocate for institutional reforms, but more importantly, changes to everyday actions.³⁰⁷

The motivational strategy of thick cosmopolitanism could be seen as an upgrade to the rationalist approach. With a sense of justice as the base ingredient, it is enhanced by the knowledge of our everyday participation or involvement in unjust processes that cause harm to the disadvantaged. The psychological mechanism behind it is called the “omission bias”, i.e., the harm being the same, failing to provide aid is considered less grave than

³⁰¹ Young’s social connection model is different from Dobson’s in several regards. Two major differences are perhaps that her understanding of responsibility is not remedial but forward-looking, and the actions she recommends are more of a collective and political nature. However, their arguments do share the assumption of individuals implicated in complex social relations across borders, and for the present purpose of discussing motivational strategies, I regard their approaches as belonging to the same strain.

³⁰² Young, “Responsibility and global justice: A social connection model.”

³⁰³ Dobson, “Thick Cosmopolitanism,” 174.

³⁰⁴ Dobson, 174-8.

³⁰⁵ Dobson, 181.

³⁰⁶ Dobson, 181.

³⁰⁷ Dobson, 182.

acting to cause the harm.³⁰⁸ The bias could be explained by the mediating emotions of guilt and shame, which people tend to reduce within their capacity.³⁰⁹ Some studies do indicate that feelings of guilt have a positive correlation with willingness to take remedial actions,³¹⁰ but other studies show more complex results. It is found, for example, that while willingness to help increases with guilt, so does dehumanisation of the victims, which is deployed as a defence mechanism to neutralise the guilt felt by regarding those suffering as less human and therefore less worthy of help. This process results in “no overall increase in cosmopolitan helping.”³¹¹ Also, it is argued that as an essentially negative feeling, guilt triggers responses of avoidance and denial.³¹² Some believe these findings shake the foundation of thick cosmopolitanism.³¹³ However, it is important to point out the severe limitation of these empirical discoveries: such research tends to focus on the highly criticised negative humanitarian appeals, which confront its audience with the most realistic images of suffering.³¹⁴ Research into the thick cosmopolitanism approach is still extremely limited, and it remains unclear for now whether more refined and tactful communication strategies and an immediate offer of feasible remedial actions might better channel guilt into desired cosmopolitan actions in a sustainable way. Furthermore, critics of thick cosmopolitanism have perhaps ignored the possibility that other, more positive feelings could also be at play – say, stronger empathy, as the result of feeling more connected to the otherwise faceless others. For these reasons, thick cosmopolitanism remains underexplored and has considerable promise.

3.5. Constructing global solidarity

A thick cosmopolitanism approach essentially adopts a defensive strategy, conceding the culture and identity-based solidarity to liberal nationalists and turning to develop a new front that focuses on the causal, material interconnectedness between human beings in a

³⁰⁸ For an overview of the relevant psychology studies on this phenomenon, see Holly Lawford-Smith, "The motivation question: Arguments from justice and from humanity," *British Journal of Political Science* 42, no. 3 (2012): 661-678.

³⁰⁹ Lawford-Smith, 671-4

³¹⁰ Nicholas Faulkner, "Motivating cosmopolitan helping: Thick cosmopolitanism, responsibility for harm, and collective guilt," *International Political Science Review* 38, no. 3 (2017): 318.

³¹¹ Faulkner, 318; also see John David Cameron, "Communicating cosmopolitanism and motivating global citizenship," *Political Studies* 66, no. 3 (2018): 718-734.

³¹² Irene Bruna Seu, "'Doing denial': audience reaction to human rights appeals," *Discourse & Society* 21, no. 4 (2010): 438-457; Stanley Cohen, *States of denial: Knowing about atrocities and suffering* (John Wiley & Sons, 2013).

³¹³ Cameron, "Communicating cosmopolitanism."

³¹⁴ I will discuss this strategy of humanitarian communication in Chapter 6.

globalised age. Supporters of the constructivist approach, however, will find this position unhelpfully conciliatory. They take the offensive, arguing that solidarity at the global level is indeed possible and feasible, or questioning whether solidarity is a genuine motivational source at all. Below, I will give an account of the former strategy, and in the following section I outline the latter. Both accounts are restructured based on arguments from different theorists who share a broadly similar position.

The first constructivist approach sheds doubt on the proclaimed “natural” or “intrinsic” nature of the ties between members of the nation. As Weinstock observes, an emerging consensus between cosmopolitans and liberal nationalists seems to be that “national partiality comes naturally to humans, whereas cosmopolitanism does violence to their natures.”³¹⁵ Similarly, Axelson understands the liberal nationalist argument, most notably David Miller’s, to be asserting that the national identity constitutes “intrinsically valuable” relationships that ground and motivate strong redistributive obligations, whereas the cosmopolitan identity is merely peripheral.³¹⁶ To concede this point would mean cosmopolitanism cannot “tap into the same fund of feeling” shared by co-nationals, and to seek a proper source of motivation, they must look elsewhere.³¹⁷ However, such contention is a salient overstatement, given the widely accepted idea that the national identity is an artificial construct – an “imagined community” maintained and reinforced by the state through various policy instruments over hundreds of years.³¹⁸

The fact that national solidarity is largely crafted with policy tools gives cosmopolitans hope to replicate the nation-state success at the global level. Indeed, as proponents of thick cosmopolitanism seek to reveal, members of humanity are already interrelated in various ways, and it is not implausible to argue that a further nudge in the right place and direction would see a genuine cosmopolitan identity take shape. A variety of tools have been proposed. Civic education is believed to have great promise to construct a sense of togetherness and to “counterbalance the creation of national myths.”³¹⁹ As I have discussed in section 3.2, Nussbaum advocates a kind of cosmopolitan education, and Lea Ypi similarly argues for a civic education to familiarise citizens with “cosmopolitan virtues.”³²⁰

³¹⁵ Weinstock, “Motivating the global demos,” 94.

³¹⁶ David Axelsen, “The State Made Me Do It: How Anti-cosmopolitanism is Created by the State,” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 21, no. 4 (2013): 451-457.

³¹⁷ Weinstock, “Motivating the global demos,” 94.

³¹⁸ Benedict Anderson offers the most influential argument on this issue in his *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism (Revised edition)* (Verso Books, 2006).

³¹⁹ Axelsen, “The State Made Me Do It,” 468.

³²⁰ Lea Ypi, *Global Justice and Avant-Garde Political Agency* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 51.

Another method is to increase democratic participation in international institutions, so that “non-compatriots would become democratic co-deliberators” and a sense of solidarity would thus be built.³²¹ Media in the age of globalisation is also believed to be able to generate a sense of common fate, allowing the global audience to experience major events simultaneously.³²² In a word, seeing solidarity as a construct, cosmopolitans have much to learn from nation-builders.

It is difficult to say, at this stage, whether these cosmopolitan community-building tools would compare with their equivalents used by nation-states. It would not be a fair contest – after all, the cosmopolitan tools are mostly inchoate, untested proposals, whereas the nation-building tools are well-honed over centuries, backed by adequate political and economic resources, and deftly deployed by highly motivated politicians. However, there are two challenges that supporters of the constructivist approach cannot easily dismiss on grounds of being the late starter.

One challenge concerns the absence of a global ethos in a world marked by extraordinary cultural diversity and value plurality. The nation-state usually has a shared moral outlook, be it natural or constructed, and it is convenient to appeal to this moral consensus in order to justify greater obligations towards each other. Granted, cultural diversity is on the rise at home as well, making the justification of redistributive duties more challenging than before for the nation-state. But what mitigates the concern that diversity would pull a welfare state apart is the rather common practices of active assimilation and integration, and of seeking commitment from newcomers to accept whatever responsibilities that come with the rights of citizenship.³²³ Through these policies, the state is still able to maintain a stable welfare scheme. The same difficulty, however, is hugely magnified at the international level – there is hardly a global ethos to begin with, nor is there an authority with coercive power to instill and cultivate one. To exacerbate this, as I have shown in the last chapter, philosophical disputes abound around the nature and the demandingness of our obligations to distant others, and around what kind of global institutions, if needed at all, would be desirable. If a collective identity presupposes some kind of minimal agreement on values, how could a

³²¹ Axelsen, “The State Made Me Do It,” 469.

³²² Beck, “Cosmopolitanism as imagined communities of global risk.”

³²³ For arguments on this see David Miller, “Multiculturalism and the Welfare State: Theoretical Reflections,” in Keith Banting and Will Kymlicka eds., *Multiculturalism and the Welfare State: Recognition and Redistribution in Contemporary Democracies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 323-338.

cosmopolitan identity come into being, without a way to convince people with diverging moral beliefs and ways of moral reasoning to accept some core values?

One suggestion that cosmopolitans should consider is to hold back the philosopher's impulse to seek and promote the truth and adopt a pragmatist spirit instead. A quick look through existing theories on the issue of global justice would reveal that despite having different ways to interpret the nature of the issue, appealing to different philosophical foundations and coming to different philosophical conclusions, they converge somewhat in terms of their policy recommendations.³²⁴ As I have discussed in Chapter 2, Pogge argues that having violated our negative duty not to harm, we bear remedial duties to the global poor; Singer regards extreme poverty, regardless of its cause, a moral evil and urges us, from a utilitarian point of view, to give what we can to reduce it; Rawls thinks poverty is largely a country's own making, but recommends affluent peoples lend a helping hand to burdened societies. Diverging as the three philosophical positions may be, they would agree on a public policy in an affluent nation to transfer more wealth to the global poor. Following Rawls's *Political Liberalism*, Weinstock proposes that we adopt the criterion of reasonableness when communicating global justice arguments to the general public for the purpose of persuasion. This means as long as a theory is logically sound from its own premises, and even if one does not subscribe to this particular argument or believe in its premises, they could still deploy it to persuade or motivate others in order to achieve the political purpose of getting more people to support projects of global justice. Doing so would reduce the difficulty of bringing people of different beliefs together for a common cause, and over time, hopefully, an "overlapping consensus", or a minimum set of shared values, would be built.³²⁵ This will then serve as a global ethos that underlies global solidarity.

The second objection to the attempt to construct a cosmopolitan solidarity concerns the nature of collective identity. Any meaningful collective identity, the objection goes, is a "we" feeling, and would logically require an external and/or adversarial "Other."³²⁶ The nations-states always have the "Other" handy, as no nation is short of enemies or competitors, be they cultural, political, economic or military. The existence of the Other is an essential cohesive force that strengthens solidarity and makes possible mutual sacrifice, not only in the redistributive sense but also in the literal sense, i.e., fighting to death on

³²⁴ Weinstock, "Motivating the Global Demos," 100-5.

³²⁵ Weinstock, "Motivating the Global Demos."

³²⁶ The most representative of this view is Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (Verso, 2000).

battlefields. Each episode of sacrifice would then be engraved into the national collective memory, powering future generations to carry on the solidarity passed on by their ancestors. However, as Abizadeh argues, this line of objection is doubly mistaken. The idea that national identity requires an external Other is rooted in the historically contingent fact of state sovereignty. On its own, sovereignty is *internally* facing, denoting supreme power over all other authorities in a given territory. However, being the cornerstone of international relations since the Westphalian treaty, it has assumed an *external* face as well, presupposing the existence of more than one sovereign power and requiring reciprocal recognition of each other's mandate to rule internally without interference.³²⁷ Stemming from this context, national identity naturally has an external Other. But the combination of external and internal sovereignty is merely a historical contingency. Conceptually, it is not incoherent to conceive sovereignty devoid of any outside political entity – put otherwise, a ‘world sovereign’ with no Other is logically possible.³²⁸ Consequently, the historical contingency that the collective identity always has an Other does not mean it *conceptually* requires an Other.

The second mistake regarding the need for an external Other is that its supporters think the formative process of individual identity could be directly applied to the formation of collective identity. Individuals develop a sense of the self, according to Charles Taylor, through a “dialogical” process with our “significant others”³²⁹; similarly, for Hegel, our self-consciousness could not come into being without recognition from another self-conscious human being.³³⁰ In other words, the development of individual identity is essentially a “linguistically mediated process of socialization”, and an external Other is necessary because the individual cannot develop a meaningful dialogue nor derive recognition from any of their own constitutive parts.³³¹ Yet for a collective identity to take shape, the dialogue could simply take place from within – between its members.³³² In fact, even the national identity is at least partially constructed from such internal debate and dialogues, especially when the traditional conception of national identity can no longer keep pace with increasing cultural diversity. The French President Nicholas Sarkozy's

³²⁷Arash Abizadeh, "Does collective identity presuppose an other? On the alleged incoherence of global solidarity," *American Political Science Review* 99, no. 1 (2005): 49.

³²⁸ Abizadeh, 49.

³²⁹ Charles Taylor, "The politics of recognition," *New contexts of Canadian criticism* 98 (1997): 25-73.

³³⁰ Abizadeh, "Does collective identity presuppose an Other?," 48.

³³¹ Abizadeh, 48.

³³² Abizadeh, 48.

controversial launch of national debate in 2009 on what it meant to “be French” is one such example. Political ploy or not, this nation-wide discussion has in the least spurred citizens of France to reflect on how its traditional, homogeneous nationhood could accommodate a more diverse population, in particular the Muslim minorities – an internal Other.³³³

To summarise this approach, there is a range of tools to help cosmopolitans to emulate nation builders in the past to construct a solidary community across borders. This grand political project is at least possible in theory, although its practicality and time frame remain unknown.

3.6. Constructing a Hobbesian community

Advocates of the strategy outlined above shares with liberal nationalists the assumption that solidarity is pivotal to motivating redistributive duties, and on this basis, it ambitiously seeks to build a cosmopolitan solidarity analogous to the national version. But is that assumption true in the first place? Do compatriots really pay tax out of mutual care to sustain a redistributive scheme for the benefit of the worse off members in their community? It does not require too much cynicism about human nature to doubt this. Rarely is the plain truth pointed out in the debate about moral motivation that citizens pay tax under the coercive power of the state, knowing full well the legal severity of tax evasion. It could well be that people pay tax simply because rationally and obviously, it is the safer option compared to a large amount of fine or imprisonment. Because of the presence of strong, self-interest-based incentives, the role of solidarity in motivating people to keep discharging their duties of distributive justice could very possibly be exaggerated by liberal nationalists.³³⁴ Moreover, tax payments often does not even require citizens to act in any way – it is simply deducted from their income through the employer, or calculated into the price of commodities. With bureaucratic services acting between the givers and receivers, it is not that plausible to accord so much importance to the motivational power of culture and identity-based solidarity. In fact, this “bureaucratic institutionalization” is believed to dilute the solidarity to the point of making it “quasi solidarity.”³³⁵ Lacking a voluntary tax system to draw comparison, we simply do not know to what extent tax is paid because people fear

³³³ Jean-François Caron, "Understanding and interpreting France's national identity: The meanings of being French," *National identities* 15, no. 3 (2013): 223-237.

³³⁴ Weinstock, "Motivating the Global Demos," 94-95.

³³⁵ Kurt Bayertz, "Four uses of 'solidarity'," in Kurt Bayertz ed., *Solidarity, Philosophical Studies in Contemporary Culture Vol. 5* (Springer, Dordrecht, 1999), 24.

the punishment, or because they are committed to the welfare of their fellow members in a political community.³³⁶ Indeed, research indicates that the effect of national identity is “barely noticeable” for redistribution to benefit the worst off, and there is no “systematic tendency for strength of national identity” to correlate with the welfare state.³³⁷ The natural extrapolation of this challenge – which I will call the Sceptical View – is obvious: if solidarity turns out to be much less important, then the main barrier to global wealth redistribution becomes the absence of coercive supranational institutions – its establishment will still be a formidable task, but at least we have disposed of a significant barrier.

We could expect an immediate objection to this Sceptical View. Indeed, coercive institutions possibly play a more important role than solidarity in ensuring everyday tax payment, but their initial establishment could not occur without some kind of *pre-existing* solidarity. If not for genuine commitment to each other’s welfare in the same community, how could people muster up the political will to set up a permanent coercive tax-collecting mechanism in the first place? We could put the same point in social contract terms. The coercive power of the state, on one common social contract approach, results from an agreement between equally-positioned individuals to protect and promote their common good. But individuals do not simply negotiate terms and conditions about the state with anyone; rather, deliberation about such a fundamental matter can only occur within a *particular* group, where there are already a “we” feeling and mutual trust.³³⁸ Our quotidian actions might be driven by a miscellany of non-altruistic calculations, but at key political moments, it is still solidarity that elevates individuals beyond their petty, self-interested desires.

The problem with this counterargument is that it overlooks the possibility that self-interest alone would suffice to encourage people to agree to a social contract with complete strangers. As Hobbes forcibly argues, rational individuals with roughly equal powers in the state of nature will no sooner consent to an all-powerful state than they realise that failing to do so will result in everyone being in “continual fear, and danger of violent death”, and life would be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.”³³⁹ The ironic thing is that this

³³⁶ Weinstock, “Motivating the Global Demos.”

³³⁷ Richard Johnston *et al.*, “National identity and support for the welfare state,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 43, no. 2 (2010): 367-8.

³³⁸ For discussion on this social contract argument against global solidarity, see David Heyd, “Justice and solidarity: The contractarian case against global justice,” *Journal of Social Philosophy* 38, no. 1 (2007): 112-130.

³³⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter XIII: “Of the Natural Condition of Mankind As Concerning Their Felicity, and Misery,” [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Leviathan_\(modern\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Leviathan_(modern))

particular piece of epiphany does not presuppose love of each other, or even knowing each other – in fact, all that is needed is the primal fear of what brutality our self-interested fellow human beings are capable of. One could continue to object, of course, that a state created out of fear and self-interest cannot possibly be a welfare state – indeed, with no solidarity between citizens, this state is more likely to adopt a libertarian minimalism, using its coercive power to guarantee nothing more than the enforcement of contracts and the basic rights to life and security. Furthermore, once a relative stable environment is established, differences in individuals’ natural endowments will translate into differences in economic and political status; as power and wealth disparities between citizens begin to exist, self-interest will direct the better off citizens further away from supporting redistributive justice. Therefore, for welfare and redistributive institutions to win consent, the objection goes, mere self-interest will not suffice and might even be counterproductive; mutual care is still a necessary condition.

This further objection fails to capture how self-interested calculations underpin political institutions that represent rather high ideals of justice. Goodin’s analysis of modern democratic states is rather illustrative on this issue.³⁴⁰ The ever-expanding franchise in liberal democracies, for example, is a rather laudable achievement, but is also partly the result of prudential consideration. Society evolves and the relative power between different groups change over time. As a disenfranchised group becomes powerful enough and a societal conflict looks imminent, the rational option is to grant them a ticket, proportional to their power, into the political “arena”, so that potential disputes could be peacefully resolved within the rules of the game. Goodin quotes a Member of Parliament to illustrate this point: “Votes are to swords exactly what bank notes are to gold - the one is effective only because the other is believed to be behind it...”³⁴¹ Similarly, popular consent for redistributive welfare programs could be attained by appealing to various uncertainties in life – war, periodic economic depression and constant movement up and down the socio-economic ladder: since no one could be certain she would not one day be the beneficiary of welfare program, the rational option is to support building a safety net.³⁴² Viewed through this realist lens, a state is nothing more than a civilized state of nature, where each individual holds roughly equal power and pose uncertain risks to each other. Its only difference from the savage state of nature is that within the state, conflicts are resolved

³⁴⁰ Robert E. Goodin, *Motivating Political Morality* (Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1992).

³⁴¹ Goodin, 92.

³⁴² Goodin, 44-60.

through civilised and institutionalised means rather than through sword and blood. Thus understood, self-interest always has a motivational role to play, even in such high moral ideals as redistributive justice. When welfare programs are absent, popular support for their creation could be obtained by pointing out the fact that everyone would benefit –life uncertainties are reduced significantly with a safety net, and social stability is increased by assuaging dissatisfaction of the disadvantaged. Once a welfare program is established and maintained through coercive tax collection, again, self-interest would drive citizens to compare the cost of complying with tax payment with punishment after non-compliance. That said, note that this realist argument is not saying that that self-interest is the *only* motive. To love and care for each other would certainly be desirable, but the often-neglected motive of self-interest does cast doubt on the sufficiency and necessity of solidarity in winning consent for wealth redistribution.

The above arguments from Goodin and Hobbes not only defend the Sceptical View against the social contract counterargument, but more importantly point to a path forward for global justice projects: if members of humanity find themselves in a situation analogous to the Hobbesian state of nature, where everyone has roughly equal potential to pose risks to others, rationality might join hands with morality to urge the privileged population to support global justice. So naturally, the next question is, is it possible to place humanity in such a situation? Or put otherwise, is there any way we could neutralise the extreme global inequality in power and wealth between individuals from the North and the South?

Fortunately (or unfortunately), humanity is already exposed to all kinds of risks that travel beyond borders. We are familiar with arguments about how the global poor is harmed in various ways, but a simple look at headlines in the recent months would reveal the privileged population are not risk immune either. Unprecedented heat waves are sweeping through the global North and fuelling wildfires more lethal than ever.³⁴³ Residents in Japan and Korea are concerned about breathing in smog blown in from China, whereas Canadian cities are scrambling for solutions to disposing of plastic waste after China refused to accept foreign waste.³⁴⁴ Measles, once thought an eliminated disease in the US, is making a

³⁴³ Fiona Harvey, “Greek wildfires: dry winter and strong winds led to tinderbox conditions,” *Guardian*, 24 July 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/24/greek-wildfires-dry-winter-and-strong-winds-led-to-tinderbox-conditions>.

³⁴⁴ Kayla Hounsell, “Canadian municipalities struggling to find place for recyclables after China restricts foreign waste,” *CBC*, 13 April 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/garbage-recycling-china-plastics-canada-1.4586602>

comeback partly due to global tourism.³⁴⁵ Increasing incidents of lone-wolf terrorism are troubling once-secure Western cities like Toronto, London and Christchurch. North Korea now boasts of possessing nuclear weapons. In light of the various global threats, the symbolic Doomsday Clock, created by a group of scientists to illustrate the vulnerability of humanity, now stands only two minutes away from midnight – our apocalypse.³⁴⁶

However, we should not simply expect, with great optimism, that the existence of globalised risks and uncertainties would naturally translate into the prudential preference to setting up various global institutions desired by many cosmopolitans. After all, in the original state of nature, threats are directly posed by each individual to each individual; yet global risks, existing on a macro or collective level could impact on each individual very differently, depending on luck, social and economic status, and ideology. Moreover, the origin, consequences and solutions of global risks are far from clear. Ulrich Beck, a sociologist who writes extensively on the subject of global risk, argues that the way risks are “staged” or “mediatized” is key to their perception. As he explains, global risks are

incalculable, uninsurable threats and catastrophes that are *anticipated*. They often remain invisible and their perceived existence depends, therefore, on how they become defined in terms of corresponding power relations of definition. Their existence takes the form of (scientific and alternative scientific) knowledge. Consequently their “reality” can be dramatized or minimized, transformed or simply denied according to the norms that decided what is known and what is not. Hence, they are the (more or less successful) results of staging.³⁴⁷

As a result, whether individual self-interest, in the presence of various global risks, could be channelled into support for institutions conducive to global justice becomes a constructivist issue. Analogous to Marx’s “relations of production”, constructing global risks is the result of “relations of definition” – both concern “relations of domination.”³⁴⁸ The issue of the refugee crisis in recent years could be a salient example – the fact that many Western citizens are feeling less secure could be manipulated in two very different

³⁴⁵ Judy Stone, “Outbreak Or Not, Measles Is A Growing Threat Globally,” *Forbes*, 20 August 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/judystone/2018/08/20/outbreak-or-not-measles-is-a-growing-threat-globally/#67f2bd314a7d>

³⁴⁶ BBC, “Doomsday Clock moved to just two minutes to 'apocalypse',” 25 January 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-42823734>

³⁴⁷ Beck, “Cosmopolitanism as Imagined Communities of Global Risk,” 1349.

³⁴⁸ Ulrich Beck, *World at risk* (Polity, 2009), 32.

directions. Viewed through the cosmopolitan lens, the crisis is one of basic human rights and foundational international convention. More specifically, the concerns should be around distributing burdens to accept refugees fairly, legislating better policies to assess their eligibility, accommodating and integrating refugees, reflecting on what caused such major political crisis in the first place, and on systematic ways to prevent such tragedies. Viewed through the nationalist lens, the issue becomes one of massive influx of opportunistic, welfare-coveting aliens who speak different languages and believe in different religions disrupting social stability and stealing already limited job opportunities. Which side dominates the debate is hardly a question for anyone who follows news and witness the rise of right-wing sentiments in the West. The lesson is that some questions – such as who determines what counts as risk and their proof, how to define causes and results, as well as what actors are involved, how to distribute responsibilities, and how to represent risks on various media forms³⁴⁹ – have to be considered by anyone who wishes to obtain political gains from global risks. Cosmopolitans are no exception to this, if they think building a Hobbesian global community to achieve global justice is a worthy attempt.

3.7. Towards the Cosmopolitan Agency Gap

We have so far discussed several strategies of motivating cosmopolitanism: the rationalist approach depends on people's natural sense of justice; the sentimentalist approach tries to arouse our sympathy with distant others; effective altruism tries to create a new norm of giving, through reasoned persuasion, nudging and the pressure of conformity; thick cosmopolitanism, by revealing the material links in a globalised world, aims to remind individuals of their participation in global injustice and induce guilt-reducing behaviour; one constructivist approach tries to build a global solidarity, whereas the other exploits self-interest as its motivational source. Besides, other disciplines are contributing their knowledge to this motivational issue as well. For instance, communication scholars suggest tailoring different messages for different kinds of audience, whereas psychologists argue that priming certain desired values, such as universalism and benevolence, coupled with appropriate “framing” of the issue, is likely to bring about behavioural changes in the long term³⁵⁰. Cosmopolitans can now boast quite a few motivational tools at their disposal.

³⁴⁹ Beck, *World at risk*.

³⁵⁰ Cameron, “Communicating Cosmopolitanism,” 9-11, provides a good introduction to these insights from other fields.

However, it is difficult at this stage to determine which tools are more effective than others. Any conclusion might be highly context-sensitive. The same set of motivational tools surely cannot be as effective in a liberal-leaning constituency as in a conservative constituency, or in a nation of extensive colonial history as in a nation that has barely expanded historically, or in a highly self-sufficient area as an area that relies heavily on global imports. The “development of effective strategies of cosmopolitan motivation will require more experimentation and testing,”³⁵¹ and the final solution to motivating cosmopolitanism will probably be a “rather messy set of disparate tools”, as Weinstock suggests, and a spirit of “opportunism” would be required to use them effectively.³⁵²

Now, since these freshly minted tools remain largely untested, the next important step is, naturally, to experiment with them, in order to explore what kind of combination would be most fruitful in a given situation. A question then arises: what political agents³⁵³ will be obligated and/or motivated to experiment with these motivational strategies? Perhaps only Singer’s effective altruism will be quick to answer this question – it taps into the existing charity culture and gives NGOs a practical guide to improving their practice to attract donors. But its essentially depoliticising nature makes it an unfit candidate if the purpose is to effect institutional changes. Other strategies discussed so far will struggle to deal with the agency challenge. Even the seemingly simplest rationalist approach could turn out to be demanding for any potential political agent: solid facts from trustworthy sources need to be presented in an accessible way for the purpose of effective persuasion, and framed in a captivating manner so that more citizens will be interested; sceptics need to be dealt with properly. When adequate amounts of citizens are convinced and motivated to act politically, campaigns with a clear focus and achievable goal will have to be organised. All these activities are time and resource consuming. Or consider the sentimentalist approach, which places emphasis on a cosmopolitan education. The agent is presumably schools, but why would schools be interested in devoting limited funding into reading literature about foreign cultures and experiences, in order to produce more global citizens? Most importantly, schools are also where nation-building happens, where students learn about their national history, myths and achievements. So, how will cultivating good national citizens be

³⁵¹ Cameron, “Communicating Cosmopolitanism,” 13.

³⁵² Weinstock, “Motivating the Global Demos,” 106.

³⁵³ I use the idea of political agent to refer to any actors that are capable of political conduct. Typically, political agents can be an individual, a loose group of individuals, an organization or a political party.

reconciled with producing global citizens?³⁵⁴ These questions will be difficult to address. As for more complex approaches such as thick cosmopolitanism and constructivist strategies, the challenges will only be greater.

The extent to which the political agency question – i.e., what political actor is expected to carry out the prescribed political conduct, be it to pursue change or preserve the status quo – has been neglected or glossed over in political theory is curious. The reason is perhaps that in traditional political theorising³⁵⁵ before the emergence of the global justice debate, the agent is so obvious that there is hardly any need to provide an independent account. Consider, for instance, Locke’s advocacy for religious freedom, or Mill’s arguments on the value of freedom of speech, or Marx’s critique of capitalism, or Rawls’s articulation of the Difference Principle for redistributive justice: in all these cases, political theories identify a good (freedom, autonomy, right, equality) and seek to promote it, or reveal an evil (exploitation, injustice, deprivation) and seek to reduce it. Their normative recommendations aim to, without exception, improve the welfare of some, or all, of the citizens of a closed political community, and those whose essential interests are at stake are naturally incentivised to be the agents to pursue change. True, practical difficulties do often exist to obstruct their efforts. Sometimes the “default” agent might be too powerless or divided; in other cases, the agent will be too biased towards the status quo and fail to detect where their genuine interests lie. However, given the correct timing, leadership and political environment, divided parties could be united, as in the American civil rights movement; or, once the misguided agents are enlightened, actions will ensue, as in the feminist movements. But no matter how utopian a traditional normative theory is, agent(s) and theory are borne twins. Furthermore, not only is the traditional political theory blessed with naturally motivated agents, it has the convenience of targeting change *within* the political community: presumably, the agent already has a range of politically effective means, such as voting, lobbying, campaigning and running for office, demonstration, or even violent revolution, to shape *domestic* norms and/or institutions. The process is straightforward, and the cost, risk and benefit are relatively calculable.

³⁵⁴ David Miller raises this question when commenting on Ypi’s proposal of civic cosmopolitan education in “Lea Ypi on global justice and avant-garde political agency: some reflections,” *Ethics & Global Politics* 6, no. 2 (2013): 93-99.

³⁵⁵ By “traditional political theorizing”, I mean deriving political theory intended for a closed political community, presumably the nation-state. This is in contrast to theories of global justice, which typically transcend the boundaries of the nation-state and demand principles of justice apply globally.

By contrast, normative theories spawned by cosmopolitanism transcend this statist tradition of political theory and thus contain a radically different logic of political action – especially in a world as diverse, unequal and divided as ours. The institutional and policy changes that global justice theorists typically recommend will benefit the global poor and disadvantaged the most. Yet any changes to international norms and institutions will require support from affluent countries that wield power disproportionate to their population, who, in the short term at least, are likely to see their interests harmed by these changes. Hence the so-called motivational gap and the need for motivational strategies – so that citizens of affluent countries could either think long term, or be motivated to act by moral factors separate from their immediate interests. These strategies, in turn, would need a cosmopolitan agent with the resource and will to implement them. But the agent’s task does not stop here. The sheer size, complexity, and lack of transparency and democratic decision-making of international politics make it difficult for individuals to exert influence. To avoid motivated citizens being disillusioned and frustrated by international politics, the cosmopolitan agents will also be responsible for managing expectations as to what practical outcomes are achievable, and devise strategically viable ways that could channel the will of citizens towards these outcomes.

There has not been much discussion around such a cosmopolitan agent. One candidate is national politicians. Kant, when discussing how his blueprint for perpetual peace would be feasible, imagines a “moral politician”, who “interprets the principles of political prudence in such a way that they can coexist with morality.”³⁵⁶ The existence of such a politician would circumvent the motivational problem we are discussing, as when he is obligated to directly fix any defects in the state’s constitution or relations with other countries that run against the moral law of nature – even if it involves self-sacrifice. Out of prudential considerations, Kant does not recommend that the moral politician pursue radical changes hastily at the cost of “severing the bond” of a political community; but at a minimum, we should expect a moral politician who “wholeheartedly endorses that such a change is necessary” and continuously works towards the political ideal as demanded by morality.³⁵⁷ Rawls, though hardly a cosmopolitan by normal standards, makes a similar proposal in his *Law of Peoples*, to help realise his realistic utopia that nonetheless requires affluent countries to assist burdened societies to escape extreme poverty. The duty to convince

³⁵⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Toward perpetual peace and other writings on politics, peace, and history* (Yale University Press, 2006), 96-7.

³⁵⁷ Kant, 96-7.

citizens of developed nations of their international obligations, Rawls argues, lies with the “statesman”, who, unlike a politician that “looks to the next election”, displays “strength, wisdom and courage” and selflessly leads his people towards the real, long-term interests of the nation.³⁵⁸ In particular, when it comes to international distributive justice, the statesman has a duty to fight the “potential lack of affinity between peoples” and to convince his citizens that to help less developed societies aligns with their national interest³⁵⁹. Overtime, hopefully, the statesman will not need to appeal to self-interest as much, as moral beliefs have been instilled and the circle of mutual care expanded, and citizens gradually act on moral principles.³⁶⁰

The problem with Kant and Rawls’s conception of the cosmopolitan agent is its idealistic nature. Cosmopolitans surely could not sit around, waiting for this saint-like figure to be elected and save the world. The election of Donald Trump and resurgence of xenophobic nationalism across the West reduce this possibility even more. What we need, then, is a more pragmatic account of the cosmopolitan agent – an account that specifies *who* the agent is, and *how* it shall make use of the motivational tools and other methods to bring about *what* kind of political change. This will be the task for the second half of the thesis.

³⁵⁸ Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, 97-8.

³⁵⁹ Rawls, 112-4.

³⁶⁰ Rawls, 112-4.

4. Charity to Justice: lessons from history

Introduction

The discussion around moral motivation in the last chapter has covered a range of plausible motivational strategies, but has yielded no definite answer as to which strategy, or combination of them, would be effective, partly because of the fact that they remain largely untested due to what I call the agency gap. However, a paradigm shift may require more than just motivated, cosmopolitan-minded citizens to happen. Assuming we are able to fill the agency gap – I will argue that we can in the next chapter – is it possible to find some more definite, specific guidance on how to realise a paradigm shift from charity to justice on extreme global poverty in the North? Bearing this question in mind, in this chapter I will turn to history for answers.

We know that domestic poverty in modern societies is addressed under the framework of what is commonly called “social justice”, or “redistributive justice”. Rather than relying on kind donations from the better-off social members, poor citizens are legally entitled to a set of minimum living standards, which vary by country but generally ensure food, clothing, health care, education, and shelter. The welfare programs are funded through coercive taxation of all social members. Although the impression that the poor are shamefully “living on charity” has not died out, it is safe to say that generally, social attitudes and state response towards domestic poverty fall under the justice paradigm. But it does not take too much knowledge of history to know this is not always so. Historically, the poor have been regarded by their better-off contemporaries as objects of condescending sympathy, charity, if not explicit repulsion. Anyone who has read Charles Dickens would probably remember Oliver Twist’s begging “Please, sir, I want some more”, to which the master at the workhouse responded with disbelief plus a ladle blow to Oliver’s head. As Samuel Fleischacker observes, it is not until fairly recently that people have started to see the “basic structure of resource allocation across their societies as a matter of justice.”³⁶¹

How did the shift from charity to justice occur regarding domestic poverty? As we will see in this chapter, charity, initially a morally demanding Christian idea, was gradually secularised and became less stringent, until it was replaced by justice to address domestic poverty; accompanying this evolution is the changing understanding of the causes, nature

³⁶¹ Samuel Fleischacker, *A Short History of Distributive Justice* (Harvard University Press, 2009), 2.

and social impact of poverty. Through a historically informed analysis and critical discussion of major philosophers' position on domestic poverty, I will, towards the end of the chapter, unveil four crucial factors that underpin such a social transformation: avoidability, involvement, community, and implementation. The brief account to be offered here is by no means exhaustive; nor could such simplified representation of arguments do justice to the richness of theories of the thinkers to be discussed. But still, this survey will serve as a history lesson to deepen our understanding of the evolving differences between duties of justice and duties of charity; more importantly, it provides a clear set of guidelines for the minimum conditions we need to satisfy before a paradigm shift towards extreme global poverty can happen.

4.1. Early ideas of charity and justice as responses to poverty

Charity as we understand it today is not a universal response to the problem of poverty – it is noticeably absent in some cultures according to some anthropological research, and did not appear in the list of virtues prescribed by Greek and Roman philosophers.³⁶² For ancient thinkers like Plato and Aristotle, poverty is an obstacle in the pursuit of justice, and as a result, shall be addressed in the realm of justice – that is, by institutional, systematic means, typically imposed by the state.³⁶³

The English word charity is derived from the Latin word *caritas*, meaning “dear”. The word is frequently used in the Bible in teachings about neighbourly love, or friendship, between man and God – in fact, it is interchangeable with the idea of Christian love.³⁶⁴ Charity even extends to one's enemies, as evidenced from the biblical saying “love your enemies”. Because of our fallen nature, everyone should try to clear their natural selfish tendency and show selfless, unmerited love of their neighbours, which indirectly demonstrates their love of God; also, charity is regarded as the most excellent and fundamental virtue, without which no true virtue could be possible.³⁶⁵

³⁶² Jerome B. Schneewind, “Philosophical Ideas of Charity: Some historical reflections,” in Jerome B. Schneewind ed. *Giving: Western Ideas of Philanthropy* (Indiana University Press, 1996), 54-5.

³⁶³ Sharon K. Vaughan, *Poverty, Justice, and Western Political Thought* (Lexington Books, 2008), 9-10. For example, Plato in *Laws* proposes certain trade and property laws that attempt to both curb the accumulation of wealth, and to provide for families falling into poverty and the vulnerable groups. Aristotle, similarly, believes the state should try “either to merge the poor population with the rich or to augment the middle”.

³⁶⁴ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 45.

³⁶⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Question 23, “Of Charity, Considered in Itself,” https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Summa_Theologiae

The Bible's attitude towards the wealthy is much less favourable than towards the poor, as shown in the words of Jesus: "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for someone rich to enter into the kingdom of heaven."³⁶⁶ This attitude has to do with how Christianity, especially Protestantism, views property and wealth. People are merely stewards of their earthly possessions, which are assigned to them in the form of trust by God for humans to carry out his purposes on earth.³⁶⁷ In other words, the value of wealth is purely instrumental. Aquinas, for example, divided wealth into two categories – natural and artificial. Natural wealth, such as food, drink and clothing, serves as "a support of human nature", and artificial wealth, i.e. money, merely makes exchange convenient, and is not to be "sought save for the sake of natural wealth."³⁶⁸ As a result of this frugal attitude towards property, and also of the virtuous nature of charity, providing concrete aid to neighbours becomes a Christian duty.³⁶⁹ Within this Christian tradition, poverty is not a problem "to be remedied, but the spur to the exercise of humility, the practice of charity and the striving for grace."³⁷⁰

Charity is not only about benevolent acts. More importantly, it is about the motive or feeling behind actions. As this quote from Bible shows: "And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."³⁷¹ In reality, it is practiced more as "a means to the salvation of the soul of the benefactor" than as "an endeavour to diagnose and alleviate the need of the beneficiary."³⁷² But regardless of motive, charity is still a highly demanding moral duty. For example, Aquinas believed that in the face of severe deprivation, charity could assume the status of a "grave moral debt (a matter of precept), the omission of which places one in a mortally sinful state."³⁷³ In another passage replying to whether theft in times of dire need is lawful, Aquinas argued that such behaviour was morally unproblematic: natural needs take precedence over human law, and therefore "whatever certain people have in superabundance is due, by natural law, to the purpose of succouring the poor."³⁷⁴ Calvin,

³⁶⁶ *King James Bible*, Matthew 19:24.

³⁶⁷ Schneewind, "Philosophical Ideas of Charity," 55-6.

³⁶⁸ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, First part of the Second Part, Question 2, "Of Those Things which Man's Happiness Consists."

³⁶⁹ Schneewind, "Philosophical Ideas of Charity," 55-6.

³⁷⁰ Gareth Stedman Jones, *An end to poverty?: A historical debate* (Columbia University Press, 2005), 81-2.

³⁷¹ *King James Bible*, Corinthians 13:3

³⁷² Charitable Trusts Committee and Baron Nathan, *Report of Committee on the Law & Practice Relating to Charitable Trusts*, 1952.

³⁷³ Stephen J. Pope, "Aquinas on almsgiving, justice and charity: An interpretation and reassessment," *Heythrop Journal*, 32, no. 2 (1991): 186.

³⁷⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Question 66, "Of Theft and Robbery."

although arguing that God intended us to enjoy earthly life and not to live like an ascetic, similarly believed that ownership of even moderate wealth generated a responsibility to perform acts of charity.³⁷⁵ But at the same time, it needs to be pointed out that Aquinas recognised that charity could not solve the problem of poverty, because “there are many who are in need”, and “it is impossible for all to be succoured by means of the same thing”; the objects of charity therefore cannot be all of the poor, but need to be somehow decided by those who own property.³⁷⁶

4.2. The secularisation of charity

From the 16th century onwards, the religious connotations of charity were gradually stripped away, and the word assumed the more secular meaning of help to the needy.³⁷⁷ A more profound change is a “relative eclipse” of its moral stringency – once an unconditional moral doctrine binding on all, charity morphed into an optional, morally supererogatory duty.³⁷⁸ Efforts from moral and political philosophers to provide a sound distinction between duties of justice and duties of charity, and their continued deliberation on the issue of poverty and property, have contributed to these changes.

Grotius (1583-1645) is among the first philosophers attempting to give a secular account of charity, which he distinguished from justice based on his dichotomy between perfect rights and imperfect rights. For Grotius, justice concerns only perfect rights, whose content and correlative duties can be specified with precision;³⁷⁹ the other category of moral duties corresponding to imperfect rights he calls love, which includes generosity, compassion and foresight, and is articulated in a naturalistic way.³⁸⁰ The right to private property is a perfect right, and possession of more than what is needed does not give rise to any strict social responsibility to be charitable – although such duties “cannot be omitted without blame”.³⁸¹ Grotius’s follower, Samuel Pufendorf (1632-1694), made a similar distinction between perfect and imperfect rights, but added to his theory a practical principle to guide the

³⁷⁵ Schneewind, “Philosophical Ideas of Charity,” 56.

³⁷⁶ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, “Of Theft and Robbery.”

³⁷⁷ Williams, “Charity,” 45-6.

³⁷⁸ Timothy P. Jackson, *The Priority of Love: Christian charity and social justice* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 2.

³⁷⁹ Schneewind, “Philosophical Ideas of Charity,” 57-8

³⁸⁰ Schneewind, 57-8. .

³⁸¹ Schneewind, 57-8.

discharge of imperfect duties – familial and national ties matter, and so does merit.³⁸² *Ceteris paribus*, poverty caused by “sluggishness and negligence” is less deserving of charitable aid than poverty caused by factors beyond one’s control.³⁸³ Other than contributing to drawing a distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor, Pufendorf gave duties of charity more secular importance, arguing that although imperfect duties are not strict, their discharge would increase human sociability and represent “the highest flowering of human capacities.”³⁸⁴

The beginning of industrialisation and the emergence of a free market economy brought more prosperity, but also contributed to a rising poverty rate in England.³⁸⁵ The Poor Law passed in 1598 in England was among the first legislations to state that communities had a legal duty to relieve poverty. More radical voices on the entitlements of the poor also began to appear. Gerrard Winstanley, for instance, raised vocal objections to the existing arrangement of property ownership – assuming that God created enough for all, Winstanley traced poverty to structural causes and advocated for claims of property redistribution grounded in justice.³⁸⁶

John Locke (1632-1704), assigned to the post of Commissioner on the Board of Trade in 1697, wrote “An Essay on the Poor Law” where he analysed the causes and impact of poverty and proposed his solutions. Also assuming that God has blessed us with plenty, Locke, however, added assumptions concerning individual responsibility and directed blame to the poor people themselves. His reasoning is as follows: since there is enough for all, “the growth of the poor must therefore have some other causes, and it can be nothing but the relaxation of discipline and corruption of manners.”³⁸⁷ Based on this diagnosis, Locke’s legislative proposals focused on punishing “vagabonds” by restricting their freedom of movement, providing work which the poor shall be forced to do, increasing the power of the elected poor guardians who are responsible for centrally managing the poor in local communities, etc.³⁸⁸ However, despite his disapproving attitudes towards the poor, Locke did believe that natural law grounds their right to relief. The fundamental law of

³⁸² Schneewind, 59.

³⁸³ Schneewind, 59.

³⁸⁴ Schneewind, 60-1.

³⁸⁵ Vaughan, *Poverty, Justice, and Western Political Thought*, 46.

³⁸⁶ Schneewind, “Philosophical Ideas of Charity,” 61-2.

³⁸⁷ John Locke, “An Essay on the Poor Law (1697),” in Mark Goldie ed., *Locke: Political Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 182-98.

³⁸⁸ Vaughan, *Poverty, Justice, and Western Political Thought*, 52-4.

nature is the preservation of mankind,³⁸⁹ and the right to private property justly acquired, although important, should be constrained by dire want; as Locke puts it, “As justice gives every man a title to the product of his honest industry, and the fair acquisitions of his ancestors descended to him; so charity gives every man a title to so much out of another’s plenty as will keep him from extreme want, where he has no means to subsist otherwise.”³⁹⁰ Although this quote seems to suggest that only duties of charity are relevant in relieving poverty, it could be understood to mean that natural law, by grounding a moral right to aid, espouses a legal right to public relief, which in turn requires taxation – this line of interpretation makes Locke an early proponent of social justice.³⁹¹ As Schneewind observes, in Locke’s theory, “the distance between the rights that determine justice and those that determine charity is decreasing.”³⁹²

It is clear that God still played a foundational role in Locke’s moral reasoning, which was also the case in the moral theories of Locke’s contemporary philosophers like Frances Hutcheson and Joseph Butler.³⁹³ It is Hume (1711-1776) who first confined morality strictly to the realm of human needs, feelings and motives, devoid of any religious significance, by transforming Pufendorf’s distinction between perfect and imperfect rights based on the existence of a divine law giver, into an account of secular virtues.³⁹⁴ For Hume, human beings naturally possess some virtues, such as beneficence, charity, generosity, clemency, and moderation before the existence of social conventions;³⁹⁵ but justice has nothing to do with these natural virtues – it is an artificial virtue based on social conventions, arising out of “selfishness and confined generosity of men, along with the scanty provision nature has made for his wants.”³⁹⁶ Justice differs from natural virtues primarily in the way they produce good. While each individual act of natural virtues, fundamentally motivated by “natural humanity”, increases good to fellow human beings, single acts of justice might produce harm, in cases like “judges take from a poor man to

³⁸⁹ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Book II, “Of the Extent of the Legislative Power”, Section 135, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Two_Treatises_of_Government

³⁹⁰ Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Book I, “Of Adam’s Title to Sovereignty, by Donation”, Section 42.

³⁹¹ Vaughan, *Poverty, Justice, and Western Political Thought*, 56.

³⁹² Schneewind, “Philosophical Ideas of Charity,” 63.

³⁹³ Schneewind, 63-5.

³⁹⁴ Schneewind, 65.

³⁹⁵ David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature, Book 3, Of Morals*, “Section 1: Of the origin of the natural virtues and vices,” https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Treatise_of_Human_Nature

³⁹⁶ Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature, Book 3, Of Morals*, “Part II, Of Justice and Injustice, Section 2: Of the origins of justice and property.”

give to a rich.”³⁹⁷ But the whole scheme of justice and law produce benefits at the societal level, allowing a society to run on cooperative, stable and mutually advantageous terms.³⁹⁸ For Hume, justice provides the essential foundation for the right to private property and “stability of possession,” and once this convention on private property is agreed upon and observed, the human society is very close to achieving “perfect harmony and concord.”³⁹⁹ The close relationship Hume has established between justice, private property and social harmony left him little room to argue that dire necessity could justify the use of another’s property, or that possession of property produces a duty of justice to aid.⁴⁰⁰ An act of charity, strictly a natural virtue driven by concern for humanity, is a laudable “relief to the distressed and indigent.”⁴⁰¹ But its utility is rather limited: “when we observe the encouragement thence arising to idleness and debauchery, we regard that species of charity rather as a weakness than a virtue.”⁴⁰²

4.3. The stigmatised poor: debating public and private aid

Locke and Hume’s derogatory impression of the poor was rather representative of the early modern age: it is the moral deficiencies and lack of discipline and industry that caused the poor’s deplorable state of being. Joseph Townsend, an influential English vicar in the 18th century, expressed this concern without reservation: “it is only hunger which can spur and goad them on to labour; yet our laws have said, they shall never hunger...where bread can be obtained without care or labour, it leads through idleness and vice to poverty.”⁴⁰³ Despite the Christian teachings on the value of charity and the moral virtues of the poor, as discussed earlier, disdain for the poor seems to have gained the upper hand as social hierarchy took root in the West. The common belief until the mid-18th century was that the poor are ordained by God to occupy the bottom part of the social hierarchy, with the more virtuous at the top, ready to perform acts of charity as a means of redemption.⁴⁰⁴ In other

³⁹⁷ Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature, Book 3, Of Morals*, “Part III: Of the other virtues and vices, Section 1: Of the origins of the natural virtues and vices.”

³⁹⁸ Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature, Book 3, Of Morals*, “Part III: Of Other Virtues and Vices, Section I, Of the Origin of the natural virtues and vices.”

³⁹⁹ Hume, “Of the origins of justice and property.”

⁴⁰⁰ Schneewind, “Philosophical Ideas of Charity,” 65.

⁴⁰¹ David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, “Section II. Of Benevolence,”

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/An_Enquiry_Concerning_the_Principles_of_Morals

⁴⁰² Hume, “Section II. Of Benevolence.”

⁴⁰³ Joseph Townsend, *A dissertation on the poor laws: By a well-wisher to mankind* [1786] (University of California Press, 1971), 15-6.

⁴⁰⁴ Fleischacker, *A Short Introduction to Redistributive Justice*, 63-5.

words, the poor lack material means for a reason, and if they are not kept poor, the indolence in their nature would predict a life of debauchery.⁴⁰⁵ On this view, the “poverty problem” is concerned less with the reduction or eradication of poverty, and more with containing the “vice and criminality of the lower class.”⁴⁰⁶

Concern with the indiscriminating provision of public aid in England and its consequent demoralisation of the poor, the perpetuation of dependency and encouragement of idleness was shared by Jeremy Bentham, Thomas Malthus and John Stuart Mill.⁴⁰⁷ All three agreed that it was necessary to relieve poverty, but also proposed strict constraints and conditions on relief: both Bentham and Mill proposed measures to ensure that public aid provided only basic necessities so that it becomes “undesirable”; Malthus even suggested that dependent poverty be made “shameful.”⁴⁰⁸ Under the influence of Malthus, population growth became a genuine concern – poverty would only worsen if population increased faster than productivity. As a result, all three thinkers advocated for contraception as part of the solution to poverty.⁴⁰⁹ Mill, for instance, saw childbearing as an imprudent act that could have negative impact on the society at large, and he supported better education for children and women partly out of his concern of overpopulation.⁴¹⁰

Alexis de Tocqueville in his *Memoir on Pauperism* studied the problem of poverty in England and gave an even harsher criticism of public aid. Although men have a “natural passion for idleness”, Tocqueville explained, two incentives motivate them into work: “the need to live and the desire to improve the conditions of life”, the former being the motive of

⁴⁰⁵ Fleischacker, 63-5.

⁴⁰⁶ Fleischacker, 63-5.

⁴⁰⁷ Michael Quinn, "Mill on Poverty, Population and Poor Relief. Out of Bentham by Malthus?" *Revue d'études benthamiennes* 4 (2008).

⁴⁰⁸ Quinn.

⁴⁰⁹ Quinn.

⁴¹⁰ Stephen Nathanson, “John Stuart Mill on Economic Justice and the Alleviation of Poverty,” *Journal of Social Philosophy*, (2012 43): 161-176. Note that Mill also justified contraception on grounds of liberating women. Although critical of public aid, Mill still believes there is a social responsibility to maintain the subsistence of every member of society through public aid. He observes that voluntary charity is unsystematic and always does either too much or too little, lavishing resources in one place while leaving other people starving; public aid, by contrast, covers all the poor indiscriminatingly. Besides, fairness dictates that if the state provides subsistence for criminals, it has to ensure the poor receives no worse treatment. However, private charity has a unique merit: since the system of public aid need to “act by general rules”, and could not, and should not, distinguish between the deserving and undeserving poor, it become the “peculiar and appropriate province” of private aid to make distinctions between different cases of poverty, exercise discretion and give more money to the deserving poor. So Mill supports an all-covering indiscriminating system of public aid, albeit somewhat reluctantly, and he leaves an important supplementary role for private aid. See J.S. Mill *Principles of Political Economy*, Book II.12.11, and Book V, 11.47.

the majority, while the latter only effective with a small minority of men.⁴¹¹ The institutionalised provision of public aid, as he sees in England, could not distinguish the deserving and undeserving poor in practice and therefore, amounted to an unconditional provision, which, in the long run inevitably creates an “idle and lazy class”, who lives “at the expense of the industrial and working class.”⁴¹² He is critical of the right to aid as well. He recognises that the idea of right generally “elevates” the human spirit by removing from “any request its suppliant character” and by equalising the status of right-holder and duty-bearer.⁴¹³ However, the right of the poor to obtain the society’s help uniquely lowers him: in a society that does not institutionalise the right to public aid, the poor who rely on private aid are indeed inferior, but such a state is secret and temporary; by contrast, public aid is no less than a “notarised manifestation of misery, of weakness, on the misconduct of its recipient.”⁴¹⁴ Furthermore, continued public aid intensifies class division and antagonism.⁴¹⁵ Private aid by contrast is a far superior option. Most importantly, it restores the “moral tie” between two social classes which is missing in public aid: the poor, now having no right to aid, “feels inspired by gratitude”, and the act of alms-giving involves the giver in the fate of the poor.⁴¹⁶ As Vaughan comments, underlying Tocqueville’s criticism of public aid is the widely-held belief that much of the public aid went to the wicked, underserving poor, whose “moral transformation” could not happen unless private charity is all they could rely on.⁴¹⁷

In the early ages of industrialisation and capitalism, the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor, and the general stigma attached to poverty, had become so entrenched that those thinkers who believed otherwise about poverty stood out. Rousseau gave an account of poverty and social inequality that habitually contradicted the mainstream views of his time. Poverty, for Rousseau, is relative; it is the product of stark contrast with wealth as well as the ever-expanding desires that then become recognised as needs.⁴¹⁸ As for the causes of poverty, Rousseau rejected ideas of individual idleness or lack of virtues that Locke and other theorists held, and turned to blame the vain rich for

⁴¹¹ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*[1835], [1835], translated by Seymour Drescher (London: Civitas, 1997), 27-9.

⁴¹² de Tocqueville, 30.

⁴¹³ de Tocqueville, 30.

⁴¹⁴ de Tocqueville, 30.

⁴¹⁵ De Tocqueville, 31.

⁴¹⁶ De Tocqueville, 31.

⁴¹⁷ Vaughan, *Poverty, Justice, and Western Political Thought*, 116.

⁴¹⁸ Sally J. Scholz, "Rousseau on poverty." in Helen M. Stacy and Win-Chiat Lee eds, *Economic Justice* (Springer, Dordrecht, 2013), 13-28.

impoverishing others to attain wealth, indulging in luxury and idleness, and for entrenching inequality by distorting the political arrangement in their favour.⁴¹⁹ Rousseau's solution to poverty, resulting from these diagnoses, is justice-based. Again, contra Locke, Rousseau did not believe that there is naturally a right to property – it is a conditional right, the existence of which after establishing the social contract also entails a communal duty to make sure fellow citizens are equal and free and could subsist; charity is not the preferred solution, as it could only maintain the class division between the rich and poor.⁴²⁰ Echoing Plato and Aristotle, Rousseau emphasized the role of public education in instilling citizenship virtues to promote unity in a small state.⁴²¹ Another of his public policy proposals was progressive tax and sumptuary laws, which would work to discourage consumption of luxury items, encourage the virtue of simplicity and collect most of the tax revenue from the better off to fund the public aid system.⁴²² Rousseau's sympathy for the poor, unique in his ranks, is likely to stem from his own life-long experience of being a humble poor philosopher reliant on patrons' charity.⁴²³

Adam Smith is another early modern philosopher who does not attach stigma to the state of poverty. Although regarded as an early champion of a *laissez-faire* economy, Smith held complex views on justice, human nature and poverty that cannot be reduced to staunch support of free market and minimalist government,⁴²⁴ and cannot be fully described here. Relevant to our current topic are Smith's attitudes towards poverty at his time: the division of labour in the capitalist economy has increased productivity to such an extent that absolute poverty no longer exists in industrial nations such as England – in his own words, the accommodation of “an industrious and frugal peasant” exceeds that of “many an African king.”⁴²⁵ For Smith, the concern with rising inequality in his time was overrated, as it was caused largely by avarice and increasing unnecessary needs.⁴²⁶ Due to his belief that poverty was only relative and was exaggerated in severity, and also out of his commitment to private property and minimal government, some argue Smith objected to taxation for the

⁴¹⁹ Scholz, 20.

⁴²⁰ Scholz, 25.

⁴²¹ Vaughan, *Poverty, Justice, and Western Political Thought*, 77.

⁴²² Vaughan, 77.

⁴²³ Vaughan, 65.

⁴²⁴ Vaughan, 82.

⁴²⁵ Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Book 1, Chapter 1, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Wealth_of_Nations

⁴²⁶ Vaughan, *Poverty, Justice, and Western Political Thought*, 88-9.

purpose of funding poverty relief, and even famine relief.⁴²⁷ Meanwhile, Smith opposed the oppressive Poor Law that restricted free movement of the poor, as this unjustly obstructs one from carrying “his industry from one parish to another.”⁴²⁸ Also, thinking that men are naturally benevolent and sympathetic, Smith seemed to believe that charity is a prime virtue that the “impartial spectator” residing within each one of us would approve of,⁴²⁹ but charity could only be a weak moral duty, as Smith also famously noted our tendency to exhibit disproportionate concern for our own welfare and obvious indifference to great misfortune of distant others.⁴³⁰

4.3.1. A brief recap

The above overview of multiple thinkers’ positions on poverty, charity and justice would seem kaleidoscopic and a bit haphazard. But if we pause for reflection, we can see that several important patterns and changes have emerged. First, the religious connotations of charity waned: from the idea of unconditional Christian love, it was gradually transformed into a secular virtue, thanks to Grotius’s concept of imperfect right. Second, as charity is secularised, its moral stringency is downgraded to the status of a praiseworthy virtue to be exercised at personal discretion. Third, the stigma associated with poverty becomes increasingly salient, as reflected in the widely accepted distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor, and also in many thinkers’ concerns with indiscriminating public aid encouraging or exacerbating poor people’s dependency and laziness. Fourth, although state aid to the poor became an established practice after industrialisation began, and there was growing recognition of the right to subsistence, to what extent such recognition was founded on justice and moral desert is dubious. Many thinkers, such as Mill, Locke and Hume, accepted the system of public redistribution of wealth with reluctance and strict conditions, while Tocqueville took the scepticism a step further and opposed state aid, claiming that the right to aid systematically demeaned the poor. Such unwillingness to support redistribution-based poverty relief is linked to the general assumption in Western political thought that duties of justice are exclusively negative, requiring one only to refrain

⁴²⁷ His attitude is rather ambivalent on this. See Geoffrey Gilbert, "Adam Smith on the nature and causes of poverty," *Review of Social Economy* 55, no. 3 (1997): 273-291 and Vaughan, *Poverty, Justice, and Western Political Thought*, 91.

⁴²⁸ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Book 1, 10.117.

⁴²⁹ Gilbert, "Adam Smith on the nature and causes of poverty," 278.

⁴³⁰ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Penguin, 2010).

from causing harm rather than to promote general wellbeing actively.⁴³¹ Based on this negative conception of duties of justice, poverty would have no legitimate claim to justice-based action, unless it is believed to be caused, at least partially, by external harm beyond individual control. The prevalent tendency to associate poverty closely with laziness and individual responsibility in the 17th and 18th century, however, did not leave much room for that belief. This effectively excluded the issue from the realm of justice, and it is thus understandable that many of the early modern thinkers viewed public aid more as charity writ large than as the overdue realisation of redistributive justice. In other words, while state aid, which could be seen as early forms of distributive justice, had emerged, charity lingered on as the predominant framework to justify this public aid system. But competing ideas concerning poverty and the political demands it could legitimately make in the name of justice were already in the making. These ideas would resonate more strongly in the coming century.

4.4. How the shift occurred: into the 19th century

After a long period of internal peace and commercial prosperity, the realisation that there need not be poverty at all, began to be more widely shared towards the end of the 18th century.⁴³² The late 18th and early 19th century witnessed a quick spread of “an ideology according to which the poor should have a legal right to improved economic conditions, not merely a right to survive alongside a moral claim on rich people’s charity.”⁴³³ Fleischacker notes a range of historical changes across the West in this period:

After the Speenhamland system was adopted in 1795...people came to look on a subsistence income as something to which they were entitled; Arthur Young noted ominously in 1797 that “[t]hat relief which formerly was and still ought to be petitioned for as a favour, is now frequently demanded as a right.” In 1796, William Pitt called for Parliament to “make relief in cases where there are a number of children a right and an honour” and drew up a bill that, had it passed, would have supplied Britain with a far more expansive array of social insurance programs than any other nation had ever had....In 1834, William Cobbett wrote that both labourers and those unable to labour have “a right to

⁴³¹ Allen Buchanan, "Charity, Justice, and the Idea of Moral Progress." in Jerome B. Schneewind ed. *Giving: Western Ideas of Philanthropy* (Indiana University Press, 1996), 100.

⁴³² Jones, *An End to Poverty*, 10-11.

⁴³³ Fleischacker, *A Short History of Distributive Justice*, 81.

subsistence out of the land,” and Yorkshire demonstrators in 1837 proclaimed that “[t]he poor have a right to subsistence from the land.” Across the Atlantic, Judge David Brewer of the Kansas Supreme Court declared in 1875 that “the relief of the poor— the care of those who are unable to care for themselves—is among the unquestioned objects of public duty.” Norwegian law briefly contained a claim that the poor had a legal right to relief in the nineteenth century, and in the early twentieth century, Norway, Sweden, and Finland all classified minimum relief for the poor as “mandatory assistance.”⁴³⁴

Three key background factors that contributed to this shift can be identified: greater attention to the political and social structure in causing poverty, the conceptual expansion of justice to incorporate positive duties, and maturing bureaucratic systems in the West. Below I start with the first one, by looking at the writings of Immanuel Kant and radical theorists in the 19th century.

Kant was among the first philosophers to justify state relief solely on grounds of justice. He gave a rather harsh criticism of the traditional charity approach to poverty reduction, be it at the individual or state level. Kant distinguished between perfect duties and imperfect duties in ways similar to Grotius and Pufendorf, but he classified the duty to relieve poverty among fellow members of society as a perfect duty, a matter of justice, not magnanimity.⁴³⁵ Corresponding to this duty is the state’s right to tax its citizens for the purpose of addressing “the most necessary natural needs” of the poor.⁴³⁶ This right, according to a recent reading of Kant, is based on the state’s right “to impose taxes on the people for its own preservation.”⁴³⁷ But permanence and stability of society are not the only reason. The right is also based, in Kant’s own words, on an obligation of the wealthy, who live under the same state as the poor and “owe their existence to an act of submitting to its protection and care.”⁴³⁸ Independence – the freedom to make one’s own choices without having to subject them to others’ choice – is another ground on which Kant justifies welfare.⁴³⁹ For Kant, an important problem of poverty is that it subjects the poor to the discretion of the rich, whose possession of property enables them to exercise a “unilateral power” against the

⁴³⁴ Fleischacker, 81-2.

⁴³⁵ Schneewind, “Philosophical Ideas of Charity,” 66.

⁴³⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Kant: The metaphysics of morals [1797]* (ambridge University Press, 2017), 110.

⁴³⁷ Sarah Williams Holtman argues this right is justice based, and gives a literature review on other readings in “Kantian justice and poverty relief,” *Kant-Studien* 95, no. 1 (2004): 86-106.

⁴³⁸ Kant, *The metaphysics of morals*, 110.

⁴³⁹ Arthur Ripstein, “Private order and public justice: Kant and Rawls,” *VA. L. REV.* 92 (2006): 1391-1438.

weak.⁴⁴⁰ This is inconsistent with the “general will” of the state, in which all citizens ought to participate as free and equal agents. Furthermore, Kant assumed there is plenty for everyone, which lead to the conclusion that poverty could only be the result of injustice.⁴⁴¹ As a result, Kant criticised the self-aggrandising charitable people:

Many people take pleasure in doing good actions but therefore do not want to stand under obligation toward others. If one comes to them submissively they will do anything. They do not want to subject themselves to the rightful in people, but want to view such simply as the object of their good heartedness.⁴⁴²

One might find clues in another passage from Kant on why charity is preferred to justice to address poverty. He seems to think this mistake arises from people’s problematic understanding of poverty, and more deeply, of their ignorance of participating in “general injustice”:

We thus have an instinct for benevolence, but not for justice. By this impulse men take pity on another, and render back the benefits they have previously snatched away, though they are not aware of any injustice; the reason being, that they do not rightly examine the matter. One may take a share in the general injustice, even though one does nobody any wrong by civil laws and practices. So if we now do a kindness to an *unfortunate* (emphasis added), we have not made a free gift to him, but repaid him what we were helping to take away through a general injustice. For if none might appropriate more of this world's goods than his neighbour, there would be no rich folk, but also no poor. Thus even acts of kindness are acts of duty and indebtedness, arising from the rights of others.⁴⁴³

Buchanan draws attention to the word “unfortunate” in the above passage, arguing that this marks a radical break from the political thought before Kant, which regarded justice as strictly negative.⁴⁴⁴ He believes that here, Kant touched on the problem of unequal initial endowment, which now luck egalitarians take to be a key foundation of redistributive justice: once we recognise that what we own or achieve is at least partly due to factors beyond our control and effort – education, family background,

⁴⁴⁰ Ripstein, 1431.

⁴⁴¹ Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics, Vol. 2* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 179.

⁴⁴² Kant, as quoted from Schneewind, “Philosophical Ideas of Charity,” 66.

⁴⁴³ Kant, *Lecture on Ethics*, 179.

⁴⁴⁴ Buchanan, “Charity, Justice, and the Idea of Moral Progress,” 101.

inherited wealth, character, appearance, etc. – it becomes difficult to claim we morally deserve everything we now have, as not all result from individual effort in the first place. As a result of the growing recognition of the poor’s lack of luck and the injustice of social institutions, the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor is undermined. Kant’s view is echoed in the late 18th and 19th century by radical thinkers. Thomas Paine argues that “[P]overty...is a thing created by that which is called civilized life. It exists not in the natural state.”⁴⁴⁵ The utopian socialist thinker Robert Owen attributes poverty to irrationalism, which stems from the state’s failure to provide good education to the poor.⁴⁴⁶ The anarchist thinker Proudhon takes the position to the extreme, proclaiming famously that “property is theft!” as the labourer in a capitalist economy is “subordinated, exploited.”⁴⁴⁷ These thinkers would disagree radically on what causes poverty, but their arguments nevertheless all reduced the blame placed on the poor themselves.

Poverty was further dissociated from individual responsibility when Marx launched a hugely influential, full-fledged attack against capitalism in his time. Marx divided a capitalist society into two classes: the proletariat, who own no means of production, such as the factory or land, and the bourgeoisie, or capitalists, who own means of production. Assuming that labour and labour alone could create value, Marx argued that capitalists exploited the proletariat by only giving a fraction of the value created by workers to them as wages to allow them to subsist, and reaped the remaining value as profits, or surplus value in Marx’s terms. As the proletariat class does not have their own means of production, they have no choice but to accept labouring for long hours and under harsh conditions for capitalists in order to receive the meagre wages.⁴⁴⁸ Not only does the current private property regime enable and sustain exploitation, the primitive accumulation of capital that leads to the current situation cannot be justified:⁴⁴⁹ in the transition from feudalism to capitalism, “great masses of

⁴⁴⁵ Thomas Paine, "Agrarian justice (1797)." in John Cunliffe and Guido Erreygers eds. *The Origins of Universal Grants* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 3-16.

⁴⁴⁶ Peter Gordon, "Robert Owen," *Prospects* 24, no. 1-2 (1994): 282-3.

⁴⁴⁷ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century (1851)*, <http://fair-use.org/p-j-proudhon/general-idea-of-the-revolution/>

⁴⁴⁸ Karl Marx, *Das Kapital, Volume 1*, Chapter 25 “The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation,” https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Das_Kapital_Volume_One

⁴⁴⁹ In saying this, however, it needs to be noted that Marx has never said that capitalism is “unjust”. It is believed that he was interested in developing a scientific theory of socialism and therefore kept his distance from ideas in moral philosophy. However, G.A. Cohen argues that Marx did think the capitalist society was unjust but he was not fully aware of his own belief – for this interpretation see G.A. Cohen, “Review of Allen Wood’s Karl Marx”, *Mind*, (1983: 92): 440–445.

men are suddenly and forcibly torn from their means of subsistence, and hurled as free and “unattached” proletarians on the labour-market.”⁴⁵⁰ Furthermore, to force labourers to accept overworking so as to extract the greatest surplus value possible, capitalists ensure a constant state of competition for jobs in the labour market, by intentionally keeping a reserve of unemployed workers, who are willing to work part-time or replace any unsatisfied full time wage labourer.⁴⁵¹

At the same time, the idea of justice begins to incorporate positive duties, to accommodate the increasingly secular discourse on rights, encroaching what was within the domain of charity.⁴⁵² Thanks to the rise of utilitarianism, the good that society ought to promote starts to be framed in a way devoid of any divine sources – regardless of one’s religious affiliation, the right or just thing to do is always promote and maximise happiness, well-being, or utility. As a result, rights, justified on the grounds of individual well-being, could no longer remain strictly negative – for a person to enjoy freedom from interference, there must be at least some positive rights in order to ensure a person thrives, or at least meets the threshold of subsistence.⁴⁵³ The utilitarians were a group of moral philosophers committed to achieving visible practical impact and were among the “prime movers” in promoting a welfare state.⁴⁵⁴ Echoing Bentham’s call that “no law ought to be made that does not add more to the general mass of felicity than it takes from it”, utilitarians advocated for redistribution, public education, health, better working conditions, and so forth.⁴⁵⁵

A surprising yet plausible implication of the utilitarian maxim “the greatest good for the greatest number” is that the distinction between justice and charity is increasingly difficult to draw.⁴⁵⁶ For more radical utilitarians like William Godwin, charity became a useless category of moral duties and could be fully subsumed under justice. His reasoning goes like this: justice, if conceived in purely consequentialist terms as promoting maximum utility, would require that even my private property be subject to the “best use” condition. In other words, no one truly owns her property in the absolute sense. If one does not really own her private property, the idea of charity,

⁴⁵⁰ Marx, *Das Kapital, Volume 1*, Chapter 26 “The Secret of Primitive Accumulation.”

⁴⁵¹ Marx, *Das Kapital, Volume 1*, Chapter 25, “The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation.”

⁴⁵² Buchanan, “Charity, Justice, and the Idea of Moral Progress,” 100-1.

⁴⁵³ Buchanan, 100-1.

⁴⁵⁴ Fleischacker, *A Short History of Distributive Justice*, 106.

⁴⁵⁵ Fleischacker, *A Short History of Distributive Justice*, 106.

⁴⁵⁶ Alan Ryan, “The Philanthropic Perspective After a Hundred Years,” in Jerome B. Schneewind ed. *Giving: Western Ideas of Philanthropy* (Indiana University Press, 1996), 81-2.

based on the assumption that “we should but certainly do not *have to* part with what is *ours* to the needy”, now becomes irrelevant, because nothing would be “ours” to begin with.⁴⁵⁷ We can still find resonance of this demandingness that is characteristic to utilitarianism in Peter Singer’s famous call to radically revise our present “moral conceptual scheme”, so that it becomes a matter of duty, not charity, for citizens from affluent countries to donate a substantial part of their wealth to those in famine and extreme poverty far away.⁴⁵⁸

In the meantime, the bureaucratic system in the Western world matured to the point of having the capacity to deliver social welfare on a massive scale.⁴⁵⁹ As previously mentioned, one way to draw the distinction between duties of charity and duties of justice is along the line of perfect and imperfect duties: the content and the beneficiary of only perfect duties could be specified. This specificity is the reason why many argue only perfect duties could be enforced and imperfect duties could not: for the latter to be enforced would give the state too much room for arbitrary exercise of power⁴⁶⁰ – on what grounds can the state force me to help out a certain individual in a certain crisis not in any way related to me? In the case of reducing poverty, however, imperfect duties could be “perfected” and then enforced. According to Buchanan,⁴⁶¹ the major difficulty in enforcing imperfect duties is their indeterminacy, but this barrier would be overcome, if the indeterminacy is somehow eliminated. The key is the modern welfare state, whose more developed bureaucratic system could “(1) identify the appropriate recipients of aid, (2) to coordinate efforts to render aid effectively, (3) to assign determinate duties for which individuals can be held accountable in order to ensure the aid is provided, and also (4) to provide assurance that the burden of aiding those in need is distributed fairly among the better off.”⁴⁶² True, in a system without “collective beneficence”, poverty relief could only be imperfect duties, carried out in the form of “independent, uncoordinated, individual acts of charity,”⁴⁶³ but once the institutions are in place to reduce indeterminacy to a

⁴⁵⁷ Ryan, 81.

⁴⁵⁸ Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality,” 236.

⁴⁵⁹ Buchanan, “Charity, Justice, and the Idea of Moral Progress”; Buchanan, “Justice and charity.”

⁴⁶⁰ Buchanan, “Justice and charity.”

⁴⁶¹ Buchanan in “Justice and charity” argues that certain imperfect duties need or could be enforced, and in order to make their enforcement feasible, certain institutions need to be established.

⁴⁶² Buchanan, “Charity, Justice, and the Idea of Moral Progress,” 102.

⁴⁶³ Buchanan, 102.

satisfactory level, the imperfect duty of charity is “perfected” to an enforceable, perfect duty of justice.

4.5. Reflection on the paradigm shift: four catalytic factors

Two points concerning political thoughts and history are worth noting before I surmise the general lessons on realising the paradigm shift from charity to justice. First, through this brief overview, we have seen a constant interplay between political thought and political reality. The shift from charity to justice does not merely occur at the theoretical level, in the musings of philosophers sitting in their armchairs. Rather, this transition is very much visible at the societal level, in the attitudes of citizens and in public policies – in Gramsci’s words, “every philosophical current leaves behind it a sediment of ‘common sense’.”⁴⁶⁴ It is difficult to ascertain which predates or results in which, and the interaction is probably better characterised this way: political thought both reflects and systematically articulates views that could be found in popular discourse; in turn, it influences public attitudes, justifies existing practices in new light, or advocates for new social practices. This mutual influence could be seen in the debate over the Poor Law and the right to public relief, which spans more than one century;⁴⁶⁵ it is also detectable in the way early socialist movements and experiments prompted Marx’s critique of capitalism, and were boosted by Marx’s scathing analysis. Political ideas are not simply philosophical discussion. They do have significant practical impacts.

Second, the shift from charity to justice may seem, from my highly selective account in this chapter, to be a linear process – but it is far from the case. On the one hand, new, “progressive” ideas may not stand out and could be drowned out by competing views in their time. Locke’s contemporary, Gerrard Winstanley, for example, did not see the English government react sympathetically to his egalitarian “Levellers” (or known as “Diggers”) movement. On the other hand, old ideas do not die out easily, and could come back fiercely in new packaging. As ideas in favour of redistributive justice were gaining momentum, contempt for the poor did not entirely fade away and would re-surface. This attitude is sometimes couched in scientific theories claiming that letting the poor die could ease

⁴⁶⁴ Joseph V. Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 133.

⁴⁶⁵ Vaughan in *Poverty, Justice, and Western Political Thought* puts the many philosophers’ accounts of poverty within historical context, and clearly shows a mutual influence between theoretical articulation and popular attitudes.

population pressure and thus benefit all; or it can come under the guise of the Social Darwinist discourse on the natural evolution of human society.⁴⁶⁶ It would be plainly wrong to assume ideas that have been refuted before are no longer worth attention, or to think that humanity is always progressing and that history could not repeat itself.

What general lessons can we draw from this historical survey on domestic poverty? We could observe three factors that seem to have accelerated the shift from charity to poverty: 1) poverty is believed to be avoidable (I call it “the avoidability factor”); 2) poverty is attributed more to external causes than to individual responsibility (“the involvement factor”); 3) the discharge of duties of justice is politically feasible (“the implementation factor”). In addition, I believe we cannot ignore that a fourth factor that has been lurking in the background – namely, that the nation is becoming a more connected and cohesive ethical community (“the community factor”). It must be noted that I am not making causal claims i.e. that these factors *caused* the shift; nor am I arguing that these factors are indispensable to a paradigm shift. Rather, the factors, generalised from the historical overview, should be more accurately and modestly characterised as catalysts – they may not be logically necessary to the major social change, but their existence seems to have accelerated the process. I will briefly explain the first three factors, before moving on to discuss the fourth in more detail.

4.5.1. The avoidability factor

The avoidability factor is the understanding that poverty as a morally bad thing should have no reason to exist in the first place. This factor requires that poverty be divorced from its religious connotations and recognised as a genuinely secular problem: people struggling to make ends meet cannot be seen as part of God’s plan, an opportunity for the rich to exercise charity, nor a blessing for the poor to learn industry and/or humility. Most importantly, for poverty to be considered avoidable, it must be materially feasible to meet basic human needs of all without incurring significant cost to the well-off. To be “materially feasible”, in turn, would require the perception that population and its growth would be proportional to material abundance. Consider Aquinas, who does not believe charity to be a fundamental solution to poverty but is nevertheless a strong advocate for individual charity. This, as I have explained, is due to his assumption that since resources are so scarce and population

⁴⁶⁶ Fleischacker, *A Short History of Distributive Justice*, 83-94.

so large, some people are bound to live in poverty. Lacking a cure-all, charity is the only appropriate response which should be exercised at individual discretion.⁴⁶⁷ Malthus, by comparison, lives in an age of relative material abundance, but still treats public relief with extreme caution due to his belief that population boom would only exacerbate poverty. It is only after the late 18th century that poverty is generally perceived as avoidable problem and thus invites more radical reflection.

4.5.2. The involvement factor

The involvement factor concerns the *perceived* level of responsibility that the better-off people should take for the severe deprivation of their fellow members of society. If the poor are perceived to be nothing more than the victims of their own moral failings – laziness, irresponsibility, short-sightedness, etc., redistributive policies, even if institutionalised at the state level, tend to still be seen as charity. When the affluent recognise that poverty is at least partly caused by social injustice, however, they would themselves become participants or even contributors to schemes of injustice and tend to accept a strong duty to rectify the status quo. In other words, the more the poor fit into the image of the “ideal victim,”⁴⁶⁸ the more likely people view their destitution as a deserving, justice-based response. It is important to note this factor is only necessary if we continue to understand justice mainly in terms of negative duties. As the discussion around utilitarianism in this chapter suggests, basic human needs/interests or general utility alone could ground positive duties of justice without any reference to the injustice or harm; other positive duty theories canvassed in Chapter 2 do not treat causal harm as a necessary component either. Indeed, if citizens predominantly accept positive duties as part of the demands of justice – or in Singer’s words, if they do re-draw the line between charity and justice, there is no need to establish causal harm before calling for justice-based solutions. However, the transition to this positive duty-based new moral scheme, if it is happening at all, is far from complete. As Campbell correctly observes, our everyday understanding of justice in everyday life is fundamentally “meritorian” – the link “between justice and desert is deeply embedded in

⁴⁶⁷ Schneewind, “Philosophical Ideas of Charity”, 69.

⁴⁶⁸ Birgitta Höijer, for example, discusses why children and women in famine arouse more public outrage in “The discourse of global compassion: The audience and media reporting of human suffering,” *Media, Culture & Society* 26, no. 4 (2004): 513-531.

the moral and political discourse of everyday life.”⁴⁶⁹ Therefore, the perception of our causal involvement in poverty would cater to our existing moral intuition, and justify poor people’s entitlement to remediation and fair treatment in the future.

4.5.3. The implementation factor

The implementation factor refers to the need for appropriate coercive institutions specifying the content, bearer and beneficiary of duties during the transition from charity to justice. The road to a fully-fledged welfare state is paved with disputes, with some demanding more distribution and others demanding less for various reasons. A redistributive state apparatus, even in its most nascent stage, serves to provide an important empirical benchmark against which both sides of the debates could assess their arguments. Being public and coercive in nature, the redistributive institution thus educates and informs citizens by exposing all social members –in particular, the rich to these ongoing debates. In this way, it makes the redistribution of wealth not just a utopian thought experiment that radical philosophers conjure up in their armchairs, but a social reality that citizens have to live with and learn to accept. From its birth, it ensures a certain level of redistribution appropriate to its historical context, and despite the criticisms it may face, it tends to develop over time, edging out the traditional charity paradigm.

The implementation factor must be distinguished it from what Valentini terms “the Agent-based View”, which states that “an agent is under a duty of justice only if the duty is perfect, i.e., its content and mode of performance are fully specified.”⁴⁷⁰ The agent-based view, finding support in the writings of Kant, Mill, O’Neill and Meckled-Garcia, regards duty-allocating institutions as “a necessary existence condition” of duties of justice; it is often criticised as getting “the relation between justice and just institutions the wrong way around” – it should be pre-existing duties of justice that require appropriate institutions to help with their discharge, rather than the existence of institutions that enable imperfect duties to be recognised as duties justice, according to its critics.⁴⁷¹ The implementation factor under discussion here, however, differs from the agent-based view. To see the difference, let me

⁴⁶⁹ Campbell, "Humanity before justice," 5; Note that Campbell is critical of the “meritorian” conception of justice and attempts to justify redistributive policies on grounds of humanity, thus transcending of the charity-justice dualism.

⁴⁷⁰ Laura Valentini, "Justice, charity, and disaster relief: what, if anything, is owed to Haiti, Japan, and New Zealand?," *American Journal of Political Science* 57, no. 2 (2013): 491-503.

⁴⁷¹ Valentini’s "Justice, charity, and disaster relief" provides a concise account of the content and criticism of this view.

state the implementation factor this way: in practice, individual agents could recognise and continuously discharge their duties of justice only if such duties are made perfect, that is, specified and enforced, by institutions. Whereas the agent-based view and its criticisms both concern the nature of duties in theory, the implementation factor is about the way duties are *perceived* by ordinary individuals. Imagine that a society where citizens, all philosophy-savvy, recognise a theoretical set of *pre-existing* duties of justice to reduce poverty, but institutions that specify and enforce them are absent. If we reasonably assume that human beings are not strongly altruistic or solely motivated by morality,⁴⁷² what would happen is that the discharge of duties of justice, completely at individual discretion, is gradually watered down to a minimal level – if they are discharged at all. In other words, duties of justice, while looking sound on paper, will slip into *de facto* duties of charity due to the lack of institutional support. To maintain that duties of justice are to be carried out the same way, with or without duty-perfecting institutions is, to borrow Bentham’s famous phrase, “nonsense upon stilts”.⁴⁷³

4.5.4. The community factor

This factor merits more attention as it serves more as a background to the development of welfare states, largely unnoticed until political theorists encounter difficulty expanding justice from the national context to the global level.

One perplexing feature about the welfare state is its stability – how could a society that requires extensive and continued wealth transfer from the rich to the poor justify such large sacrifice? In explaining this, political theorists have raised the idea that it is because the nation, as a kind of community, has special features that are missing from the “community of mankind”, or other ad-hoc communities, such as an interest-based club, or a profit-oriented corporation: the nation, it is said, is not a “voluntary association”, but an “ongoing and relatively closed” community of common fate.⁴⁷⁴ There are two, not necessarily incompatible, ways to understand this uniqueness of the nation. We could see it as a community of care, or a community of fear. Let me explain both.

⁴⁷² This is, I believe, a reasonably minimal assumption about human nature, as it only states that not all people are saints: they typically prioritize the interests of their own and their family members and friends over others’ needs, and they do not always follow the calls of morality.

⁴⁷³ Jeremy Bentham, *Rights, representation, and reform: Nonsense upon stilts and other writings on the French Revolution*, Vol. 15 (Oxford University Press on Demand, 2002), 330.

⁴⁷⁴ Tamir, *Liberal nationalism*, 117.

Supporters of the idea that the nation is a community of care, often referred to as “liberal nationalists”, believe that fellow feelings between co-nationals sharing the same culture have been a long-overlooked background condition against which liberalism, and its political product, the liberal democratic welfare state, operates.⁴⁷⁵ On this view, the individualistic rights that liberalism cherishes – especially the socio-economic rights whose fulfilment requires positive duties, presuppose a non-individualistic culture in which fellow members demonstrate a strong care for each other’s welfare. It is believed this mutual care can be traced to a shared national culture, history and a common language, which help build a stronger trust and mutual understanding among fellow members. Furthermore, the fact that “Others” exist beyond our borders – those people who speak different languages and have different lifestyles – cultivates a robust allegiance to the nation, which exhibits itself most strongly in times of conflict. Without such powerful sense of community, it is unthinkable to require the better-off members of a society to continuously fulfil the demanding positive duties, by contributing a substantial part of their income to fund welfare programs. For these reasons, liberal nationalists maintain that it is important to protect the national culture and/or cultivate a strong national identity, for social welfare to be sustainable. As the global community is significantly lacking in such strong communal ties and mutual care, liberal nationalists argue, the “community of humanity” is but an empty figure of speech and cannot ground claims of redistributive justice that require continued discharge of positive duties.

The “community of fear” interpretation of the nation’s uniqueness, by contrast, touches upon the darker side of human nature. According to some historians and political theorists, the motive of the better-off agreeing to sacrifices is none other than to better protect their wealth: using part of their income to provide for the poor is the lesser of two evils – the other being the prospect that the desperate poor, inflamed by radical ideas of communism, will rise up, resort to violence and take everything they own. This idea was mentioned in Rousseau’s explanation of the social contract, which for him is a trick played by the self-interested wealthy to tame the poor.⁴⁷⁶ It can find modern resonance as well. Mack Walker, for example, explaining why Bismarck would agree to set up a welfare system, suggested that one purpose was to “dish the radicals” – to beat the socialists in the competition to win

⁴⁷⁵ The most well-known philosophers holding this view include Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism*, David Miller, *On Nationality* and Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, community, and culture*.

⁴⁷⁶ Jean-Jacque Rousseau, *The Social Contract and other later political writings* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

over the poor majority.⁴⁷⁷ As the historian Walter Scheidel comments, “Mass levelling was born of mass violence—as well as the fear of future mass violence on an even vaster scale.”⁴⁷⁸

The “community of fear” interpretation, although radically different from the “community of care” interpretation in terms of motive, is similarly based on the understanding of the nation as a relatively closed community of common fate – otherwise the fearful rich could simply leave and form their own political community. We should not equal the better off members’ fear of the poor as a distaste or spite, however. It is a perfectly natural desire to protect oneself and one’s property. In a civilised political community, this desire ultimately contributes to the compromise to make material sacrifice, and in this sense, we can see it as facilitating recognition of the poorer fellow members as deserving equal moral standing. As a result, the two seemingly opposed accounts of the uniqueness of the nation could co-exist within the modern nation-state. Together, they constitute what I call the community factor that consolidates the shift from charity to justice.

4.6 Assessing global poverty against the four factors

The historical survey has allowed us to identify four factors that have contributed to the charity-to-justice transition in nation-states. I do not assert a similar paradigm shift on global poverty is a perfectly parallel case, but still, these four factors could help explain why charity is still the dominant approach, if we assess the current reality against them.

The avoidability factor. There is no systematic information on how much citizens of affluent countries know about global poverty, but we could speculate from the limited available data, mostly collected in the UK and Europe. Only 34% of the UK public, according to a survey in 2016, are “totally disengaged” – that is, they have done nothing on global poverty; among the 34%, only 20% claim to have never encountered a news article about global poverty.⁴⁷⁹ However, we should be reminded that extreme poverty could be simply an abstract concept to the affluent, whose material comfort hinders them from realistically fathoming suffering of the poor vicariously.⁴⁸⁰ As for the cost of reducing

⁴⁷⁷ Quoted from Schneewind, “Philosophical Ideas of Charity.”

⁴⁷⁸ Walter Scheidel, *The Great Leveller: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton University Press, 2017), 121.

⁴⁷⁹ Bond, “UK public attitudes towards development,” 2016, <https://www.bond.org.uk/sites/default/files/resource-documents/bond-aid-tracker-online.pdf>

⁴⁸⁰ Jamie Mayerfeld, *Suffering and moral responsibility* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 46.

poverty, people are familiar with charity appeals that a life could be saved or changed at minimal cost, but how convincing such appeals are remains questionable.⁴⁸¹ On top of this, more people think that the already meagre foreign aid should be cut,⁴⁸² which testifies partly to the belief that eradicating global poverty could be costly.

The involvement factor. The injustice of global poverty is, paradoxically, both stark and obscure. As has been argued in the first two chapters, in many cases extreme poverty is exacerbated and sustained, if not caused, by the legacies of colonialism and the current exploitative and unfair international system and trade relations. However, the publics understand the causes of global poverty no differently than decades ago – the poor countries are corrupt, troubled by constant conflicts and frequent natural disasters.⁴⁸³ In other words, explanatory nationalism still holds sway, and the Northern publics do not believe they are involved in or at least partially responsible for extreme poverty. Poor nations are primarily responsible for their own problems, while providing aid to them is a kind gesture on the part of affluent countries.

The implementation factor. Not much can be said on this factor, as clearly there is no global institution that is able to allocate and enforce positive duties. The DAC country's annual target of spending 0.7 percent of GNP on foreign aid, if institutionalised, could be seen as a watered-down version of duty-perfecting institutions, but as for now, the 0.7 percent is merely a target that incurs no strict obligations whatsoever (except in the UK that recently made the target compulsory).

The community factor. As liberal nationalists correctly point out, the community of humanity is too empty and vague to be expected to motivate people in redistributive justice. However, a thin concept of such community could be said to exist. The human rights discourse, although regarded by many to be merely rhetoric, is at least reminding everyone about the equal moral status of each individual human being. International institutions such as the UN and the International Court of Justice, although still engineered in favour of the powerful nations, are at least capable of producing some basic international consensus and

⁴⁸¹ Gabriel, "Effective altruism and its critics."

⁴⁸² Bond, "UK public attitudes towards development."

⁴⁸³ Alex Glennie *et al.*, "Understanding Public Attitudes to Aid and Development," June 2012, <https://www.odi.org/publications/6651-understanding-public-attitudes-aid-and-development>; UKaid, "Public Attitudes Towards Development," Spring 2010, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67684/public-attitudes-april10.pdf

coordinated efforts based on humanitarianism, if not justice. But we have to admit that the community of humanity is not strong enough to sustain redistributive justice yet.

Interestingly, these four factors confirm that, from a historical perspective, a variety of motivational strategies canvassed in Chapter 3 would all be needed to realise a paradigm shift: we need to inform Northern citizens about the severity of global poverty and the complex causal mechanisms that they participate in and benefit from; we need to build stronger emotional connections and solidary ties with distant others, and in the meantime, we should be aware of the risks we pose to each other in a globalised age, and act in unison to address these risks. Perhaps as we attempt to achieve the paradigm shift on global poverty, the need for other catalytic factors will emerge. But for now, the four already identified would serve as a useful guide on what we should work on first.

5. INGOs and the cosmopolitan agency gap

Introduction

In this chapter, I argue that development international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have an important and unique role to play in filling the cosmopolitan agency gap. They have decades of experience in combatting poverty, a worldwide reputation, adequate personnel and funding, proven mobilising power, unrelenting commitment to eradicating extreme poverty, and a strong willingness to improve their practice. I start this chapter with an introduction to the evolution of INGOs over the past decades, and then provide a brief history of five select major INGOs to represent the sector. I then draw attention to three influential social movements, where the five INGOs and their peers have famously mobilised millions of citizens in the global North to walk onto the streets and protest for change. Lastly, I discuss the problems behind these social movements, and point to the increasing critical awareness within the INGO sector that the desired charity-to-justice shift cannot be brought about by their current approach, and that they must transform themselves before transforming the overall response from the Northern countries to extreme global poverty.

5.1. Theorising INGO evolution: towards the fourth generation

An active transnational civil society is often thought to be a rather recent phenomenon facilitated by modern communication technologies, but the truth is that international NGOs have existed since the 1760s, and have gone through cyclical patterns of rises and falls in their vibrancy, political influence and moral appeal.⁴⁸⁴ Davies divides the history of transnational civil society into three phases from 1760s onwards, with World War I and II respectively destroying the previous phase and kick-starting a new phase.⁴⁸⁵ The major development INGOs active today were almost all invariably created in response to the war-induced humanitarian crisis in the third phase, marked by the beginning of the Second World War in 1939. Responding to the same historical opportunities and needs, large development INGOs have followed a very similar pattern of growth. In a much-cited essay, David Korten identified three distinctive generations of humanitarian and development

⁴⁸⁴ Thomas Davies, *NGOs-a New History of Transnational Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁴⁸⁵ Davies.

NGO strategies: (a) relief and welfare; (b) local self-reliance; and (c) sustainable systems development.⁴⁸⁶ This path of evolution, in Korten's words, represents an "exclusively operational to more catalytic roles,"⁴⁸⁷ and testifies to INGOs' accumulation of knowledge of poverty alleviation and development, impressive ability to reflect on and improve their practices, and expanding political influence.

The activities of the first-generation INGOs are rather straightforward: they take private donations from citizens in affluent countries, and distribute basic necessities such as food, clothing and shelter to meet the immediate needs of individuals and families. However, such activities, while doing much good to fulfil temporary needs, could only relieve superficial symptoms without addressing the fundamental issue of underdevelopment.⁴⁸⁸ It is notable that it is in this generation of activities that the starving child images that aimed to arouse strong compassion began to be widely used in order to attract as many potential donors and maximise donations.⁴⁸⁹ Their humanitarian importance soon received official recognition. With the birth of the United Nations, NGO involvement in international affairs was formalised – Article 71 of the UN Charter states that "the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) may make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organisations which are concerned with matters within its competence".

As the anticolonial movements in many countries from the 1960s onwards drove missionary NGOs that used to sustain colonial rule out of favour, "war charities" like Oxfam, which had wrapped-up their relief work in Europe and were looking for new directions, quickly filled in the gaps left by their predecessors in developing countries.⁴⁹⁰ Meanwhile, the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization called for aid to "go beyond philanthropy" in the "Freedom from Hunger" campaigns.⁴⁹¹ Partly in response to that call, and partly due to the realisation that relief work alone would never be sufficient, INGOs gradually shifted their focus to build community-level development projects. Given that the states in developing countries were often inadequate and inefficient, second-generation INGOs partially assumed the role of the government to provide these services.⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁶ David Korten, "Third generation NGO strategies: A key to people-centered development," *World development* 15 (1987), 147-9.

⁴⁸⁷ Korten, 147.

⁴⁸⁸ Korten, 148.

⁴⁸⁹ Korten, 148.

⁴⁹⁰ Korten, 57.

⁴⁹¹ Firoze Manji and Carl O'Coill, "The missionary position: NGOs and development in Africa," *International Affairs* 78, no. 3 (2002): 573.

⁴⁹² Korten, "Third generation NGO strategies," 148.

The second generation INGOs were involved in activities such as building local infrastructure, training and improving agricultural skills, supplying education materials, teaching literacy, providing health and sanitation services, etc. However, in the 1960s and '70s, mainstream development theories still regarded the state as the only major actor, and INGOs were permitted to operate their projects on condition that they did not question the state's exercise of power.⁴⁹³ Consequently, their political influence was still limited. Although NGOs were politically side-lined at the national level, with improved expertise and tenacity, they began to help organise and participate in more international conferences since the 1970s, and have gained increasing influence.⁴⁹⁴

Since the late 1980s, INGOs changed their focus of operation yet again, after another re-examination of the community-level projects. They had realised first, that working as independent organisations could only benefit a select few villages, and second, that even self-reliant communities could not thrive sustainably without a supportive national development system.⁴⁹⁵ The third-generation NGOs therefore re-focused their strategies on facilitating institutional changes on a national or regional level, which required more cooperation with other public and private actors to achieve the desired influence.⁴⁹⁶ It is not until this generation that INGOs adopted the rights-based approach, which, in contrast to the previous so-called "needs-based approach", aims to institutionalise individual rights, allow equal participation and decision-making, and empower discriminated and marginalised groups.⁴⁹⁷

The evolution of INGOs from the second to the third generation received increasing attention from official aid agencies, which, since the late 1980s, had been disheartened in their development aid efforts for a variety of reasons – most notably, the mainstream, state-centred development theories were losing appeal, and bureaucracy and corruption crippled development efforts and caused waste of aid.⁴⁹⁸ INGOs, with their inspiring new ideas, such as promoting gender equality and a rights-based approach, and more efficient use of

⁴⁹³ Manji and O'Coill, "The missionary position," 576.

⁴⁹⁴ Steve Charnovitz, "Two centuries of participation: NGOs and international governance," *Michigan Journal of International Law*, 18 (1996): 258-265.

⁴⁹⁵ Korten, "Third generation NGO strategies", 149.

⁴⁹⁶ Korten, 150-2.

⁴⁹⁷ Peter Uvin, "On high moral ground: the incorporation of human rights by the development enterprise," *Praxis: The Fletcher Journal of Development Studies* 17 (2002): 1-11.

⁴⁹⁸ David Lewis and Nazneen Kanji, *Non-Governmental Organizations and Development* (Routledge, 2009), 39-40.

funding, quickly became the “favoured child” of donor countries.⁴⁹⁹ The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, or the Rio Conference) in 1992, which devoted a whole chapter in Agenda 21 to discussing how to strengthen the role of non-governmental organisations in promoting sustainable development,⁵⁰⁰ marked a new stage of “empowerment” for NGOs.⁵⁰¹ The further integration of the global economy, the end of the Cold War, the emergence of global media institutions and the spread of democracy all facilitated the boom of NGOs in the 1990s,⁵⁰² and commentators then believed they were witnessing “a veritable associational revolution.”⁵⁰³ Increasing official funding was channelled through INGOs to developing countries, and more opportunities were given to them to take part in decision-making at the national and international level, based on this then popular, yet weakly supported belief: the second and third-generation INGOs, regarded as the development alternatives to the traditional state-led and state-centred approach, was a “panacea” for development problems, or a “magic bullet” that could help achieve development targets.⁵⁰⁴ This overly optimistic expectation has been toned down, as INGOs drew criticism primarily regarding their legitimacy, effectiveness and accountability.⁵⁰⁵

INGOs remain to be important political actors on development in recent years. In developing countries, especially in democratic ones, INGOs are found to improve local governments’ capacity to deliver social services.⁵⁰⁶ In the global North, INGOs have developed dynamic relationships with the governments as well. INGOs have obtained substantial and steadily increasing portions of official development aid⁵⁰⁷ (ODA) – the figure has grown from USD 2,037 million in 2010 to USD 3,185 million in 2015, according

⁴⁹⁹ Michael Edwards and David Hulme, “NGO performance and accountability in the post - cold war world,” *Journal of International Development* 7, no. 6 (1995): 849.

⁵⁰⁰ United Nations, “Sustainability Report: United Nations Conference on Environment & Development,” 3 to 14 June 1992, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf>.

⁵⁰¹ Charnovitz, “Two centuries of participation”, 265.

⁵⁰² Charnovitz, 265-7.

⁵⁰³ Lester M. Salamon and Helmut K. Anheier, *The emerging nonprofit sector: An overview*. Vol. 1. (Manchester University Press, 1996), 32.

⁵⁰⁴ Edwards and Hulme, “Too close for comfort?”

⁵⁰⁵ Edwards and Hulme. Also see Anthony Bebbington, Samuel Hickey, and Diana Mitlin, *Can NGOs make a difference? The challenge of development alternatives* (London: Zed, 2008).

⁵⁰⁶ Susanna Campbell, Matthew DiGiuseppe and Amanda Murdie, “International Development NGOs and Bureaucratic Capacity: Facilitator or Destroyer?,” *Political Research Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (2019): 3-18.

⁵⁰⁷ David S. Brown, J. Christopher Brown and Scott W. Desposato, “Who gives, who receives, and who wins? Transforming capital into political change through nongovernmental organizations,” *Comparative Political Studies* 41, no. 1 (2008): 24-47; Nicola Banks, David Hulme, and Michael Edwards, “NGOs, states, and donors revisited: Still too close for comfort?,” *World Development* 66 (2015): 707-718.

to the latest available statistics.⁵⁰⁸ This amount of funding has created fierce competition within the sector to respond to the shifting demands of government donors to whom INGOs are accountable,⁵⁰⁹ sometimes even at the cost of the interests of their beneficiaries.⁵¹⁰ However, INGOs are more than just instruments to distribute aid funds. They are deemed as “key development stakeholders for collaboration and exchange of information” that should have the right to participate in ongoing dialogues with the OECD Development Assistance Committee,⁵¹¹ or as partners with Northern governments.⁵¹² In addition, there have been global knowledge-sharing platforms, such as the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, that allow INGOs to contribute their expertise and shape the development agenda and poverty-reduction and advocacy approaches.⁵¹³

Korten later theorised the fourth generation of INGO activities.⁵¹⁴ At this stage, INGOs become active initiators and participants in wider social movements to call for long-term structural change.⁵¹⁵ This argument is rather prescient – around the turn of the 21st century, INGOs did manage to organise unprecedented global movements on development issues and achieved considerable success. I will discuss these movements later in Section 5.3. For now, this brief historical survey of INGOs should suffice to show that INGOs have accumulated rich knowledge on development issues, from service delivery to relevant policies and institutions. In addition, INGOs have undergone major changes, partly to improve their own practices and partly in response to needs and political opportunities, to become politically relevant in both the global South and North. Below, I present brief case studies of five large INGOs, to complement the historical overview with a close-up perspective on the range of INGOs efforts to reduce global poverty.

⁵⁰⁸ OECD, “Aid for Civil Society Organisations, 2015-2016,” January 2018.

<https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-topics/Aid-for-Civil-Society-Organisations-2015-2016.pdf>

⁵⁰⁹ Andrew Heiss and Judith Kelley, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: International NGOs and the Dual Pressures of Donors and Host Governments,” *The Journal of Politics* 79, no. 2 (2017): 732-741; Khaldoun AbouAssi, “Hands in the Pockets of Mercurial Donors: NGO Response to Shifting Funding Priorities,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (June 2013): 584–602.

⁵¹⁰ Banks, Hulme and Edwards, “NGOs, states, and donors revisited: Still too close for comfort?”

⁵¹¹ OECD, “Aid for Civil Society Organisations, 2015-2016.”

⁵¹² Jonathan J. Makuwira, *Non-governmental development organizations and the poverty reduction agenda: the moral crusaders* (Routledge, 2013).

⁵¹³ For instance, see Liz Steele, “How Effective Are International Non-Governmental Organizations? A study of INGO Support of the Development Effectiveness Agenda,” *CSO Partnership*, 2018, <http://edclibrary.csopartnership.org/bitstream/1/249/1/CPDE-INGO-Report.pdf>

⁵¹⁴ Lewis and Kanji, *Non-Governmental Organizations and Development*, 15.

⁵¹⁵ David Korten, *Getting to the 21st century: Voluntary action and the global agenda* (Kumarian Press, 1990).

5.2. From grassroots to prominence: the stories of five INGOs

Representative of a much larger sector, the five INGOs, namely, Oxfam, CARE, Plan, Kiva, and Charity Navigator, demonstrate how non-governmental agencies grow through trial and error to become prominent international agencies. While sharing the same broad goal of eradicating extreme poverty, they understand the complexity of the issues, and have, over the years adopted diverse strategies to thrive in their niche market.

5.2.1. Oxfam International

Oxfam is the telegraph name for Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, a charity organisation founded in 1942 to raise funds to feed hungry people – especially children in Nazi-occupied Greece.⁵¹⁶ The fledgling organisation went on to aid refugees after World War II. In 1948, it opened its first charity shop that sold donated goods and used proceeds to fund relief work. Oxfam grew rapidly in the following decades, reaching out to relieve famine in India and funded projects in Africa and South America the 1950s.⁵¹⁷ In the '60s, Oxfam's focus shifted gradually to help with agriculture and food production in poor countries, using funds collected from pledged givers; in the '70s, it was already able to provide a one-off aid package of £1 million to Bangladesh, and collected over £5 million in annual income from its charity shops across Britain.⁵¹⁸ In 1979, it created a campaigns department, and started recruiting area campaigners in the early 1980s. Notable campaigns that Oxfam participated in or initiated include “BandAid” in 1984, “Hungry for Change” in the same year which called attention to Oxfam's food work, and “Red Nose Day” with Comic Relief in the UK. It also began to engage in research to produce and disseminate knowledge of poverty-related issues, for example, publishing a report entitled *Bitter Pills* in 1982 that revealed the relationship between pharmaceutical companies and poverty. Oxfam launched Gender and Development Unit (GADU) in 1986 to better focus on women's development issues. Meanwhile, affiliate Oxfam organisations in other countries were formed, and in 1995, Oxfam International, a federation of Oxfam organisations based in different continents, came into being.

⁵¹⁶ Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Oxfam International,” accessed 9 June 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Oxfam-International>.

⁵¹⁷ Oxfam, “History of Oxfam,” accessed 9 June 2019, <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what-we-do/about-us/history-of-oxfam>.

⁵¹⁸ Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Oxfam International.”

Today, Oxfam International has 20 member organisations, and runs over 1,200 charity shops and online shops in 8 countries across the world, selling not only donated items, but also fair trade products such as coffee, toys and handicrafts.⁵¹⁹ In the 2017/18 financial year, Oxfam's income reached 1042 million Euros, of which 402.2 million (38.6%) is through public fundraising.⁵²⁰ Worldwide, Oxfam has 50,000 volunteers and 10,000 staff members.⁵²¹ While reacting to natural disasters and human-made humanitarian emergencies remains important for Oxfam, it has given increasing attention to working at a grassroots level to promote development with a rights-based approach, and also to conduct research to inform and mobilise individual citizens to campaign for institutional changes. For instance, one of its recent campaigns targets major supermarket chains, scoring them on their transparency and accountability, their treatment of workers and farmers down the supply chains, and their stance on gender equality.⁵²² Its "Even it up" campaign, which aims to call attention to extreme global inequality and tax avoidance, has received considerable media attention as well.⁵²³

5.2.2. CARE International

In 1945, 22 American organisations joined together to found CARE (acronym for Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe, and later changed to Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere) to provide lifesaving packages to people in post-World War II Europe. The first packages, which were surplus "10-in-1" food parcels intended to feed the U.S. Army, could be bought at the price of ten dollars and sent to specified recipients in Europe within four months.⁵²⁴ After these parcels ran out, CARE took donations from American companies to assemble their own packages. As the organisation grew, the beneficiaries became unnamed individuals such as "a hungry occupant of a thatched cottage", and the packages started to include other items such as carpentry tools

⁵¹⁹ Oxfam, "Oxfam Annual Report, 2010-2011," accessed 9 June 2019,

<https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/oxfam-annual-report-2010-11.pdf>.

⁵²⁰ Oxfam, "Oxfam Annual Report, April 2017 to March 2018," accessed 9 June 2019, https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/oxfam_annual_report_2017-2018_final_2.pdf

⁵²¹ Oxfam, "Oxfam Annual Report, 2016-2017," accessed 9 June 2019, <https://www.oxfam.org/en/annual-report-2016-2017>.

⁵²² Oxfam, "Ripe for Change," accessed 9 June 2019, <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/ripe-change>

⁵²³ Larry Elliott, "Explosion in wealth inequality needs urgent plan of action, says Oxfam," *Guardian*, 29 October 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2014/oct/29/explosion-wealth-inequality-needs-urgent-plan-action-oxfam>

⁵²⁴ CARE, "History of CARE," accessed 9/6/2019, <http://www.care.org/impact/our-stories/care-history>

and medicine.⁵²⁵ As Europe recovered economically, CARE closed most of its missions in Europe, and in defiance of voices that its original mandate was over and the organisation should dissolve,⁵²⁶ CARE re-focused its package delivery to developing countries in the 1950s.

The CARE-style food and kit redistribution, totalling over a million packages and sent around the world,⁵²⁷ was gradually phased out in the late 1960s and replaced by effort to help build longer-term development projects. The symbol of the package, however, was retained, to represent the “compassion and generosity” of CARE’s supporters.⁵²⁸ CARE’s national member organisations in Northern countries began to emerge in the 1980s. Besides engaging in agroforestry projects, CARE also responded to major humanitarian emergencies, such as the Ethiopian famine in the 1980s. Its understanding of poverty evolved from seeing it as a lack of material resources to recognising its many facets such as social exclusion and discrimination, which led it to adopt a rights-based approach by 2000.⁵²⁹ CARE is also credited with piloting cooperative, local-group microfinancing for after it helped establish a Village Savings and Loans Associations in Niger in 1991. Similar models have now become a popular approach to finance individual initiatives.⁵³⁰

Today, CARE works in 94 countries on nearly 1000 projects in humanitarian emergency response and development.⁵³¹ In financial year 2017/18, CARE reported an income of US\$604 million and nearly \$170 million from private contributions.⁵³² Aware that extreme poverty impacts the female gender differently, CARE takes empowering women as one of its main strategies and has been campaigning for ensuring decent work for the 8 million garment workers in Asia – most of whom are women.⁵³³

5.2.3. Plan International

⁵²⁵ CARE.

⁵²⁶ Michael Barnett, *Empire of humanity: A history of humanitarianism* (Cornell University Press, 2011).

⁵²⁷ V. Kasturi Rangan and Katharine Lee, “Repositioning CARE USA,” *Harvard Business Review*, 12 August 2008, <https://hbr.org/product/repositioning-care-usa/509005-PDF-ENG>

⁵²⁸ CARE, “History of CARE.”

⁵²⁹ Rangan and Lee, “Repositioning CARE USA.”

⁵³⁰ CARE, “Microfinance,” accessed 9/6/2019, <http://www.care.org/work/economic-development/microfinance>.

⁵³¹ CARE, “Our Work,” accessed 9/6/2019. <http://www.care.org/our-work>

⁵³² CARE, “Consolidated Financial Statements,” accessed 9/6/2019, https://www.care.org/sites/default/files/2018_care_usa_consolidated_financial_statements_final.pdf

⁵³³ CARE, “Made by Women: Promoting dignified work for garment workers in Asia, IMPACT REPORT 2018,” accessed 9/6/2019, https://www.care.org/sites/default/files/made_by_women_impact_report_2018.pdf

In 1937, the journalist Langdon-Davies cofounded “The Foster Parents Plan for Children in Spain” with refugee worker Eric Muggeridge to provide food, shelter and clothing to children during the Spanish Civil War. Their first Children’s colonies worked this way:⁵³⁴ a donor, or a Foster Parent in Plan’s words, donated money (a shilling a day in 1937 for one child) to the organisation, which then chose one homeless child and sent the name, age, life history and a photo of the child to the Foster Parent. Throughout the period of sponsorship, the Foster Parents regularly received a bulletin from the organisation about news in Spain and letters and drawings from the child. The Foster Child and the Parent were encouraged to communicate with each other frequently. This early model works similarly to Plan’s Child Sponsorship scheme, which has continued to this day, except that now sponsors with specific preferences could handpick a child to support, at the price of slightly over 1 US dollar per day.

During World War II, the organisation extended aid to children all across Europe. As Europe recovered from the War, it turned its attention to the lives of children in developing countries, expanding its work to Asia and South America in the 1960s and to Africa in 1970s. They formally started to use Plan International as their name in 1974.⁵³⁵ More knowledge of poverty in developing countries allowed Plan to reflect on their poverty-reduction approach, and in the 1970s, it realised that although providing cash transfers and family support on an individual basis worked well in post-War Europe, the method was not appropriate for places with endemic, extreme poverty.⁵³⁶ As a result, Plan turned to “integrated community development” since the 1980s, developing more community-based financing systems and projects that provided jobs to local people.⁵³⁷ In recent decades, Plan has been using the “Child Centred Community Development Approach” (CCCDA) – a rights-based approach that focuses on addressing injustice and power imbalances causing poverty.⁵³⁸ It works on issues from child health and education to child participation and economic security. Plan pays particular attention to protecting girls’ rights, mobilising the

⁵³⁴ Han Dijsselbloem, Justin Fugle and Uwe Gneiting, "Child Sponsorship and Rights-Based Interventions at Plan: Tensions and Synergies," in Brad Watson and Matthew Clarke eds. *Child sponsorship: Exploring pathways to a brighter future* (Springer, 2014), 116.

⁵³⁵ Plan International, “The History of Plan International,” accessed 9/6/2019, <https://www.plan.ie/about-plan/history/>

⁵³⁶ Dijsselbloem, Fugle and Gneiting, "Child Sponsorship and Rights-Based Interventions at Plan: Tensions and Synergies," 125.

⁵³⁷ Dijsselbloem, Fugle and Gneiting, 128.

⁵³⁸ Dijsselbloem, Fugle and Gneiting, 130.

“Because I am a girl” movement in recent years to highlight issues such as child marriage, sexual violence and female genital mutilation.⁵³⁹

5.2.4. Kiva

The central idea of microfinancing, or microcredit, is to provide loans and other financial services to poor, entrepreneurial people to fund their small businesses and/or agricultural activities and become self-reliant. Started in the 1970s, microfinancing has become a global movement, with numerous INGOs partnering with local financial services to connect lenders in affluent countries to borrowers in poor countries.⁵⁴⁰ Created in 2005, Kiva is among the most successful microfinancing INGOs. It examines borrower’s requests and posts them on their website categorised according to different purposes, such as agriculture, education, and arts. Interested lenders are able to view the borrower’s personal photo and plan with the loan online. They can give as little as US\$25 to fund various projects, with around a 97% chance of being repaid. Neither Kiva nor the lenders receive interest on the loans.

Kiva operates in more than 80 countries, often reaching into communities through what they call “Field Partners”, who screen borrowing requests, disburse money and receive interest from borrowers at varying levels – a practice that has incurred doubt and criticism.⁵⁴¹ Lenders can also track their loans and rate borrowers to provide a reference to future lenders. Kiva treats this booming microfinancing industry as an exchange of information, in the form of money transfer and the “universal language” of business.⁵⁴² This model is believed to overcome two weaknesses of traditional charitable donation: it creates a more binding partnership between people who have never met and avoids the condescending “giver and receiver” feeling that arises with charity.⁵⁴³ As of October 2017,

⁵³⁹ Plan International, “Because I am a girl,” accessed 9/6/2019. <https://plan-international.org/because-i-am-a-girl>

⁵⁴⁰ Robert Cull and Jonathan Morduch, “Microfinance and economic development (English),” Policy Research working paper; no. WPS 8252. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group, 22 November 2017, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/107171511360386561/Microfinance-and-economic-development>

⁵⁴¹ Megan Moodie, “Microfinance and the Gender of Risk: The Case of Kiva.org,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38, no. 2 (Winter 2013): 279-302.

⁵⁴² Matt Flannery, “Kiva and the Birth of Person-to-Person Microfinance,” *Innovations/Winter & Spring 2007*, 39.

⁵⁴³ Flannery, 39.

Kiva has accumulated 1.6 million lenders and funded 2.6 million borrowers, 81% of the borrowers are women, with a total amount of US\$ 1 billion.⁵⁴⁴

5.2.5. Charity Navigator

Within the current charity paradigm of INGOs, soliciting private donations to fund their development projects in the global South continues to be a major activity in affluent countries. However, which organisation utilises donations most efficiently and effectively, i.e., devotes the highest proportion to those in need and achieves the most visible effects, becomes a concern for charitable donors. The so-called “meta-charities” like Charity Navigator were born to address this concern. Unlike most INGOs that directly engage in poverty reduction and development efforts in poor countries, Charity Navigator, established in 2001, categorises and monitors these INGOs, and provides ratings based on a methodology that takes into account their financial health, accountability and transparency.⁵⁴⁵ This rating system allows Charity Navigator to recommend the most efficient organisations or criticise those that expand too fast or over-pay their executive staff. In addition, Charity Navigator provides practical tips for donors on how and why to effectively donate and volunteer to produce the greatest impact. It also allows users to give directly through its website, and emulating the diversification investment strategy, it encourages donors to put multiple charities in a “basket” and give with one click.

Charity Navigator boasts 11 million annual visitors and ratings on over 9,000 organisations. The expectation is that these visitors divert their donations towards NGOs that spend more money on development and less on administrative functions, but research has shown mixed results on the effects of the recommendations from these charity evaluators. One study finds that donors tend not to be affected by the ratings.⁵⁴⁶ Smaller organisations, however, receive an almost 20% increase in donations when their rating goes up one star.⁵⁴⁷ Given that the rating methodology is constantly changing and improving, there is reason to expect rating agencies like Charity Navigator to become more influential in guiding donations in

⁵⁴⁴ Kiva, “Impact,” accessed 9/6/2019, <https://www.kiva.org/about/impact>

⁵⁴⁵ Charity Navigator, “Charity Navigator’s Methodology,” accessed 9/6/2019, <https://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=content.view&cpid=5593#rating>

⁵⁴⁶ Rebecca Szper and Aseem Prakash, “Charity watchdogs and the limits of information-based regulation,” *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 22, no. 1 (2011): 112-141.

⁵⁴⁷ Barış K. Yörük, “Charity ratings,” *Journal of Economics & Management Strategy* 25, no. 1 (2016): 195-219.

the future. The emergence and popularity of such meta-charities represent an effort from within the INGO sector to self-regulate, which is something to applaud.⁵⁴⁸

5.3. From Charity to Justice: mobilising global citizens

The importance of getting publics behind poverty-reduction is widely recognised by official and non-governmental organisations alike. Reflecting on the achievements concerning the Millennium Development Goals, a report from UNDP regarded motivating popular support as one of the most important lessons.⁵⁴⁹ An OECD report believes that “engaging the public, whether through public information, communication, campaigns or development education, is a core function” of governmental aid agencies, and in fact, many OECD members and non-members do spend part of their development budget, albeit a very limited one, to build communication teams to engage domestic publics.⁵⁵⁰ Non-governmental agencies, by contrast, are far more generous in reaching out to the publics. Kirk calculated that the five biggest INGOs in the UK spent about 165 million British pounds on “fund-raising, running over 1,000 non-profit charity shops, supplying resources to schools, buying and generating media space, and public campaigning – most of which tell a common basic story about charity and global poverty.”⁵⁵¹ A survey conducted by the Thomas Reuters Foundation of the world’s 50 biggest INGOs by expenditure found that USD 1.5 billion in 2013-14, or 6.6 percent of the total expenditure, was spent on fundraising, compared to only about USD \$500 million spent in 2003-04.⁵⁵² In addition to fundraising, INGOs are also known for their capacity to mobilise the publics into social movements. Such efforts have allowed INGOs to shape public knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about global poverty. INGOs are thus seen as “intermediaries between the concerned Northern public and the recipients or beneficiaries of development work,”⁵⁵³ or as “media institutions” giving “legitimate and

⁵⁴⁸ Szper and Prakash, "Charity watchdogs and the limits of information-based regulation."

⁵⁴⁹ UNDP, "From MDGs to Sustainable Development For All: Lessons from 15 Years of Practice," 15 November 2016, <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/sustainable-development-goals/from-mdgs-to-sustainable-development-for-all.html>

⁵⁵⁰ OECD, "Partnering with Civil Society: 12 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews," 2012, <http://www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/12%20Lessons%20Partnering%20with%20Civil%20Society.pdf>

⁵⁵¹ Kirk, "Beyond charity," 247.

⁵⁵² Tom Esslemont, "Exclusive: Which aid relief charities spend the most on fundraising?," *Reuters*, 15 July 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-aid-business/exclusive-which-aid-relief-charities-spend-the-most-on-fundraising-idUSKCN0PP00F20150715>.

⁵⁵³ Helen Yanacopulos, *International NGO engagement, advocacy, activism: The faces and spaces of change* (Springer, 2015), 2.

proxy voice” to the developing world.⁵⁵⁴ To lend proof to these claims, in this section I briefly delineate how INGOs motivated millions of Northern citizens in three global movements related to extreme poverty in twenty years. In addition to this evidence of INGOs’ unparalleled mobilising power, the different messages sent by these social movements testify to a change of focus on global poverty, and thus demonstrate INGOs’ commitment to advocating for the justice paradigm.

5.3.1. Live aid

The Live Aid event in 1985 is the first event that brought extreme poverty to a truly global audience. The BBC coverage of the 1984 Ethiopian famine with graphic details motivated pop music stars Bob Geldof and Midge Ure to found Band-Aid – a charity group, and to write the hit single “Do they know it’s Christmas?” to raise money for famine relief. After an all-star recording of the song helped raise £8 million,⁵⁵⁵ Geldorf decided that more could be done, and in 1985 organised a dual-venue concert called Live Aid, in both London in the UK and Philadelphia in the US. This event reaped an astonishing 1.9 billion viewers all over the world and raised a total of \$140 million.⁵⁵⁶

The legacies of Live Aid event are mixed and rather controversial. In addition to the impressive amount of donations, this event heralded an era of mass activism on the issue of global poverty and marked the beginning of NGOs’ rise in prominence in informing and mobilising citizens. It is also seen as the beginning of a model that marries celebrity to development issues:

If Live Aid had never happened, would Richard Branson have swum with Desmond Tutu while discussing world peace? Would Ted Turner have funded mosquito net initiatives, or Bill and Melinda Gates committed their wealth to provide vaccinations and contraceptives, or Jimmy Carter spent his post-presidency trying to eradicate tropical diseases in countries like Nigeria? Would George W. Bush have enacted PEPFAR (the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief), a massive government initiative to fight AIDS/HIV

⁵⁵⁴ Nandita Dogra, *Representations of global poverty: aid, development and international NGOs* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 2.

⁵⁵⁵ BBC, “Live Aid: The show that rocked the world,” 5 April 2000, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/702700.stm

⁵⁵⁶ Graham Jones, “Live Aid 1985: A day of magic,” *CNN*, 6 July 2006, <http://edition.cnn.com/2005/SHOWBIZ/Music/07/01/liveaid.memories/index.html>

around the world? Would David Cameron have devoted unprecedented amounts of money to the UK's foreign assistance budget? It's also easy to question whether the African schools, water wells and AIDS-awareness campaigns of Oprah, Brad Pitt, Matt Damon, Will.i.am, Annie Lennox, and Alicia Keys would exist today if Live Aid hadn't set the precedent for celebrity focus on the continent.⁵⁵⁷

However, the donations the movement collected were accused of helping the Ethiopian government to oppress its citizens, exacerbating rather than relieving the famine,⁵⁵⁸ and the simplistic and largely negative stereotypes it created still skew public understanding of developing regions, and Africa in particular, today.⁵⁵⁹ A report studying the UK public found that the influential campaigns in the 1980s have caused the British audience to strongly associate a starving child with flies around their eyes with the developing world. As a result, victims of poverty have been seen as less human, and able to be rescued only by aid from the superior developed world.⁵⁶⁰ For the following years, a variety of INGOs' activities – fundraising in particular, exacerbated this problem. In order to fund their relief operations in the global South, and to win over donors' money in an increasingly competitive, non-profit sector,⁵⁶¹ they continued to use the familiar “starving child” appeals, which could only perpetuate the “patronizing, offensive and misleading view of the developing world” and bring “guilty gestures of charity”, rather than truly informed donors necessary for long-term structural change.⁵⁶² INGOs have changed their communication practice in response to these criticisms, but I will leave the discussion around their communication strategies to the next chapter.

5.3.2. Jubilee 2000

⁵⁵⁷ Kristi York Wooten, “The Legacy of Live Aid, 30 Years Later,” *Atlantic*, 13 July 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/07/live-aid-anniversary/398402/>

⁵⁵⁸ *Spin*, “Live Aid: The Terrible Truth,” 13 July 2015, <http://www.spin.com/featured/live-aid-the-terrible-truth-ethiopia-bob-geldof-feature/>

⁵⁵⁹ *VSO* (Voluntary Service Overseas), “The Live Aid Legacy: The Developing World Through British Eyes-a Research Report,” 2002, <https://celebrityanddevelopment.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/liveaidlegacy-vso.pdf>

⁵⁶⁰ *VSO*.

⁵⁶¹ Simon Cottle and David Nolan, “Global Humanitarianism and the Changing Aid-Media Field: ‘Everyone was dying for footage’,” *Journalism Studies* 8, no. 6 (2007): 862-878; Natalie Fenton, “Mediating hope: New media, politics and resistance,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 11, no. 2 (2008): 230-248.

⁵⁶² Cohen, *States of denial*, 178; also see Ian Smillie, “Public support and the politics of aid,” *Development* 42, no. 3 (1999): 71-76; Matt Smith and Helen Yanacopulos, “The public faces of development: An introduction,” *Journal of International Development* 16, no. 5 (2004): 657-664.

In late the 1980s, development NGOs noticed that poor countries began to cut spending on basic services and infrastructure in order to pay off their external debts, and started to advocate for debt relief but achieved only limited impact.⁵⁶³ In 1990, the British academic Martin Dent asked his students to sign a petition calling for the cancellation of unpayable debts of poor countries by 2000.⁵⁶⁴ Inspired by the Bible, he termed this campaign Jubilee 2000, a concept from the *Leviticus* representing the release of slaves and prisoners and the return of their property. This movement gained tremendous momentum as the world approached the new Millennium, earning support from a diverse range of prominent figures such as the Pope, the renowned economist Jeffrey Sachs, the singers Bono and Bob Geldof. A UK-based campaign coalition was formally built in 1997, which pooled the resources and expertise of big and small development INGOs together, and a global alliance network was established in the next year.⁵⁶⁵ In 1998, the coalition mobilised more than 50,000 activists in Birmingham, England to ring the G8 meeting in a nine kilometre long “human chain to pressure the Western leaders to take more radical approach to the issue of debt,⁵⁶⁶ and in the Cologne G8 Summit in 1999, another 30,000 campaigners took part.⁵⁶⁷ More than 20 million signatures – a record-breaking number - from around the world reinforced the appeal of the campaigns. An estimated \$120 billion in debt was finally dropped.⁵⁶⁸

The success of Jubilee 2000 was based on among other things, effective political communication, principled coalition building, and clear policy goals.⁵⁶⁹ As one of the coalition leaders later reflected, comparing the campaign to diamond-cutting, they “cut the debt problem to get maximum reflection”, so that is messages are “radical enough to mobilize people but not so radical that you were marginalized.”⁵⁷⁰ The campaign was carefully framed around the “co-responsibility of the creditor and debtor countries”, emphasising that the creditor countries should take blame for providing loans to support corrupt and undemocratic regimes; the issue therefore becomes one of justice.⁵⁷¹ In order to

⁵⁶³ Paola Grenier, “Jubilee 2000: Laying the Foundations for a Social Movement,” in John D. Clark ed. *Globalizing Civic Engagement: Civil Society and Transnational Action* (Earthscan, 2003), 89.

⁵⁶⁴ David Golding, “Dr Martin Dent OBE: a humanitarian giant and the author of ‘Brand Jubilee’,” 23 June 2014, <https://jubileedebt.org.uk/news/dr-martin-dent-obe-humanitarian-giant-author-brand-jubilee>

⁵⁶⁵ Grenier, “Jubilee 2000,” 91.

⁵⁶⁶ Ann Pettifor, “The Jubilee 2000 Campaign: A Brief Overview,” in Chris Jochnick and Fraser A. Preston eds. *Sovereign debt at the crossroads: challenges and proposals for resolving the Third World debt crisis* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 301.

⁵⁶⁷ Pettifor, 304.

⁵⁶⁸ Andrew Dobson, “Martin Dent obituary,” *Guardian*, 22 May 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2014/may/22/martin-dent-obituary>

⁵⁶⁹ Grenier, “Jubilee 2000”; Pettifor, “The Jubilee 2000 Campaign: A Brief Overview.”

⁵⁷⁰ Grenier, “Jubilee 2000,” 93-4.

⁵⁷¹ Grenier, 94.

unite diverse groups and minimise division, the campaign targeted the reform of the existing Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative started by the World Bank in 1996. This was partly in response to mounting civil society pressure that demanded more countries should be entitled to debt cancellation with less conditions attached.⁵⁷² The success of the Jubilee 2000 was multi-fold: not only was the HIPC enhanced but developing countries also had a much stronger voice in the ensuing 2001 World Trade Organization Summit; in addition, civil society organisations were given a greater role in the making of international development policies.⁵⁷³

5.3.3. Make Poverty History

The enthusiasm to alleviate the plight of the extremely poor was pushed to a new height in 2005, when 8 million Britons wore the white wristband in support of the UK-based Make Poverty History campaign. Its global counterpart – the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) – mobilised 53.5 million people from over 100 countries to back calls for trade justice, debt cancellation and more aid to poor countries.⁵⁷⁴

The Make Poverty History (MPH) campaign in 2005 marked the greatest effort of INGOs to break free of the charity paradigm. Uniting participants with the slogan “Justice not Charity”, the league of NGOs tried to convince the Northern publics that extreme poverty could not be simply solved by handing out donations more generously, and that the issue was a product of unjust global institutions – especially debt, aid and trade regimes. The whole movement had an explicit strategy to empower its participants with pride and joy, leading them to believe they were part of a historical final push to force the elites to reform the unjust global structure.⁵⁷⁵ In order to disassociate Africa from its many pejorative stereotypes, the campaign organisers were especially cautious in making any reference to Africa.⁵⁷⁶ However, the ambitious MPH movement more than failed to change the charity frame: the movement backfired and reinforced the established public perception of the poor

⁵⁷² Meghnad Desai and Yahia Said, "The new anti-capitalist movement: Money and global civil society," *Global civil society* (2001): 51-78.

⁵⁷³ Nick Buxton, "Debt Cancellation And Civil Society: A Case Study Of Jubilee 2000," in P. Gready ed. *Fighting for Human Rights* (Routledge, 2004).

⁵⁷⁴ Barbara Rugendyke, "Lilliputians or Leviathans? NGOs as advocates," in Barbara Rugendyke ed. *NGOs as Advocates for Development in a Globalising World* (Routledge, 2007), 25-38.

⁵⁷⁵ Kate Nash, "Global citizenship as show business: the cultural politics of Make Poverty History," *Media, Culture & Society* 30, no. 2 (2008), 174.

⁵⁷⁶ Graham Harrison, "The Africanization of poverty: A retrospective on 'Make poverty history'," *African Affairs* 109, no. 436 (2010): 396-9.

countries. The UK-based campaign had little engagement with people from the developing world, and the injustice frame it sought to promote lacked details; as a result, “the poor” became a vague collective, a distant other, leaving a “hollowness of poverty imagery” that its audience automatically refilled with the default choice – Africa.⁵⁷⁷ Out of a desire to build a coalition as broad as possible, the campaigners deliberately depoliticised their protest, leaving the role of colonial histories and exploitative social institutions in creating the existing poverty largely unmentioned, let alone any radical redistributive proposals.⁵⁷⁸ Since many of the campaigners were themselves, in the eyes of the audience, charities, their attempt to reframe poverty as a matter of justice was “doomed to be misunderstood.”⁵⁷⁹ Due to all these reasons, this “compromise-oriented, consensus-based” movement ended up being literally “just a walk in the park.”⁵⁸⁰

5.4. Strong in slogan, slow in change

The three major events led by INGOs indicate an increasing public awareness of global poverty and rising support for policies to reduce it. Consistently high public support for development aid corroborates this view. Surveys conducted in the early 2000s found out that across 13 OECD countries, the average popular support for giving aid to developing countries was at 81.4 percent;⁵⁸¹ a survey in 2012 found that about half of Europeans believed the EU should keep its promise to increase aid, and a further 12 percent believed that the aid should be increased.⁵⁸² Despite the nationalist and populist turns in recent years, as represented by “Brexit”, the refugee crisis in Europe, and the election of Donald Trump, public support surprisingly remained stable and strong: the percentage of citizens who believe development aid is “important” has levelled off at 89 percent since 2015,⁵⁸³ and 81 percent polled in the US endorse “food and medical assistance” to poor countries.⁵⁸⁴ Strong

⁵⁷⁷ Harrison, 396-9.

⁵⁷⁸ Dogra, *Representations of global poverty*.

⁵⁷⁹ Darnton and Kirk, *Finding Frames*, 34.

⁵⁸⁰ Hugo Gorringer and Michael Rosie, “‘Pants to Poverty’? Making Poverty History, Edinburgh 2005.” *Sociological Research Online* 11, no. 1 (2006): 1-15.

⁵⁸¹ Ida McDonnell, Henri-Bernard Solignac Lecomte and Liam Wegimont eds., *Public Opinion and the Fight against Poverty* (Development Centre Studies, Paris: OECD Publishing, 2003).

⁵⁸² European Commission, “Special Eurobarometer 392: Solidarity that spans the Globe: Europeans and development aid,” October 2012,

http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs_392_en.pdf

⁵⁸³ European Commission, “Special Eurobarometer 476: EU citizens and development cooperation,” September 2018. https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/ebs-476-report-20180925_en.pdf

⁵⁸⁴ Steven Kull, “American public support for foreign aid in the age of Trump,” *Brookings*, 31 July 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/global-20170731-blum-stevenkull-brief-6.pdf>

public support does have important implications for policies. For example, in the post-financial crisis UK, where the public support for development assistance is among the highest in Northern countries, the government decided to “ringfence” the aid budget and protected it from being cut,⁵⁸⁵ and in 2015 became the first G7 nation to enshrine the spending target in law.⁵⁸⁶ Besides popular support for official aid, Northern citizens are also quite eager to donate from their own pockets. More recent statistics are lacking, but a report published in 2015 shows that private contributions to NGOs operating in the 29 member countries of Development Assistance Committee (DAC) have, after years of increase, stabilised around an annual total of US\$30 billion (\$29.7 billion in 2013 and \$30.3 billion in 2012), accounting for about 24 percent of total net official development assistance between 2010 and 2013.⁵⁸⁷

Despite development INGOs’ proven track record in connecting to constituents in the global North, there have been doubts surrounding the transformative potential of their engagement efforts. Many critics have drawn attention to the publics’ lack of knowledge. The high level of public support has been, for decades, “associated with an extremely high level of ignorance.”⁵⁸⁸ Smillie described public knowledge of development issues as “a mile wide and an inch deep” to highlight the regrettable fact that a wide range of topics in development and poverty-reduction sound familiar to the publics but leave no deep impression.⁵⁸⁹ Two reports from OECD, published in 2003 and 2014 respectively, point out that despite an appetite for greater understanding of how development projects work, and a rather keen interest in the lives of people in less developed countries, public awareness has remained low; some research even finds that public support has declined in recent years. In general, the publics in different countries all have an oversimplified understanding of poverty reduction, they are quite sceptical of whether aid funds are effective, and they largely attribute the causes of poverty to domestic and natural causes like corruption, poor governance, and drought.⁵⁹⁰ These findings may contradict the more encouraging statistics about public support as previously discussed, but as critics point out, this contradiction

⁵⁸⁵ Helen V. Milner and Dustin Tingley, "Public opinion and foreign aid: A review essay," *International Interactions* 39, no. 3 (2013): 389-401

⁵⁸⁶ Mark Anderson, “UK passes bill to honour pledge of 0.7% foreign aid target,” *Guardian*, 9 March 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/mar/09/uk-passes-bill-law-aid-target-percentage-income>

⁵⁸⁷ OECD, “Aid for CSOs.”

⁵⁸⁸ Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?*, 111.

⁵⁸⁹ Smillie, "Public support and the politics of aid," 71-76.

⁵⁹⁰ McDonnell, Lecomte and Wegimont eds., *Public Opinion and the Fight against Poverty*; OECD, “Partnering with Civil Society”; Glennie, Straw and Wild, “Understanding Public Attitudes to Aid and Development”; Darnton and Kirk, *Finding Frames*.

could be the result of problematic polling techniques. For example, respondents are only asked one or two simple questions about whether the government should give aid to developing countries, or if they are concerned about global poverty, while the concept of development, global poverty or aid were sometimes not even specified.⁵⁹¹ Many believe that development efforts equal humanitarian relief work – 87 percent of Americans think ‘giving food and medical assistance to people in needy countries’ are the appropriate form of aid, unaware of the various long-term poverty-reduction projects.⁵⁹² It should also be noted that a favourable answer could be what the respondents believe to be the socially desired answer, and that support for aid in principle should not be easily equated with actual political support for a development assistance budget; moreover, little is known from the polls about specific individual motivations behind support for development.⁵⁹³

Another problem concerns the enduring and prevalent yet undesired charity-based approach towards extreme global poverty in Northern countries. True, a moral/humanitarian motive is one of the two major reasons people support aid (the other being advancement of national interest)⁵⁹⁴ – the public tend to believe that their country has a moral duty to assist poor countries.⁵⁹⁵ Yet it is worth questioning the nature and depth of the conception of moral duty, when the dominant paradigm presumes that aid and development are charity work, which casts the unsettling image of a “powerful giver” and a “grateful receiver.”⁵⁹⁶ The paradigm is deeply problematic:

In this paradigm, agency lies almost exclusively with the powerful givers; the grateful receivers are simply understood as poor, needy, and without control over their own destiny. Further, “the poor” are understood as an undifferentiated group without intrinsic strength, often referred to through the shorthand of “Africa”, where nothing ever changes...A corollary to this paradigm is that radical or transformative political, corporate, or social change

⁵⁹¹ David Hudson and Jennifer vanHeerde-Hudson, "A Mile Wide and an Inch Deep': Surveys of Public Attitudes towards Development Aid," *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning* 4, no. 1 (2012): 5-23.

⁵⁹² PIPA, “Americans on Foreign Aid and World Hunger: A Study of U.S. Public Attitudes,” 2 February, accessed 1 July 2019, http://worldpublicopinion.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/ForeignAid_Feb01_rpt.pdf

⁵⁹³ Hudson and van Heerde-Hudson, "A Mile Wide and an Inch Deep"; Sang-Seok Bae and Seoyong Kim, "A mile wide and an inch deep: analyzing Europeans' attitudes toward development aid by using a multilevel model," *International Review of Public Administration* 21, no. 3 (2016): 185-198; Spencer Henson and Johanna Lindstrom, "A mile wide and an inch deep? Understanding public support for aid: The case of the United Kingdom," *World Development*, 42 (2013): 67-75.

⁵⁹⁴ Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?*, 113.

⁵⁹⁵ Henson and Lindstrom, "A mile wide and an inch deep?"

⁵⁹⁶ Darnton and Kirk, *Finding Frames*; also see Chapter 2 of Dogra's *Representations of global poverty*, and VSO, "The Live Aid Legacy."

is beyond reach. Charity operates within an understanding of the world as it currently is, and does not reach into realms of radical or systematic change, [which] fundamentally restricts the scale of action offered or demanded to a scale incommensurate with the job of alleviating poverty.⁵⁹⁷

The lack of knowledge, and the problematic but prevalent social norm of seeing development efforts as matters of charity, produces a widespread sense of powerlessness and feelings of lacking agency in the Northern publics. Pogge observes that that citizens in affluent countries, in line with the charity paradigm discussed above, typically believe that the persistence of extreme poverty requires no moral attention, and certainly has nothing to do with “our conduct, policies, and the global economic institutions we forge.”⁵⁹⁸ When people believe that the extreme poverty in the developing world is causally related to war, famine, corruption and natural disasters, and when the general impression is that “nothing has changed in Africa”, it is hard to expect people to keep up their enthusiasm and continue to believe individuals could make a difference.⁵⁹⁹ A segmentation model that divides the public into six segments, ranging from “Active Enthusiasts”, to “Disapproving Rejecters”, shows that since 2008 the former had been on the decline while the latter had been on the rise; furthermore, the young generation, inheriting a sense of development fatigue, are informed yet disengaged as well.⁶⁰⁰

5.5. Breaking the charity paradigm: reflections and call for change from within

It is not uncommon to see development INGOs boldly envision a just world free from extreme poverty. Without a doubt, they have immense potential: they have accumulated experience, credibility, mobilising power and political influence over the past decades, and the global movements they have organised evidence their unwavering commitment in recent decades to combatting global poverty and advocating political and structural reforms; moreover, they have maintained good relationships with other political stakeholders, such as grassroots activists in both the South and North, local and national government agencies, and United Nations and its affiliated organisations such as UNDP. In a word, as cosmopolitan agents, INGOs have very unique advantages.

⁵⁹⁷ Kirk, "Beyond charity," 248.

⁵⁹⁸ Pogge, *World poverty and human rights*, 5.

⁵⁹⁹ Darnton and Kirk, *Finding Frames*.

⁶⁰⁰ Darnton and Kirk.

However, if the publics remain unchanged in their perception and knowledge of the issue after decades of public communication, we will need to rethink INGOs' engagement approach. Martin Kirk, the prior Head of Campaigns at Oxfam UK, has given a rather scathing diagnosis of INGOs. The fact that public attitudes remain unchanged, he argued, is due to two related failures of INGOs. First, INGOs "routinely pin their ambitions far higher than they can reach", in the meantime maintaining a "blindness to their inability to deliver their stated goals."⁶⁰¹ The best example would be the Make Poverty History campaign – knowing that extreme poverty could not become history over one single campaign, however successful it was, INGOs still chose this phrase for rhetorical purposes. As Kirk criticised, as INGOs regard "this disconnect between rhetoric and ability as unimportant", they have failed to give "due appreciation" to their impact over the long term.⁶⁰² Related to this ambition-capacity mismatch, the other issue concerns INGOs deeply entrenched charity discourse, despite their claims to advocate for justice-based solutions. Recall that Korten has argued that INGOs have entered the fourth generation, whose activities centre around advocacy for structural change. While this is reflected in the global movements and their policy achievements, it is important to note that the typical first-generation INGO activities – direct fundraising from citizens – have remained a major source of INGO revenue. Although "Justice Not Charity" was the widely known slogan of the 2005 global campaign, INGOs adopted "many of the same visual, linguistic, and experiential cues as Live Aid", ending up exploiting and strengthening the existing charity frame rather than challenging it.⁶⁰³ If INGOs genuinely intend to eradicate extreme poverty, Kirk suggests, they must set their sights on shifting public norms towards the justice paradigm in the long term, and adopt a new discourse that is "grounded in ideas of justice and equality, taking into account the realities of modern networked life in a complex and multipolar world, rich with diversity and profoundly interdependent", that has "at its heart an understanding of the systematic 'diseases' that underlie the gross injustice of mass poverty", that centralises the agency of people in poverty themselves, and that "describes a worldview based on shared prosperity".⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰¹ Kirk, "Beyond charity," 246.

⁶⁰² Kirk, 254.

⁶⁰³ Kirk, 254.

⁶⁰⁴ Kirk, 249.

Attempts to seek such a discourse have begun.⁶⁰⁵ But what one says and does is often only a superficial reflection of more fundamental malaise and cannot be changed without reform from within. Kirk also recognises that meaningful change will be more profound than just “messaging and language.”⁶⁰⁶ There must be an attempt to understand why the charity paradigm holds, and INGOs will ultimately have to rethink their “organizational cultures, business models, and the reason for engaging domestic publics at all.”⁶⁰⁷ I will endeavour to conduct such an analysis in the next chapter, and recommend changes that will improve INGOs’ performance as cosmopolitan political agents.

⁶⁰⁵ For instance, see Darnton and Kirk, *Finding Frames* and Bond, “Tomorrow’s World: How might megatrends in development affect the future roles of UK-based INGOs?,” 2015, https://www.bond.org.uk/sites/default/files/resource-documents/tomorrows_world_230215.pdf

⁶⁰⁶ Kirk, “Beyond charity,” 249.

⁶⁰⁷ Kirk, “Beyond charity,” 250.

6. A Sector to Be Reformed: INGOs' questionable public engagement

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the tension in North-based INGOs between their two primary ways of engaging with the publics: fundraising and development communication. I argue that this tension is only symptomatic of a deeper problem at the sectoral level, and this problem seriously constrains any INGO's attempt to educate citizens on development matters or create a genuine solidarity. I propose in the last section ways to reform the development INGO sector in the North, and provide reasons for why they should think seriously about such a reform.

6.1. "Two parallel universes"

Fundraising and development communication are two major kinds of activities INGOs engage in with the publics in the global North. Fundraising aims simply to collect monetary donations from individual citizens, to support INGOs humanitarian relief and development efforts, as well as to maintain their own operations. Typical ways of fundraising include face-to-face fundraising on the street or at the doorstep, telephone fundraising, TV appeals, and online advertisements. Development communication, by contrast, includes a wider range of activities that do not directly solicit donations but aim to educate the publics on development issues in the South, raising their levels of awareness and concern, in hopes of mobilising them into political action for more fundamental changes. These activities can include handing out leaflets, putting up posters, sending regular email newsletters, posting articles on the website, updating social media accounts, publishing articles or interviews in print media and organising campaigns. It seems that the two kinds of activities share the goal of reducing global poverty and facilitate development efforts. Thus, they are mutually complementary. However, NGO watchers and practitioners have noted a tension between them. This tension essentially concerns which kinds of changes are more desirable and should take precedence – short-term, palliative relief that addresses immediate needs, or long-term, structural overhaul that seeks to fix systematic injustices in economic and political institutions.

This tension between the two “temporal orientations,”⁶⁰⁸ or the “chemical” and “alchemical” branches within NGOs,⁶⁰⁹ is a recurrent observation in the literature on development NGOs.⁶¹⁰ A seminal study in 2012 conducted in-depth interviews with 17 professionals from 10 UK-based NGOs⁶¹¹. According to a campaigns manager from a major development NGO, fundraising is “about the gravity of need”, whereas campaigning and communication, concerning “the gravity of the structural problem”, is not about money, but justice; however, these two are “parallel universes” at the moment.⁶¹² This expression mirrors feelings of frustration over the difficulty of reconciling the two kinds of activities. The campaign and communication branch, or the “alchemical” branch, are annoyed by the fundraising logic, which emphasises effectiveness of raising donations above everything else, and often motivates INGO staff to resort to controversial yet familiar “flies-in-the-eyes” imagery that has been highly criticised in the past decades for dehumanising victims in the South.⁶¹³ Managers responsible for development communication concede that fundraising brings good revenue figures that are highly valued in a “data-driven culture”, and admit to the practical need to survive the economic downturn.⁶¹⁴ However, in the meantime, they experience a sense of powerlessness, seeing their colleagues thrive by using negative imagery and simplified messages to evoke sympathy and raise generous donations. On the other hand, fundraisers disapprove of the “too up in the clouds” pursuit of communicating complexity and context of poverty on the part of their more idealist colleagues.⁶¹⁵ Other research that interviewed communication managers working for INGOs in New Zealand has elicited strikingly similar comments: fundraising and development communication are treated as an “either/or proposition”, and while many interviewees acknowledge the value

⁶⁰⁸ Shani Orgad, "Visualizers of Solidarity: Organizational Politics in Humanitarian and International Development NGOs," *Visual Communication* 12, no. 3 (2013): 295-314.

⁶⁰⁹ Barnett, *Empire of humanity*.

⁶¹⁰ For such observations see Henrietta Lidchi, "Finding the right image: British development NGOs and the regulation of imagery," *Culture and global change* (1999), 90; VSO, "The Live Aid legacy"; Briar Thompson and C. Kay Weaver, "The Challenges of Visually Representing Poverty for International Non-Government Organisation Communication Managers in New Zealand," *Public Relations Inquiry* 3, no. 3 (September 1, 2014 2014): 377-93.

⁶¹¹ Shani Orgad and Corinne Vella, "Who Cares?: Challenges and Opportunities in Communicating Distant Suffering: A View from the Development and Humanitarian Sector," June 2012, [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/44577/1/Who%20cares%20\(published\).pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/44577/1/Who%20cares%20(published).pdf)

⁶¹² Orgad, "Visualizers of Solidarity," 300.

⁶¹³ Orgad, 300-1.

⁶¹⁴ Orgad, 300-1.

⁶¹⁵ Orgad, 302.

of “making people think”, they frankly stated that thinking does not help in the immediate need of persuading people to “part with their money.”⁶¹⁶

It could be argued that INGOs have been trying to blur the line between the two branches, but the changes they have implemented have stayed at a rather superficial level. For instance, the tension between fundraising and development communication within INGOs is said to be subject to constant internal negotiation.⁶¹⁷ But it seems such negotiation has only been restricted to the selection of imagery – photos that show full-length individuals as active agents against local settings tend to be chosen, while the old-fashioned negative images are largely screened out.⁶¹⁸ Another change is that many organisations have established ethical guidelines to govern the practices of fundraising and the messages they convey. However, these explicit guidelines tend to be trumped by the “tacit” and “personal” knowledge of communication managers, whose “whatever works” attitudes and “gut feeling” guide them in the choice of fundraising messages.⁶¹⁹ However, they might influence the way INGOs represent the global South visually. Neither internal negotiation nor ethical guidelines serve to raise the priority of development communication. In-depth, thought-provoking development communication has been reduced to a secondary, instrumental role: activities such as publishing a feature article in the media are deemed important by some communication managers not because they create a more informed and active citizenry, but due to the consideration that they build trust in the donor base, enhancing the “brand” of their organisation and inclining the audience to make donations later.⁶²⁰ Dogra’s analysis of major INGOs in the UK within the year 2005/06 shows that of all the messages they produced in various media channels, 80% to 85% aimed at fundraising, whereas merely 15% fell under the category of advocacy/campaign and awareness-generation.⁶²¹ Not only does a tension exist between fundraising and development communication, we have a clear winner emerge from the two as well.

6.2. Understanding the fundraising imperative: a collective action explanation

⁶¹⁶ Thompson and Weaver, "The Challenges of Visually Representing Poverty."

⁶¹⁷ Orgad, "Visualizers of Solidarity."

⁶¹⁸ Orgad, 302-3.

⁶¹⁹ Thompson and Weaver, "The Challenges of Visually Representing Poverty," 387-388.

⁶²⁰ Thompson and Weaver, 382-3.

⁶²¹ Dogra, *Representations of Global Poverty*, 27-9.

It is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the tension in order to find ways, if any, to resolve it and help INGOs onto a track that serves their long-term pursuits. I argue, however, that this tension is intractable within any single INGO, as it is the result of a much deeper problem of the competitive development INGO sector. I will argue, in the context of INGO competition, that the INGO sector faces a collective action problem, which gives no individual INGO adequate incentive to devote significant resources to development communication.

6.2.1. Conceptualising competitive non-profit organisations

It is no secret to those of us who live in an era of aid agencies mushrooming and jostling for attention that INGOs compete with each other. We have grown so used to this phenomenon that the oddity of it does not emerge until on second thought. Shouldn't the very nature of non-profit, non-governmental organisations preclude them from engaging in business-like competition? Firms in a capitalist market are born to maximise their market share and profits, and it is in their nature to compete against each other. Non-profit organisations, however, are distinguished from firms exactly because of what the economist Hansmann termed "the non-distribution constraint" – "the prohibition on the distribution of profit."⁶²² Rather than motivated by selfish gains, NGOs are motivated by "principled beliefs or values"⁶²³ to "breed new ideas, advocate, protest, and mobilize public support."⁶²⁴ Within the same field, beliefs and values of different organisations often converge. World Vision is committed to "pulling up the roots of poverty and planting the seeds of change";⁶²⁵ Oxfam wants to empower people so we can live in a "fairer world without poverty";⁶²⁶ CARE International is dedicated to "saving lives and ending poverty."⁶²⁷ Underlying these different rhetorical expressions is the same determination to end the grave injustice of extreme poverty. Judging from the similarity of their mission statements, and considering that they do not seek selfish interests, it is, in fact, difficult to imagine that INGOs compete rather than cooperate. They should, in theory, not only cooperate for mutual benefit and

⁶²² Henry B. Hansmann, "The Role of Nonprofit Enterprise," *The Yale Law Journal*, 1979, 5: 835-901.

⁶²³ Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond borders: Advocacy networks in international politics* (Cornell University Press, 2014).

⁶²⁴ Jessica T. Mathews, "Power Shift," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2017 Issue, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1997-01-01/power-shift>

⁶²⁵ World Vision, "Our Work," accessed 9 June 2019, <https://www.worldvision.org/our-work>.

⁶²⁶ Oxfam, "Who we are," accessed 9 June 2019, <https://www.oxfam.org/en/about>

⁶²⁷ Care International, "Who we are," accessed 9 June 2019, <https://www.care-international.org/who-we-are-1>

refrain from undercutting each other, but also be willing to make necessary sacrifices if it serves the ultimate goal of eliminating extreme poverty. In an ideal world, development INGOs are expected to “work themselves out of a job.”⁶²⁸

But the plain fact is INGOs do engage in fierce competition and have done so for decades. Humanitarian agencies, big or small, compete for almost everything pertinent to their work – official funds,⁶²⁹ media attention,⁶³⁰ private donations,⁶³¹ and even the opportunity to relieve suffering.⁶³² Competitive aid agencies flooded into Rwanda after the humanitarian crisis in 1994 and notoriously turned the scene into a “relief circus.”⁶³³ This familiar theme recurred after humanitarian crisis in Kosovo, Dafur, Indonesia, Haiti, where the competition was “every bit as frantic and cut-throat as a commercial tender competition.”⁶³⁴ Like multinationals, INGOs also actively expand their market share by opening up new branches in foreign countries, showing little regard for their local comrades. In 1984, World Vision, an American NGO, advertised on the Australian TV screens and called for donations to help the poor, starving Ethiopians, sabotaging local charities in their endorsement of the traditional Christmas Bowl appeal; this act of aggressive expansion, however, brought World Vision a surge of donations and made it one of the largest INGOs in Australia today.⁶³⁵ As De Waal scathingly remarks, an organisation that is “most determined to get the highest media profile obtains the most funds ... In doing so it prioritizes the requirements of fundraising: it follows the TV cameras, ... engages in picturesque and emotive programmes (food and medicine, best of all for children), it abandons scruples about when to go in and when to leave, and it forsakes cooperation with its peers for advertising its brand name.”⁶³⁶

⁶²⁸ Michael Edwards, “Have NGOs Made a Difference? From Manchester to Birmingham with an Elephant in the Room,” in A. J. Bebbington, S. Hickey and D. Mitlin eds. *Can NGOs Make a Difference? The Challenge of Development Alternatives* (London: Zed Books, 2008): 38–52.

⁶²⁹ Riddell, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?*; Edwards and Hulme, “Too close for comfort?”.

⁶³⁰ Cottle and Nolan, “Global Humanitarianism and the Changing Aid-Media Field.”

⁶³¹ Orgad, “Visualizers of Solidarity”; Dogra, *Representations of Global Poverty*.

⁶³² Michael Maren, *The Road to Hell: The Ravaging Effects of Foreign Aid and International Charity* (Simon and Schuster, 2009).

⁶³³ Maren.

⁶³⁴ Toby Porter, “An Embarrassment of Riches,” *Humanitarian Exchange Magazine* 21 (Humanitarian Practice Network (2002), <https://odihpn.org/magazine/an-embarrassment-of-riches/>)

⁶³⁵ Graham Hancock, *Lords of poverty: The power, prestige, and corruption of the international aid business* (Atlantic Monthly Press, 1992).

⁶³⁶ Alexander De Waal, *Famine Crimes: Politics and the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), quoted from Gani Aldashev and Thierry Verdier, “Goodwill bazaar: NGO competition and giving to development,” *Journal of Development Economics* 91, no. 1 (2010): 50.

If the reality becomes such a stark contrast to theoretical prediction, there must be something fundamentally problematic with the way development INGOs are conceptualised. It has been argued that scholars harbour a “normative bias” towards NGOs, seeing them as “non-instrumental actors seeking to serve public purposes”, while also “implicitly assuming that individuals work for NGOs for non-instrumental reasons.”⁶³⁷ This bias is understandable, given that scholarship on NGOs tend to come from political scientists and sociologists, who study their roles in advocating for policies, organising social movements and participating in “contentious politics”, and often focus on cases of success.⁶³⁸ To overcome this bias, it is necessary to recognise the institutional similarity of NGOs to for-profit firms or interest groups,⁶³⁹ and as a result acknowledge the fact that the defining characteristic of non-profit organisations – the non-distribution constraint – could be “circumvented” in various ways.⁶⁴⁰ INGOs, despite their reluctance to admit it,⁶⁴¹ have become corporate-like institutions that are managed and marketed professionally by persons enlisted from the private sector with business degrees, setting regular performance targets and employing a variety of marketing methods to compete for limited media and donor attention.⁶⁴²

Highlighting this corporate aspect of INGOs is not to equate them with businesses – that would be unjustly inaccurate. Interview with INGO leaders reveals that most non-profits are still primarily motivated by their altruistic principles but find themselves fettered by the harsh reality.⁶⁴³ Acknowledging this instrumental, self-serving side, however, provides us with a more useful lens to examine the increasingly crowded development sector. Some argue that the trend of “marketisation” better aligns what NGOs actually do with their stated missions, by ensuring more professional implementation of development projects

⁶³⁷ Erica Johnson and Aseem Prakash, “NGO research program: a collective action perspective,” *Policy Sciences* 40, no. 3 (2007): 233.

⁶³⁸ Johnson and Prakash, 224.

⁶³⁹ Elizabeth Bloodgood, “The interest group analogy: International non-governmental advocacy organisations in international politics,” *Review of International Studies* (2011), 37(1), 93-120.

⁶⁴⁰ Johnson and Prakash, “NGO research program.”

⁶⁴¹ Orgad, “Visualizer of Solidarity.”

⁶⁴² Critiques of this line could be found in a wide range of literature: Cottle and Nolan, “Global Humanitarianism and the Changing Aid-Media Field”; Joe Saxton, “The achilles' heel of modern nonprofits is not public ‘trust and confidence’ but public understanding of 21st century charities,” *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 9, no. 3 (2004): 188-190; Ian Bruce and Celine Chew, “Debate: The marketization of the voluntary sector,” *Public Money & Management* 31, no. 3 (2011): 155-157; Lilie Chouliaraki, *The ironic spectator: Solidarity in the age of post-humanitarianism* (John Wiley & Sons, 2013); Kirk, “Beyond charity”; Johnson and Prakash, “NGO research program.”

⁶⁴³ George E. Mitchell and Hans Peter Schmitz, “Principled instrumentalism: a theory of transnational NGO behaviour,” *Review of International Studies* 40, no. 3 (2014): 487-504.

and improving the efficiency of utilising resources.⁶⁴⁴ This may be true for certain projects, but in general, marketised INGOs find themselves between two very divergent sets of imperatives, as Table 1 below shows.

Table 1: NGO Imperatives⁶⁴⁵

| DEVELOPMENTAL IMPERATIVES | INSTITUTIONAL IMPERATIVES |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bottom line: empowering marginalised groups for independent action | Bottom line: size, income, profile, market share |
| Downplay the role of intermediary; encourage marginalised groups to speak with their own voice | Accentuate the role of intermediary; speak on behalf of marginalised groups |
| Democratic governance; less hierarchy; more reciprocity; a focus on stakeholders | More hierarchy; less reciprocity; a focus on donors and recipients |
| Multiple accountability, honesty, learning from mistakes, transparency, sharing of information | Accountability upwards, secrecy, repeat mistakes, exaggerate successes and disguise failures |
| Maintain independence and flexibility; take risks | Increasing dependence on government funds; standardisation; bureaucracy |
| Address the causes of poverty; defend values of service and solidarity | Deal with symptoms: internalise orthodoxies even when antithetical to mission |
| Long term goals drive decision making; programme criteria lead | Short term interests drive decision making; marketing criteria lead |
| Rooted in broader movements for change; alliances with others; look outwards | Isolated from broader movements for change; incorporate others you're your own structures; look inwards |
| Maximise resources at the "sharp end"; cooperate to reduce overheads and transaction costs | Duplicate delivery mechanisms (e.g. separate field offices); resources consumed increasingly by fixed costs |
| Maintain focus on continuity, critical mass and distinctive competence | Opportunism - go where the funds are; increasing spread of activities and countries |

⁶⁴⁴ For example, see the discussion in Dirk-Jan Koch, Judith Westeneng and Ruerd Ruben, "Does marketization of aid reduce the country-level poverty targeting of private aid agencies?," *The European Journal of Development Research* 19, no. 4 (2007): 636-657.

⁶⁴⁵ Whole table quoted from Edwards, "Have NGOs made a difference?"

6.2.2. The collective action explanation to the fundraising imperative

Some activities of INGOs, conceived as corporate actors with self-interested ends, could be explained from the collective action problem framework. In the original theory proposed by Olson, collective action problems happen when private incentives of uncoordinated individual actors distract them away from pursuing the public good that benefits all.⁶⁴⁶ Studies have demonstrated that development and humanitarian INGOs in a highly competitive environment do face various collective action problems. They tend to, for instance, prioritise securing official funding contract and continuing with palliative humanitarian aid over political advocacy, for fear of vexing their official donors, even though the latter could potentially bring more fundamental solutions; the high possibility that rival NGOs might quickly fill in the vacuum left by an NGO that withdraws aid as a protest gesture weakens the bargaining power that NGO community has with their aid recipients.⁶⁴⁷ In both cases, self-serving interests – a more secure funding base or a seat with the aid recipient – are put before the collective interests of engaging in political action for structural change.

The fundraising imperative could be explained by the collective action theory too. The purpose of development communication is to produce a citizenry that are informed and concerned about the gravity and unjust nature of global poverty, and are willing to engage in political actions. As I have argued in Chapter 1, this is a critical factor to eradicating global poverty as it has the potential to change the unjust, poverty-entrenching political and economic structure. We could also assume that citizens more concerned with extreme global poverty tend to be more committed donors. Informed and active citizens can therefore be regarded as a public good that North-based development INGOs have an interest in promoting.

Several features about this public good are worth noting. First, it has the classic feature of non-excludability – every organisation, regardless of the extent of their contribution to this good, enjoys complete and equal access to it. This leads to the free-rider problem: a small aid agency that has no resource to educate the public may see its private donations steadily increase, due to of years of effort put into development communication by other large

⁶⁴⁶ Mancur Olson, *The logic of collective action*, Vol. 124 (Harvard University Press, 2009).

⁶⁴⁷ Alexander Cooley and James Ron, "The NGO scramble: Organizational insecurity and the political economy of transnational action," *International security* 27, no. 1 (2002): 5-39; Garret Cullity, "Compromised Humanitarianism," in Keith Horton and Chris C. Roche eds. *Ethical questions and international NGOs* (Springer, 2010), 157-174.

organisations. Second, it incurs a potentially high level of cost. Research needs to be conducted to identify knowledge gaps of the general public, information on development issues needs to be collected, and ways of engagement need to be devised – all these activities require professional personnel, or well-trained volunteers, which would cost a considerable proportion of INGOs' budgets. Third, there is a high level of uncertainty associated with the outcome of development communication. Even if huge amounts of resources are devoted to educating the public, there is no certain way to predict whether or not they will absorb the information and change their stereotypical perceptions, attitudes and values; moreover, even if they do, there is no way of knowing beforehand whether these changes will translate into actions. Fourth, the attempt to produce the public good could be detrimental to the organisation's short-term interest. It is entirely possible that pointing out that one's ideas are wrong, even if done cleverly, could annoy the person and cost the organisation one potential supporter. Also, as many have argued, the legitimacy of INGOs is at least partly founded on how efficient they are in deploying their funds at saving people⁶⁴⁸. Engaging in development education will undoubtedly divert a part of the funds, reduce the effectiveness in humanitarian relief, and therefore damage an organisation's legitimacy in the eyes of the public. These features show that although the public good – an informed and active citizenry – is desirable, it would be too costly and risky for any single organisation to try to produce it on its own.

By contrast, fundraising aligns with INGOs' short-term interests in a much more reassuring way. With decades of practical experience in fundraising, plus a large amount of research probing what methods most effectively persuade people to give,⁶⁴⁹ INGOs are armed with specialised fundraising teams, who conduct careful profiling of their supporters,⁶⁵⁰ and whose income is linked to the donation commitments they gather⁶⁵¹. There is little chance of free-riding: the organisation, through fundraising activities, cultivates a bond with its

⁶⁴⁸ Ringo Ossewaarde, André Nijhof and Liesbet Heyse, "Dynamics of NGO legitimacy: how organising betrays core missions of INGOs," *Public Administration and Development: The International Journal of Management Research and Practice* 28, no. 1 (2008): 42-53; Iain Atack, "Four criteria of development NGO legitimacy," *World development* 27, no. 5 (1999): 855-864;

Erla Thrandardottir, "NGO legitimacy: four models," *Representation* 51, no. 1 (2015): 107-123.

⁶⁴⁹ For an overview of ways to effectively solicit fundraising, see René Bekkers and Pamala Wiepking, "A literature review of empirical studies of philanthropy: Eight mechanisms that drive charitable giving," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 40, no. 5 (2011): 924-973.

⁶⁵⁰ Chris Mowles, "Post - foundational development management—power, politics and complexity," *Public Administration and Development: The International Journal of Management Research and Practice* 30, no. 2 (2010): 149-158.

⁶⁵¹ *Economist*, "Trusting charities: Faith, hope and charities," 11 November 2010, <http://www.economist.com/node/17461445>

donors, increases its brand exposure, and reaps all the donations. Further, fundraising has the advantage of the economy of scale:⁶⁵² the more expansive it grows, the cheaper the cost per unit becomes. The routine practice and discursive strategies, once established, can be easily replicated in foreign markets, or for future humanitarian emergencies with slight changes – in Smillie’s words, by just “changing the face and the accent in front of the camera.”⁶⁵³ Within an individual INGO, well-managed, efficient fundraising is a virtuous circle. More donations means better funded development projects and quicker response to high-profile emergencies, which in turn enhances the “brand” of the organisation and solidify its legitimacy, making it easier to collect more private contributions.

However, this trend of INGO marketisation entrenches itself and becomes a vicious cycle in the wider development sector, by creating further pressure on those less professionalised and efficient, forcing them to adopt similar strategies, in order to survive fiercer competition⁶⁵⁴ – a phenomenon termed as “institutional isomorphism”. It was argued decades ago that competition among INGOs, analogous to an arms race, leads to wasteful spending on “excessive fundraising.”⁶⁵⁵ Recent economic models find proof for this theory: if the size of the donor market is fixed, more competitors would strengthen INGOs’ incentives to expend more resources on fundraising.⁶⁵⁶ But as I have argued in this section, competition-induced inefficiency is only part of the problem. A more worrying issue is that competition creates a collective action problem, in which individual INGOs lack the incentive to contribute to the public good of educating citizens on development matters and focus on their organisational interests. The collective action framework, I believe, explains why the tension between fundraising and development communication goes deeper than just a squabble between different INGO departments with different concerns. It is the reflection of a rational organisational reaction to a sector-wide, unhealthy incentive structure, and could never be resolved by the goodwill of any single INGO.

6.3. Communicating global poverty with shackles

⁶⁵² Gani Aldashev and Thierry Verdier, "When NGOs go global: Competition on international markets for development donations," *Journal of International Economics* 79, no. 2 (2009): 198-210.

⁶⁵³ Ian Smillie, *Alms bazaar. altruism under fire; non-profit organizations and international development* (Ottawa: IDRC, 1995).

⁶⁵⁴ Dogra, *Representations of Global Poverty*, 139-140.

⁶⁵⁵ Rose-Ackerman, "Charitable giving and “excessive” fundraising.”

⁶⁵⁶ Aldashev and Verdier, “When NGOs go global”; Marco A. Castaneda, John Garen and Jeremy Thornton, "Competition, contractibility, and the market for donors to nonprofits," *The Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization* 24, no. 1 (2007): 215-246.

Running INGOs as a fundraising machine, although for a good cause, has not only severely restricted the space for development communication and public engagement, but obstructs such efforts. As Seu and Orgad points out, monetary donations are essentially a fleeting engagement with the issue – a form of “cheap participation” featured by ease of disconnection and a good feeling⁶⁵⁷. The nature of communicating for fundraising purposes determines that INGOs have to simplify and soften their messages to capture attention more quickly and also to avoid challenging the publics. Putting fundraising above development communication also entails inducing the potential donors into thinking their contribution makes a real difference; as a result, INGOs have an interest in presenting themselves as the effective quick fix and thereby avoiding any mention of the complex causes and solutions inherent in global poverty.

Nandita Dogra’s analysis of INGO’s messages provides the most informative and comprehensive study on what and how INGOs communicate. One of her major findings clearly shows how INGO messages cater to the problematic public perception of the South. Women and children take up a disproportionate percentage of pictures that have people – 42% of all characters are children, and 30% are women, while men account for a mere 9%.⁶⁵⁸ A study of Belgian campaign posters over the past decades similarly found that children are the subject of half of the images.⁶⁵⁹ Typical charity pictures of children show them gazing at the camera, with the background of their family members or home cropped out on purpose, in order to give a sense of isolation that accentuates “need and urgency.”⁶⁶⁰ Such imagery conforms to the colonial history by suggesting that the South are like toddlers that calls for intervention by the adult, which is the NGOs and citizens from the affluent world.⁶⁶¹ Adult females often appear with their children but with the husband/father absent, which projects the image of a “powerless group of innocent victims”; they are mostly captured in their traditional clothing, whose non-Western colourfulness gives a sense of “difference” and “distance”, thus inviting an Orientalist gaze from the West.⁶⁶² These depictions are among the various ways in which “INGOs remain complicit with colonial

⁶⁵⁷ Irene Bruna Seu and Shani Orgad, “Mediated Humanitarian Knowledge: Audiences’ Reactions and Moral Actions-Final Report,” 2014, <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/psychosocial/FinalReportBruna.pdf>

⁶⁵⁸ Dogra, *Representations of Global Poverty*, 32.

⁶⁵⁹ Machiel Lamers, "Representing poverty, impoverishing representation? A discursive analysis of a NGOs fundraising posters," *Graduate Journal of Social Science* 2, no. 1 (2005): 37-74.

⁶⁶⁰ Dogra, *Representations of Global Poverty*, 35.

⁶⁶¹ Dogra, 38.

⁶⁶² Dogra, 39-48.

ways of seeing” a perpetually backward South and developed North, “while sidestepping the deep connected histories that shape current global inequalities.”⁶⁶³

Marketised fundraising for development purposes follows a logic extremely similar to the commercial behaviour: the point is to persuade consumers (potential donors) that “our” particular brand offers the best product (most effective aid) at the cheapest price. Working in a “hectic” consumerist culture and having been criticised for years for introducing too much negativity, INGOs practitioners have gravitated to a cheerful, feel-good mode to “sell” their products – as exemplified in the increasingly popular use of charity gifting, where information is irreversibly simplified to the level of “buy a goat, person happy.”⁶⁶⁴ Following the same commercial logic, it is also important to inform the donors of how effective their contribution has been, and to avoid frustrating them with the knowledge that in many circumstances aid has only limited, palliative effects. This logic motivates the widespread adoption of the “fairy-tale narrative” by INGOs, in which aid money magically transforms the life of a miserable child.⁶⁶⁵ The “three-wave” communication strategy has been found to be a common practice: the first wave sends out appeals that show starvation, misery and impoverishment, most typically of children, in order to communicate dire needs; the second wave shows improvement but also room for improvement, hence asking for continued donations; the third wave wraps up the story with a happy ending, where aid workers from a particular INGOs with salient logos on the outfit stand with saved individuals.⁶⁶⁶

Simplifying messages to reach a wider audience is understandable, but such practice is deeply problematic when it damages attempts to communicate serious issues, such as the causes of and solutions to poverty. Being frank about the complexity of global poverty could be intimidating for the audience. Such messages could become “alibis for passivity” and work against fundraising;⁶⁶⁷ in consequence, it is in the interest of INGOs to “pre-empt the incorporation of complexity.”⁶⁶⁸ As discussed in Chapter 1, one of the greatest myths about extreme poverty is that it is caused by either internal or natural factors – corruption or bad governance, natural disasters, overpopulation, etc. If INGOs are truly concerned with informing their constituency, debunking such myths should be an important task. However,

⁶⁶³ Dogra, 56.

⁶⁶⁴ Dogra, 134-40.

⁶⁶⁵ Dogra, 134-40.

⁶⁶⁶ Thompson and Weaver, “The Challenges of Visually Representing Poverty,” 383.

⁶⁶⁷ Martin Scott, *Media and development*, (Zed Books Ltd., 2014), 144.

⁶⁶⁸ Dogra, *Representations of Global Poverty*, 136.

their messages often turn out to lend support to these widely held biases.⁶⁶⁹ One of Oxfam's serial appeal posters that targets "African myths", for example, puts the typical donor's concern in capital letters and large font: "I'M NOT GIVING MONEY TO A CORRUPT LEADER IN AFRICA", on the left side, and on the right side, Oxfam responds: "Neither are we."⁶⁷⁰ This reply, by trying to side with those concerned with corruption in Africa and earn their trust, cleverly evades the complicated question of to what extent corruption causes extreme poverty. Admitting the relevance of corruption in causing poverty, and implying that Oxfam, compared to other aid agencies, distributes donated funds cleanly and effectively, this appeal constitutes more of a branding exercise than myth-busting attempt.

Marketisation not only constrains INGOs' intent and ability to engage in genuine development education, but undermines their credibility as well. The annually released Trust Barometer reports show that non-profit organisations tend to enjoy a much higher public trust than media, government and business.⁶⁷¹ As mentioned in the previous section, this trust is founded on the non-distribution constraint. For decades, development INGOs have been viewed as mission-driven good Samaritans. Marketisation, however, forces INGOs to expend higher proportions of their income on maintaining a professionalised personnel to survive in the marketplace, which is a self-interested behaviour that erodes the non-distribution constraint. In stark contrast to the Good Samaritan, INGOs are increasingly perceived as a manipulative Marketer with a secret, selfish agenda, who fundraises only to "keep directors in job, keep the organisation going, to make the organisation bigger", in the words of a UK citizen.⁶⁷² This kind of perception, and its concomitant distrust, are found to be "widespread across all demographic groups", and have a deeply damaging effect on these organisations.⁶⁷³ Research shows that 60–70% of the public in the UK ranked "the amount that goes to the cause/charity" among their top concerns about charity.⁶⁷⁴ This distrust becomes a negative feedback loop: fearing further loss of trust, INGO staff tend to "play down at best, and gloss over at worst" their administrative, marketing and fundraising cost; and the publics, speculating based on their

⁶⁶⁹ Dogra provides an extensive discussion of how INGOs de-politicize, de-historicize, naturalize and technologize the issue of extreme poverty, in Chapter 4 of *Representations of Global Poverty*.

⁶⁷⁰ Dogra, *Representations of Global Poverty*, 75-6.

⁶⁷¹ For the reports in the past years, see the "Edelman Trust Barometer Archive" at <https://www.edelman.com/research/edelman-trust-barometer-archive>

⁶⁷² Seu, Flanagan and Orgad, "The Good Samaritan and the Marketer: public perceptions of humanitarian and international development NGOs."

⁶⁷³ Seu, Flanagan and Orgad, 221.

⁶⁷⁴ Saxton, "The achilles' heel of modern nonprofits".

limited experience with INGOs, end up overestimating these costs and becoming more suspicious.⁶⁷⁵

In recent years, attention has also been drawn to the way the whole development sector – including INGOs and other development organisations such as the UN – adopts a set of jargon terms that sound “intellectual and scientific beyond the understanding of the lay person, best left to ‘experts’”⁶⁷⁶. Participation, gender-based, the human rights approach, sustainability, governance, inclusion, capacity building – development “buzzwords” such as these appear frequently in development INGOs’ advertising materials, yet their exact meanings and connotations are seldom spelled out for their audience. As some development scholars argue, these buzzwords, or “NGOish” as called by *The Economist*, have become *la langue de bois* (the language of evasion) – they are “nice and woolly” and have a “moral unassailability, but their meanings are essentially contested and unclear⁶⁷⁷. But again, as long as this language gives its speakers a nice aura and brings in funding, why go to great lengths to explain them?

6.4. Flimsy solidarities

Despite the various problems in their communication, and the organisational self-interest at play, it is undeniable that INGOs attempt to, and in fact do, overcome the geographical distance between the North and the South and establish, through their mediation, emotional and moral connections between sufferers and citizens of affluent countries. Interviews with INGO communication managers find that a crucial purpose of their work is to create a feeling of “being there” for their Northern audiences. To produce a sense of genuine intimacy with the distant others, INGOs simulate “embodied proximity”: Oxfam, for example, made a video of two of their “typical UK donors” being sent to Africa to see poverty and its relief with their own eyes; some INGOs have even tried the latest 3D immersive films.⁶⁷⁸ In so far as INGOs trying to strengthen human bonds across borders, they can be seen as “visualisers of solidarity”,⁶⁷⁹ creating an ethical community at the global scale. However, it is questionable to what extent such solidarity is the desirable sort.

⁶⁷⁵ Saxton.

⁶⁷⁶ Standing, “Social Protection,” 53-68.

⁶⁷⁷ Cornwall and Eade eds., *Deconstructing development discourse*; *The Economist*, “The jargon of aid: Anyone here speaks NGOish?”

⁶⁷⁸ Orgad and Seu, *Mediated Humanitarian Knowledge*.

⁶⁷⁹ Orgad, “Visualizers of Solidarity.”

An ideal solidarity, in Arendt's words, should be a "community of interest with the oppressed and exploited" that is established "deliberately and dispassionately", that "partakes of reason", that looks upon "fortune and misfortune with an equal eye", that as a principle "can inspire and guide action."⁶⁸⁰ Humanitarian campaigns and appeals have gone through three stages – "shock effect" appeals, "deliberate positivism" and post-humanitarianism – each as an attempt to neutralise the negative impact brought by its predecessor.⁶⁸¹ I will look at each in turn, in order to consider if the solidarities they cultivate have transformative political potential.

6.4.1. "Shock effect" appeals and guilt and pity-based solidarity

Early humanitarian appeals focus on capturing suffering at its most helpless moment and confronting the well-off Western publics with the "raw realism" of starvation, sickness, filth and lack of order.⁶⁸² The solidary actions in response to this type of appeals is based on primarily two kinds of emotions: knowledge of human misery evokes pity, and failing to perform the simple act of giving amounts to complicity in sustaining such misery and producing guilt, which people tend to assuage or avoid.⁶⁸³ However, both are problematic grounds of solidarity. While guilt could motivate people to act and reduce it, it could also, as a negative emotion, trigger a "bystander" effect, rendering people completely powerless and inclined to escape rather than confront;⁶⁸⁴ guilt may also act like a boomerang, directing anger not at the culpable, but at the messenger, i.e., the campaigners who spread these shocking messages.⁶⁸⁵ In a recent study on audience reaction to INGO appeals, it was found the "bystander" and "boomerang" effects were highly visible. One interviewee, for example, feels "assaulted by the traumatic information" brought to her by INGOs, and felt the only option was to "turn it off", and resents these organisations for constantly upsetting her.⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸⁰ Arendt, *On Revolution* [1963], 88-9.

⁶⁸¹ Lilie Chouliaraki provides the most original discussion on the tripartite division of the development of humanitarian communication in "Post-humanitarianism: Humanitarian communication beyond a politics of pity"; For further elaboration, see Scott, *Media and development*; Orgad and Seu, "'Intimacy at a distance' in humanitarian communication."

⁶⁸² Chouliaraki, "Post-humanitarianism," 110.

⁶⁸³ Cohen, *States of denial*.

⁶⁸⁴ Chouliaraki "Post-humanitarianism," 111-2; Cohen, *States of denial*.

⁶⁸⁵ Cohen, *States of denial*

⁶⁸⁶ Seu and Orgad, *Mediated Humanitarian Knowledge*.

There are several problems with pity serving as a foundation of solidarity. To begin with, pity thrives on an unequal power relationship – it can exist only if the donor has the power to rescue the receiver, who lacks agency and the ability of self-help. This explains why women and children appear much more often than men in humanitarian appeals – they are seen as lacking agency and therefore more deserving of pity. More importantly, pity is guilty of de-politicising the essentially political matter of poverty. This moral sentiment is focused solely on individual needs rather than the political structure; the people in need are seen not as a community of rights-holding citizens seeking emancipation and freedom, but are “lumped together into an aggregate” of the “suffering masses”; as a result, poverty is turned into a “social question”, stripped off its political underpinnings.⁶⁸⁷ Most dangerously, pity could over time feed on the spectacle of misfortune and morph into a narcissistic existence at the cost of the original goal of empowering the objects of pity. Nietzsche argues, somewhat cruelly, that pity “preserves things that are ripe for decline, it defends things that have been disowned and condemned by life, and it gives a depressive and questionable character to life itself by keeping alive an abundance of failures of every type... this was the perspective of a nihilistic philosophy that inscribed the negation of life on its shield.”⁶⁸⁸

Arendt gives a similar comment on this aspect of pity:

“Without the presence of misfortune, pity could not exist, and it therefore has just as much vested interest in the existence of the unhappy as thirst for power has a vested interest in the existence of the weak. Moreover, by virtue of being a sentiment, pity can be enjoyed for its own sake, and this will almost automatically lead to a glorification of its cause, which is the suffering of others.”⁶⁸⁹

As a result, “shock effect” appeals could not give rise to the political conception of solidarity envisioned by Arendt, as both guilt and pity they induce are shaky grounds for solidarity.

6.4.2. Deliberate positivism and humanity-based solidarity

⁶⁸⁷ Arendt, *On Revolution*, 59-66.

⁶⁸⁸ Nietzsche, *Nietzsche: The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings* (Aaron Ridley ed.), 6.

⁶⁸⁹ Arendt, *On Revolution*, 89.

“Deliberate positivism” as a style of humanitarian communication emerges as an attempt to address the problems associated with “shock effect” appeals – notably, guilt-induced inaction and anger towards INGOs themselves, and the exhausting nature of pity as an emotion. Named individuals engaging in daily activities or telling their stories and a smile on the face are the common themes in the pictures of positive appeals, which humanise them with a sense of agency; the text also emphasises the positive and immediate impact a donor could make to the life of a person. Underlying positive appeals is a logic of “same humanity”, the idea that we are essentially alike.⁶⁹⁰ As a result, “deliberate positivism” avoids guilt and pity, and evokes a stronger sense of equality between the donors and recipients.

However, the solidarity generated by “deliberate positivism”, although no longer founded on pity, is still a rather thin one and lacks the critical political dimension. It has been found that in INGO discourse, common humanity has been deployed as a camouflage that glosses over the deep connections between the North and South, encouraging us to “buy into the narrative of ‘oneness’ which ignores the deep schisms we have created and continue to recreate.”⁶⁹¹ The logic of the common humanity discourse operates with an innate naïveté, assuming that the distances can be overcome, that the differences between cultures do not matter, and that the persistence of extreme poverty in an affluent world is less a matter of justice than one of insufficient good will and generosity between fellow human beings. Constantly reminding people of fact that we are members of the same species, by its logic, will conjure up endless empathy, a panacea to the problem. Even if the message of one humanity is successfully conveyed, it is an empty rhetoric, a motivationally weak and superficial ground of solidarity. Failing to establish solid material ties with distant others, this motivational scheme “collapses under strain” in practice.⁶⁹²

The idea of humanity becomes even weaker in practice, as INGOs have hardly succeeded so far in producing a humanity-based discourse. In the previous sections, I have pointed out the various constraints their communication practice is subjected to – competition for attention, pleasing and inspiring the donors, avoiding difficult and challenging information – which, in the resigned summary made by a communication manager, end up generating an “almost like” common humanity;⁶⁹³ a sub-optimal, compromised version that leaves

⁶⁹⁰ Scott, *Media and development*, 149. Dogra, *Representations of Global Poverty*.

⁶⁹¹ Dogra, *Representations of Global Poverty*, 191; Scott, *Media and development*.

⁶⁹² Dobson, “Thick cosmopolitanism.”

⁶⁹³ Orgad, “Visualizers of solidarity,” 311.

plenty of room for the unequal power relations to creep in and allows the Northern publics to gaze at the different life of distant Others.⁶⁹⁴

6.4.3. Post-humanitarianism and solidarity as irony

According to Chouliaraki, a new style that she terms “post-humanitarianism” is emerging in humanitarian communication, which goes beyond the negative/positive dualism. Post-humanitarian communication no longer relies on grand, intense emotions such as pity, as “shock effect” appeals do, and includes an element of reflexivity that is lacking in “deliberate positivism” campaigns. The aesthetic aspect of post-humanitarian communication is characterised by juxtaposition, or contrast, sometimes in a playful way, in order to produce irony or absurdity that encourage the viewer’s moral reflection. This style of appeal further lowers the threshold of engagement for the audience, often asking them merely to click their mouse and visit the website or sign a prepared petition. Deliberately omitting a moral justification for the cause, they highlight the brand of the organisation in hopes that the “aura” of the brand sustains customer loyalty.⁶⁹⁵ One typical example was World Food Programme’s “No Food Diet” video appeal, in which an African mother uses a steaming pot that boils stones to trick her starving children into thinking that dinner will come so that they can fall asleep. In the meantime, the voice-over describes this process as if it is a Western weight-losing diet recipe: “first, take five nice stones, rub the dirt off and pop them into a pot of briskly boiling water; then put the children to bed...guess what? It is absolutely guaranteed to reduce weight. In fact, it is so effective 25,000 on the No Food diet die every day.”⁶⁹⁶ The juxtaposition between the diet discourse of losing weight, which is familiar to the West, and the cruel images of hunger in Africa, serves to produce a “tragic irony.”⁶⁹⁷

A recent Oxfam New Zealand’s “Taps Off Day” campaign is also a case in point. On March 11, 2017, Oxfam released a short film starring local comedian celebrity Te Radar, calling on New Zealanders to turn their taps off on March 22, the World Water Day, as an act of solidarity with those without access to clean water in neighbouring Pacific islands. The short film, accompanied by a light and happy rhythm throughout, starts off showing Te

⁶⁹⁴ Dogra, *Representations of Global Poverty*, 95-124.

⁶⁹⁵ Chouliaraki, “Post-humanitarianism.”

⁶⁹⁶ World Food Programme, “The No Food Diet,” 28 November 2005, accessed 9 June 2019,

<http://www.wfp.org/videos/no-food-diet>.

⁶⁹⁷ Chouliaraki, “Post-humanitarianism,” 115.

Radar lapping at a steamy window, a saucer on the floor, and a water hose in the garden, desperately searching for drinkable water. The issue of access to clean water is then presented with his narration: “We are pretty lucky in New Zealand to have taps. We turn them on, clean water comes out...unfortunately, many of our neighbours in the Pacific aren’t so lucky”. As the narrator talks, he fills in all possible containers at home, and goes to remind the viewer that on Taps Off Day, “you can only use the water you prepared the day before...unless you go to the toilet, you can flush”. “By taking part in the Taps Off Day”, the viewers are told, “you can help them access clean water.” At the end, the green Oxfam New Zealand logo appears, sending a final reminder that the viewer could register at tapsoff.org.nz to participate. There is no justification for why this particular action stands out among alternatives, if any, nor explanation for why the clean water problem occurs. Rather, from its account, luck seems to be the crucial factor in determining who gets water. Also, there is no shocking image of residents in the Pacific countries, nor positive promise about how donors can make a huge difference. Rather the audience are simply invited to engage in a playful, game-like activity, and to support the cause on grounds that it was initiated by Oxfam, a famous, trustworthy brand.

Post-humanitarian appeals like the two examples above open up an opportunity for the audience to examine their privileged life in a fresh, critical lens, and this critical reflection is expected to ground solidarity with the global poor. But this ironic solidarity achieved through irony is not without problems. Post-humanitarian appeals operate on the assumption that there is no objective, universal knowledge of justice to draw on; consequently, they often lack public moral justification and rely on brand reputation as the key persuasive strategy.⁶⁹⁸ While engaging in the solidary action – turning off the taps for 24 hours, for instance – can be seen as a *public* action, the justificatory vacuum that post-humanitarian appeals create leaves the reasons behind the action to be a *private* matter. By choosing to conduct the public act of solidarity on purely personal grounds, the public act becomes one’s own private “project of moral self-fulfilment” and self-empowerment.⁶⁹⁹ In the face of a variety of inviting appeals from competitive humanitarian brands, all failing to give a reasoned justification, the final solidary act is tantamount to making a more “profitable” choice and teaming up with the better brand.⁷⁰⁰ In a consumerist market, post-

⁶⁹⁸ Rorty, *Contingency, irony, and solidarity*. Chouliaraki, “‘Improper distance’: Towards a critical account of solidarity as irony.”

⁶⁹⁹ Chouliaraki, “‘Improper distance’.”

⁷⁰⁰ Chouliaraki.

humanitarian appeals hint at justice, but provide no reasoned persuasion.⁷⁰¹ Such “shortcuts to judgement” have failed, like its predecessors, to act as moral educators. It produces a narcissistic, sentimental Northern public, who are more concerned with private self-fulfilment through superficial acts of solidarity than with understanding the political mechanisms of exploitation and working towards their eradication. This ironic solidarity, again, cannot offer hope for transformative solutions to extreme poverty.

6.5. Justifying the demand for change

Two conclusions could be drawn from the critiques of INGOs offered in this chapter. First, despite their self-given mission and ambition to eradicate extreme global poverty, development INGOs could never in their current approach achieve that goal. In a highly competitive sector, INGOs lack the incentive to genuinely engage with and educate the Northern publics, and would rather prefer to see their constituencies as customers to please. Their mode of public engagement, half-hearted at best, serves a strongly instrumental agenda. For decades, the ties of solidarity they have established between the North and the South are not founded on an equal relationship, reasoned arguments and indignation at exploitation, and could not sustain political movements with transformative potential. Following this point, it has even been suggested that, “aid agencies in a literal sense” and “genuinely radical and transformative agents of systemic change”, who could “authentically claim to have the ideas and the mandate to make mass poverty a thing of history”, are such radically different roles that INGOs could not “straddle the two with integrity.”⁷⁰² Secondly, any meaningful reform of INGO practice, or their mode of engagement with the publics, must happen to the entire sector, rather than to individual organisations. Producing a shift in public opinion and attitudes would require continued efforts over a prolonged period of time, and unless the whole sector agrees to commit to this end and regulate competitive fundraising, free-riders who continue with the marketing approach will be the greatest beneficiary – not only sabotaging the efforts of public engagement but encouraging other organisations to follow suit.

A reasonable proposal for change, following the two conclusions, is this: INGOs that aspire to see the end of extreme poverty must seek separation and amalgamation at the same time. Separation is about clearly demarcating the North-based INGOs into two kinds of

⁷⁰¹ Chouliaraki, 371.

⁷⁰² Kirk, "Beyond charity," 258.

organisations – those focus on the traditional mode of humanitarian relief, and those that strive for fundamental change. For all the criticisms against the practice of fundraising, its importance in obtaining a surge of funds during humanitarian crisis cannot be denied: it does save lives, and unless a more stable funding mechanism is established, the old-fashioned charity model cannot be easily discarded. However, in asking for charitable donation, these organisations should not over-exaggerate their roles, and be crystal clear that they are simply offering palliative care for the moment. Amalgamation, on the other hand, is to pool together into a single agent the resources, personnel, and credibility of those organisations that take the cause of eradicating extreme poverty seriously. This adequately resourced agent will commit to a long-term engagement with the general public for the purpose of transforming their opinions and attitudes, and motivating them for collective political action. The path forward will certainly be unclear – there has been hitherto no proven, reliable method of changing public opinion. As a result, this amalgamated “transformative agent of change” could only explore as they go, with a relentless spirit of experimentation, and input from academia on the most updated knowledge about poverty, human psychology, communication, and so on. There have been efforts among academics to translate their output on paper into impact on the real world – for instance, the high-profile international network Academics Stand Against Poverty (ASAP). Closer links between the transformative agent and academic should be encouraged. Also, the transformative agent should abandon the consumerist marketing techniques that have been so deftly deployed by INGOs. INGOs tend to assume their audience all think alike and respond to their messages in similar ways;⁷⁰³ whereas different individuals undergo different critical readings of INGO messages.⁷⁰⁴ As a result, this transformative agent must employ not one, but a diverse range of modes of engagement, based on accumulated knowledge of their local audience. Following the lead of Lea Ypi, I will call this transformative agent the “cosmopolitan avant-garde agent”, and in the next chapter will provide a detailed account about its operation, purposes and modes of engagement.

⁷⁰³ Dogra, *Representations of Global Poverty*; Shani Orgad and Irene Bruna Seu, "The mediation of humanitarianism: Toward a research framework," *Communication, culture & critique* 7, no. 1 (2013): 6-36.

⁷⁰⁴ Irene Bruna Seu, Frances Flanagan and Shani Orgad, "The Good Samaritan and the Marketer: public perceptions of humanitarian and international development NGOs," *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 20, no. 3 (2015): 211-225"; Thompson and Weaver, "The Challenges of Visually Representing Poverty"; Dogra, *Representations of Global Poverty*; Rachel Tallon, "The impressions left behind by NGO messages concerning the developing world," *Policy & Practice-A Development Education Review* 15 (2012).

But why should North-based INGOs go to such lengths and change themselves? After all, as voluntary organisations, they have the right to determine how and for what they work. One possible ground I would like to suggest is effectiveness. As I have argued throughout this chapter, their current practices cannot really help accomplish their stated goals, and the proposed changes could facilitate self-realisation. Another ground is legitimacy. Mission statements for voluntary organisations are more than just a rhetoric. It implies the organisations know “in a detailed manner what service is best for their beneficiaries,”⁷⁰⁵ and if the organisations are not genuinely working to carry out these missions, they are in fact misleading their supporters. Worse still, since the resources that could be devoted into a cause are finite, NGOs that have the most ambitious-sounding mission statements, attract the most funds yet do not really strive to accomplish their missions are in fact, unjustly edging out those truly committed to the cause. Mission statements, therefore, create a legitimate expectation of the organisation, and it loses legitimacy when it fails to, or does not try to deliver.

Besides effectiveness and legitimacy, I also argue that North-based INGOs have a duty of justice to change. For decades, “liberal institutionalists” – Rawls, Pogge, Tan, for example – have argued that justice is primarily about the structure and institutions that have a fundamental impact on important aspects of human life, and the participants in these structure and institutions have a duty of justice to make them just. Inspired by this theoretical position, Jennifer Rubenstein argues that the international humanitarian aid could also be seen as an institutional structure that can be assessed from the perspective of justice: it contains “the public, explicit ‘rules of the game’ that NGOs and other actors knowingly follow (or choose not to follow), as well as the norms, implicit assumptions, and unspoken habits that “govern [participants’] manner of perceiving, judging, imagining, and acting.”⁷⁰⁶ This institutional structure is an “ongoing scheme that seriously affect the life prospects of millions of people.”⁷⁰⁷ To oversimplify, the facts that it (i) significantly affects many people’s fundamental interests; (ii) is pervasive; and (iii) constrains people’s options in a serious way means the humanitarian aid system meets the criteria for being the subject of justice.⁷⁰⁸ Since it “is created and sustained (in part) by both neutral and political

⁷⁰⁵ Eric Werker and Faisal Z. Ahmed, "What do nongovernmental organizations do?," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 22, no. 2 (2008): 73-92.

⁷⁰⁶ Jennifer Rubenstein, "Humanitarian NGOs' Duties of Justice." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 40, no. 4 (2009), 531.

⁷⁰⁷ Rubenstein, 532.

⁷⁰⁸ Rubenstein, 532.

humanitarian NGOs” and also because NGOs benefit from it, they bear a duty to justice to make it just. However, many of NGOs’ practices – such as misleading donors into thinking they are making a profound change – promotes the overall injustice of this system, and as a result, the North-based INGOs have a duty of justice to correct these problems for a start, and ultimately work towards an overhaul of the international aid system.

The fact that INGOs do not really possess the leverage to achieve what they claim to fight for has been “the elephant in the room” for years.⁷⁰⁹ It is time to admit how annoyingly space-consuming this elephant is, and find a way to remove it.

⁷⁰⁹ Edwards, “Have NGOs Made a Difference?”.

7. Towards the Cosmopolitan Avant-garde NGO: a statist account of public engagement

Introduction

As I have argued in Chapter 3, the real challenge with cosmopolitans and proponents of global justice is not a lack of motivational tools, but a hitherto overlooked political agency gap. There is a regrettable negligence on the part of those concerned about the eradication of extreme global poverty: after all, we are falling short on the important factors I have identified to achieve a paradigm shift from charity to justice, and powerful political agents are urgently needed to fulfil these conditions. Northern INGOs are suitable candidates to fill in the agency gap. However, having thus attempted for over a decade, they have found themselves trapped by historical practices and ongoing competition within the sector, and could not break free from a charity-dominated frame on their own. I have therefore called for a sector-wide reform in the last chapter that will allow INGOs sharing the aim of reducing extreme poverty to form an independent organisation, which I call the avant-garde NGO, and explore ways of bringing a paradigm shift from charity to justice.

Two questions concerning the avant-garde NGO would follow: Why would it work, and how will it work? This chapter can be divided into two parts to address the two questions separately. In the first part, based on a critical discussion of Lea Ypi's theory of cosmopolitan avant-garde agency, I provide a theoretical foundation for the idea of an avant-garde NGO working *within* the state to motivate cosmopolitan changes in public attitudes and state policies. In the second part, I theorise a public engagement strategy with an explicit focus on sparking active thinking among ordinary citizens to produce profound and long-lasting attitude changes that make the state more cosmopolitan.

I will start the chapter by introducing Ypi's account of statist cosmopolitanism and avant-garde political agency. While acknowledging the potential feasibility of Ypi's state-based approach, I caution against optimism, and argue that Ypi is misguided in placing political theorists at the centre stage in realising political change. Instead, I argue that the central task of the cosmopolitan avant-garde is to sustain and boost its public support – in other words, to perform public engagement. I then turn to contend that lack of thinking, or in Arendt's term, thoughtlessness, is the key reason underlying ordinary citizens' indifference towards global poverty. Having established that, I proceed to develop a public engagement

strategy featuring practices that I call defamiliarisation, heuristic communication and deliberative sessions to promote thinking and channel attitude change to state policies.

7.1. Statist cosmopolitanism

The most salient normative feature about the cosmopolitan avant-garde is what Ypi calls “statism”: Ypi argues that political agency⁷¹⁰ could only be effective within the state, where principles of justice could be legitimately enforced and where associative relations provide ground for progressive internalisation of principles of justice. To see the importance of the “statist” conception of agency, contrasting what Ypi calls the “individualist” conception would be beneficial. Traditionally, Ypi points out, cosmopolitans tend to dismiss the state as a historical contingency, an arbitrary feature that divides humanity and should have no moral relevance in theorising universalist principles of justice.⁷¹¹ Alongside this dismissal of the state is cosmopolitanism’s tendency to idealise individual moral agency: it is expected that individuals, attracted to the appeals of world citizenship, act as justice demands. But some obvious weaknesses soon present themselves: not all individuals have an equally strong sense of justice; self-interested tendencies and commitments to one’s private life projects always pull ordinary people away from other-regarding cosmopolitan duties; individuals, constrained by “epistemic limits”, could not identify the root cause of injustice and produce an effective solution.⁷¹² Consequently, most believers in cosmopolitanism, except for perhaps a few moral heroes, will find themselves impotent against these limitations, failing more often than not, in converting noble-sounding cosmopolitan principles into concrete actions. Viewed through a cynical lens, the love of humanity could even be said to be nothing more than an elitist pretext, under which the self-proclaimed cosmopolitan shirks from more immediate obligations that are essential to the flourishing of the local community. If cosmopolitanism relies on individual agency, it

⁷¹⁰ Ypi never gave a definition of political agency in her book. Following Diana Coole’s definition, we can simply understand the concept as the “property or capacity of actors to make things happen”, which is often enabled by one’s rationality, autonomy, and freedom – see Diana Coole, “Agency (political science),” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/agency-political-theory>. However, Ypi seems to adopt a more demanding definition of political agency, by stressing its enabling historical, social and cultural context. For instance, on page 132, she says, “political agency obtains when it is both feasible, that is, relevant political, legal, and social mechanisms are in place to operate the necessary changes in the system, and when the outcome of political action is sustainable, that is, it has a chance to survive without disrupting existing social ties, and it generates a sense of the collective that is likely to endure throughout time.”

⁷¹¹ Ypi, *Global justice and avant-garde political agency*, 77.

⁷¹² Ypi, 20.

seems doomed to oscillate between “moral flamboyance and political inactivity”, and political change that will hardly obtain or last.⁷¹³

State-based cosmopolitan avant-garde agency avoids the pitfalls associated with individual agency. It is politically effective, because of what Ypi calls popular sovereignty, which, by setting agreed-upon procedures of political participation and criteria for decision-making, legitimates coercive imposition of principles of justice. The political significance of legitimate coercion is necessary for cosmopolitanism, or any doctrine of justice, if we consider three facts. First, as just mentioned, individuals, although capable of moral reasoning, cannot not reliably and consistently fulfil their moral obligations. Second, conflicts – between individual selfish interests, between a plurality of views on principles of justice, and between different preferences for particular institutions to realise these principles of justice – are an “irreducible feature” of any political community.⁷¹⁴ Third, state membership is largely non-voluntary, as joining and exiting a political community is an arduous process that most people would not go through. The three facts combine to paint an unsettling picture of a non-voluntary community of morally imperfect individuals holding fundamentally different beliefs about justice. In order to avoid mutual destruction in this community, there will need to be an agreed-upon mechanism to regulate collective life. This is the essence of popular sovereignty – all community members are allowed to participate in the negotiation of the overarching institutions of the society, and as conflicting views of justice are articulated, one particular interpretation will finally be chosen, reflected in the shared institutions, and imposed on every member of the political community. With this legitimately derived coercive power, principles of justice are transformed from moral duties that could be discharged at the discretion of individuals into political obligations whose non-compliance leads to legal punishment. It is important to note that this is not a static process. As differing conceptions of justice and conflicting material interests continue to exist, the state institutions will be perpetually subject to re-negotiation and change, opening the room for cosmopolitan principles to be enshrined. With social antagonism acting as “a vehicle for political transformation,”⁷¹⁵ popular sovereignty thus becomes “a condition of possibility for the political allocation of responsibilities determined by cosmopolitan principles.”⁷¹⁶

⁷¹³ Ypi, 23.

⁷¹⁴ Ypi, 150.

⁷¹⁵ Ypi, 24.

⁷¹⁶ Ypi, 148.

But justice that relies solely on the state's coercive power would be at best shaky. Ideally, compliance with demands of justice should not only be motivated by the prudential calculation to avoid legal punishment but also driven by people's deeply held moral values and principled beliefs. However, commitment to normative principles – for instance, equal individual freedom and rights and respect for the law – does not develop overnight. Rather, it takes time to sink in, as citizens in the same community jointly go through a process of “moral and political socialization”, or a “learning process”, which gradually cultivates individuals' sense of justice and helps them internalise legally imposed obligations.⁷¹⁷ This process radically differs from the usual cosmopolitan hope that atomised individuals rationally assess the moral reasoning behind competing conceptions of justice and find cosmopolitanism the true or most appealing doctrine. Rather, this moral learning process must be rooted in a community's common history and shared culture and is therefore importantly “backward-looking.”⁷¹⁸ For a particular understanding of justice to be institutionalised is for it to establish a “cultural as well as political hegemony”, which is “necessarily linked to a historical sense of the collective, to the self-understanding of citizens as participants in shared practices, to familiar ways of reasoning and debating, to particular forms of artistic expression, to dominant religious doctrines and legal texts, and to critical reflection on the legacy of particular historical institutions.”⁷¹⁹ But in the meantime, the learning process is “forward-looking”, as citizens participate in their political processes, where their conflicting moral values and views clash to the point where new conceptions of the common good emerge; their institutions consequently would undergo continuous minor modifications and major reforms to mirror contemporary political and social demands, and in turn shape another generation's understanding of what justice requires.⁷²⁰ The state, in other words, is where morality is fused into politics and where moral progress happens.

7.2. Ypi's cosmopolitan avant-garde agency

It is because of the state's unique capacity to impose and instil principles of justice that Ypi recommends we adopt a statist conception of political agency for it to become realistic and effective. The cosmopolitan avant-garde agents, therefore, act “within the state in

⁷¹⁷ Ypi, 83.

⁷¹⁸ Ypi, 63.

⁷¹⁹ Ypi, 150.

⁷²⁰ Ypi, 24, 63-4;

conformity with cosmopolitan principles of justice”;⁷²¹ they attempt to introduce “progressive views of the function and purpose of shared institutions”;⁷²² they critique the existing institutions, in the meantime refining “the lens through which reality is observed”⁷²³ and “sensitizing local publics”⁷²⁴ to contemporary concerns; Ultimately, they are concerned with “enacting the learning process that gradually leads to challenging and replacing old categories and conceptual resources with new and progressive ones.”⁷²⁵ In short, they are the “engines of cosmopolitan political progress” driving the state in the direction they have chosen.⁷²⁶

7.2.1. Art and Politics

The cosmopolitan avant-garde is named obviously after the artistic avant-garde movement. One crucial common ground is their explicit political purpose of influencing public opinion. Encouraged by the leftist movements in their time, “avant-garde painters (from Courbet to Picasso), writers (from Zola to Brecht), and musicians (from Wagner to Schoenberg)” intended their work “both as a critique of present cultural and social institutions and as a concrete instance of their political emancipation.”⁷²⁷ Art no longer exists just for its own aesthetic sake, nor does it just serve the taste and interest of the social elites; rather, it becomes an expressive means consciously deployed to disseminate unconventional ideas:

When we wish to spread new ideas amongst men, we use in turn the lyre, ode or song, story or novel; we inscribe those ideas on marble or canvas [...] We aim for the heart and imagination, and hence our effect is the most vivid and the most decisive.⁷²⁸

This requires the audacity to challenge ordinary morality and reveal the unjust power relations operating behind it:

⁷²¹ Ypi, 31.

⁷²² Ypi, 31.

⁷²³ Ypi, 2.

⁷²⁴ Ypi, 154.

⁷²⁵ Ypi, 155.

⁷²⁶ Ypi, 9.

⁷²⁷ Ypi, 8.

⁷²⁸ Henri De Saint Simon, *Selected Writings on Science, Industry and Social Organization* (trans. Keith Taylor, London: Croom Helm, [1825] 1975), quoted from Ypi, 156.

Real poetry is included in anything that does not conform to ordinary morality, a morality that can only preserve the constituted order by building banks, garrison, prisons and churches.⁷²⁹

But a more important and illuminating feature shared by the cosmopolitan avant-garde and their artistic counterpart lies in their attitude towards tradition and innovation, an attitude that perhaps is best captured by the Hegelian concept “aufheben” – to abandon and to preserve at the same time so as to enable dialectical progression. Generalising from a historical survey of various artistic works, Ypi argues that the persuasive power of the avant-garde art is at its strongest when its innovations are critical of but still continuous from its predecessors – in other words, when it acts as the “creative conscience of a usable tradition.”⁷³⁰ This is an important normative lesson for the cosmopolitan avant-garde:

As Brecht put it, ‘a vanguard can lead the way along a retreat or into an abyss. It can march so far ahead that the main army cannot follow it, because it is lost from sight.’ Political avant-gardes, just like artistic avant-gardes, can avoid either leading backwards or losing their way only if they are able to adequately combine normative commitments with being rooted in particular political circumstances, and only if they are able to innovate in a way that also communicates with existing concerns and commitments.⁷³¹

7.2.2. Who are the avant-garde agents?

When it comes to the question of what agents are part of the cosmopolitan avant-garde, Ypi gives an inclusive answer. Ypi calls these agents avant-garde not because they are ahead of others in the moral sense. Rather, they occupy particular social and institutional positions that gives them “deep and revealing” insights that would inform the development of political theory. In this sense, the avant-garde comprises, first and foremost, people vulnerable to and negatively affected by current political and economic arrangements. Activists, ordinary citizens, civil society associations, political parties, and even public officials and state agencies, so long as they demonstrate sympathy and sensitivity to global

⁷²⁹ Ypi, 159.

⁷³⁰ Hilton Kramer, ‘The Age of the Avant-Garde,’ *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 7/2 (1973), quoted from Ypi, 159.

⁷³¹ Ypi, 160.

justice issues, are also considered a potentially constitutive part.⁷³² But these agents alone are not expected to achieve political transformation. Ypi echoes the view of the Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci: awareness of one's class conditions and revolutionary consciousness is not the inevitable, natural outgrowth of one's economic conditions, but result from intellectuals' mediation and education.⁷³³ These avant-garde agents will work in close collaboration with what Ypi calls the "activist theorist", and their actions and ideas will be informed by "activist theory", which concerns channelling normative principles into concrete political actions to change the world.⁷³⁴ The voices and claims from individuals harmed by current global order will be a "lens through which to observe anomalies", or "raw materials" from which the theorist finds a "novel interpretive paradigm", in order for a societal discursive shift to occur.⁷³⁵

Starting from here, the theorist's task unfolds in three distinct stages: she examines and analyses the particular circumstances of an injustice or "moment of crisis", looking for patterns, affected parties and political agents and the underlying logic of conflict; then she will "reflect on this conflict based on available interpretations of the function and purpose of current institutions", to find out how or why they fail to capture the "emerging claims and concerns"; at the final stage the theorist becomes both the "spectator and participant": not only does she suggest innovative understandings of institutions that will help resolve the current conflict and exit the particular instance of injustice, her theoretical contribution itself becomes a form of political agency that interacts with "real-world political agents", enhancing the coherence and persuasiveness of their claims.⁷³⁶ Failures are not to be feared, as experiences will "enrich the stock of political resources" for future generations;⁷³⁷ but if their efforts are successful, social norms will slowly drift towards the desired direction, making more commonplace what initially seems unorthodox, and in the end, result in perhaps piecemeal changes in institutions, which would hopefully trigger a "cascade" effect with deeper and more extensive reforms to follow.⁷³⁸

⁷³² Ypi, 5, 166.

⁷³³ Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process*, 131-165.

⁷³⁴ Ypi, 61-9.

⁷³⁵ Ypi, 62-5.

⁷³⁶ Ypi, 61-65.

⁷³⁷ Ypi, 27.

⁷³⁸ Ypi, 164.

7.3. Reflections on Ypi's cosmopolitan avant-garde: rightfully statist, wrongfully optimistic

7.3.1. Defending statist cosmopolitanism

Ypi's theory of political agency could thus be understood to be an iterative model that contains two interacting levels. At one level, activists, civil society organisations and academics, having identified a particular instance of injustice, collaborate to draw on political and cultural resources from their national community to promote a new discourse that aligns with cosmopolitan values; at the other level, the state responds to popular demands and modifies its institutions accordingly. The institutional changes then feed back into the first level, so that citizens who initially resist cosmopolitan values internalise the newly imposed duties overtime. As new aspects of the injustice are revealed, another cycle begins.

With a pragmatist spirit rarely seen among cosmopolitan theorists, Ypi has fleshed out a rather plausible account of how the state could, under the pressure from the cosmopolitan avant-garde, progressively incorporate cosmopolitan principles into its laws and institutions and become advocates of global justice. Ypi is not alone in advocating for state-based global justice. Kant imagines "moral politicians" working within the state to bring its actions gradually in line with requirements of cosmopolitan hospitality.⁷³⁹ Brown has also noticed the missing middle ground between the well-argued ethical values and obligations prescribed by the many variants of moral cosmopolitanism, and the grand institutional designs of world state or federations as proposed by political cosmopolitanism; "creating responsible cosmopolitan states", he contends, is the way to fill this gap.⁷⁴⁰ In a similar vein, I have in Chapter 4 suggested the implementation factor: a paradigm shift from charity to justice in regards to poverty could not occur without the relevant moral duties to reduce poverty being specified and made enforceable. As no political actors other than the state have such coercive power, this condition essentially highlights the role of the state in enabling a cosmopolitan transformation.

A familiar objection to this statist approach is that effort to transform states has serious limitations and would never bring about full-scale global justice. A world still composed of

⁷³⁹ Ypi, 31-3; Jeremy Waldron, "Kant's Theory of the State," in *Toward perpetual peace and other writings on politics, peace, and history* (Yale University Press, 2006), 179-200.

⁷⁴⁰ Garrett Wallace Brown, "Bringing the state back into cosmopolitanism: The idea of responsible cosmopolitan states," *Political Studies Review* 9, no. 1 (2011): 53-66.

multiple sovereign states, it is argued, would never have a just basic structure: exploitation and dependence will not disappear as states continue to be characterised by stark power disparities, due to differences in natural resources, environment, population and geographical location. Furthermore, even if all states genuinely try to act fairly and justly in economic cooperation, their good intentions will be thwarted by their epistemological incapacity in the face of the unpredictably complex and chaotic global economy.⁷⁴¹ The only way to establish a just international background, the objection goes, is to have some form of centralised coordination from a supranational political authority. Ultimately, global justice entails the “transcendence” of states.⁷⁴²

This objection does raise legitimate concerns. However, transcending the state is not necessarily incompatible with the state-based approach. The question essentially is one of time-scale and feasibility. On the one hand, it always seems more practical to reform the existing system than creating a new system. As Harvey has argued, the state “may be an illusion or a misrepresentation, but it is nevertheless a social fact.”⁷⁴³ Given that the state cannot be easily wished away, in the face of burning injustices such as extreme poverty, transforming state actions and institutions will at least further systematically reduce, if not annihilate, suffering in our own generation. On the other hand, it is difficult to imagine the creation of a supranational political entity without the consent from states to cede a part of their power – and this is more likely to happen when states are leaning closer towards cosmopolitanism. The statist approach is, therefore, not only a more effective antidote to the problems we have in our day and time, but also the only imaginable pathway to revolutionising the international system in the long run.

7.3.2. The activist theorist and the intellectual illusion of politics

A cosmopolitan turn of the state hinges ultimately on whether the will of the cosmopolitan avant-garde could crystallise in the form of law and policy. In this regard, however, Ypi’s account seems to have deviated from her pragmatism and misplaced the focus: she envisions the cosmopolitan avant-garde to centre around the activist theorist, giving little

⁷⁴¹ Luke Ulaş, “Transforming (but not transcending) the state system? On statist cosmopolitanism,” *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 20, no. 6 (2017): 657-676; Saladin Meckled-Garcia, “On the very idea of cosmopolitan justice: constructivism and international agency,” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 16, no. 3 (2008): 245-271.

⁷⁴² Ulaş, “Transforming (but not transcending) the state system?,” 671.

⁷⁴³ David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* (Columbia University Press, 2009), 261.

normative consideration to non-theorist political agents. It is the aspiring activist theorist who is charged with observing the status quo, the extant institutions and the tradition of a community, who is supposed to analyse the disparate and fragmented claims symptomatic of a larger societal conflict, who would recommend a theory/interpretation of institution that would inspire a new, more coherent discourse to effect change at the state level. By contrast, the non-theorist agents who are also part of Ypi's cosmopolitan avant-garde seems secondary in importance and receive surprisingly little normative guidance. Any activists, civil society organisations, politicians who are "already politically and/or morally sensitive to the cosmopolitan discourse" are considered a member of the avant-garde, but this "designation of 'avant-garde'" cannot be conferred until the theorist has "ceased to be a mere spectator and assumes a politically active role."⁷⁴⁴ The non-theorist agents are assigned a supportive role, as they are expected to "supply political theorists with the raw material" and later to "join the theorists' efforts to promote politically effective and motivationally sustainable initiatives."⁷⁴⁵ The few paragraphs on exemplary non-theorist agents are largely descriptive and approving – for instance, the activists who boycott the cheap labour force and child labour used by multinationals, and the pro-migrant campaigns that seek to reduce unjust deportation and give more extensive rights to newcomers. Ypi seems to believe that the key obstacle to the advancement of global justice is inadequate activist theorising. "Once a more coherent normative account of these concerns and commitments is available", Ypi argues, "the issue of political transformation compatible with certain principled requirements takes a further direction."⁷⁴⁶

There are two ways to interpret this central role Ypi assigns to the activist theorist.⁷⁴⁷ One understanding is that the theorist's effort to produce a better theory – better in the sense that it reduces the conflict between disparate claims on a certain issue of global justice, and/or frames the issue in a fresh perspective, and/or proposes a practical solution to a political impasse – constitutes an act of public communication and therefore an act of political agency in the meantime. Such an act can unify an otherwise fragmented camp, attract more supporters, strengthen the persuasiveness of their arguments, and point to a path forward. On the other, more realist understanding, the cosmopolitan-minded theorist analyses the power dynamics in a given political situation, identifies an agent – say an elected

⁷⁴⁴ Ypi, 66.

⁷⁴⁵ Ypi, 170-172; 66-9.

⁷⁴⁶ Ypi, 170.

⁷⁴⁷ Both interpretations are discussed by David Miller in "Lea Ypi on global justice and avant-garde political agency: some reflections."

representative, or a party in a coalition government, that is sufficiently motivated by cosmopolitan values and already possesses political power in the system. The activist theory then serves as a clear-headed statecraft guidebook for that particular agent to solidify its position in the political context, to ensure a result that better aligns with demands of global justice. On both understandings, however, Ypi seems to have reduced the other political agents, be they politicians, activists, organisations or political parties, to puppets – the strings on which are pulled by the overarching activist theorist. This top-down, theorist-centred approach would incur some immediate questions. Could works of the theorist achieve a sufficiently wide readership? Could the distinct camps and claims of global justice ever be unified? Would, and why would, the political agents the theorist has in mind take her advice? Would a change of political institution enacted through realist means without adequate popular support backfire? And what happens when different activist theorists make differing recommendations? Considering these practical difficulties, the suggestion that the theorist lead political change sounds like a remote possibility.

Ypi's high hopes on the activist theorist leading political change, and her praises of the leftist global movements in recent decades perhaps typify the academic idealisation of politics. In this world, political participation is deemed meaningful and worthwhile, exchange of opinion is frequent, illuminating perspectives are welcomed, barriers to communication is minimal, people tend to be convinced by better arguments in virtue of their logic and facts, sensitivity to injustice and suffering – even in distant places is heightened, and political misconduct is scrutinised and held accountable. It is, essentially, the left-leaning, intellectuals' world of politics.

This world certainly exists, but is by no means representative. Indulging in the intellectual imagination of politics could dangerously blind academics to a parallel world of ordinary citizens beyond the “progressive” circle. A look at political events in recent years would reveal that there, cosmopolitans are not only fighting an uphill battle, but are on the retreat. Individuals continue to be educated into good *national* citizens rather than *global* citizens, holding a “not-in-my-backyard” and “not-my-business” attitude towards even the direst crisis on foreign land. When states demonstrate a more cosmopolitan stance, say, by welcoming more refugees or honouring their previous commitment on containing climate change, many citizens feel betrayed by their government. In their perception, social welfare paid by their tax dollar is stolen by lazy immigrants, whereas employment opportunities that should belong to them are stolen by other more hard-working immigrants; scientifically

suspicious climate change asks them to sacrifice immediate economic interests to promote some secret political agenda; their “white” culture and traditional way of living are under threats from multiple fronts: the overly proud LGBT groups, immigrants whose cultures are too exotic to appreciate, and native ethnic groups who incessantly try to take advantage on the grounds of historical injustice.⁷⁴⁸ Politics is a way to defend themselves. As a result, many become engaged activists to resist the cosmopolitan pull, joining the fervent chanting of “Make America Great Again!”, “Build that Wall!” and “Take Back Control!” on both sides of the Atlantic. Their political enthusiasm boost right-wing parties and politicians, pressuring the state to prioritise the national interest, often articulated in a conservative fashion and contrary to the cosmopolitan hope: rejection of open market and globalisation, suspicion and mistrust of immigrants from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and refusal to shoulder more international responsibilities to tackle global challenges.

Media literacy seems to have hit a new low in the so-called “post-truth” era. People uncritically embrace information pushed into their social media feeds – information that is selected to fit each individual user’s preferences, tastes and prejudice and in turn strengthens them. This includes information that even turns out to be factually baseless rumours deliberately fabricated to influence one’s political opinion.⁷⁴⁹ Meantime, and rather paradoxically, many react to traditional media outlets with a level of incredulity not seen before, treating them as a mouthpiece for interest groups with a political agenda. As truth and falsehood are increasingly indistinguishable, facts increasingly amenable to distortion, and people increasingly entrenched in their beliefs and way of thinking, communication across ideological lines to seek common ground becomes an ever-increasing challenge.

An optimist might still see the silver-lining from these phenomena and conclude that ordinary citizens are still active political animals who are just disoriented and misled in a world booming with information from all directions. But considered against a larger backdrop, these changes are better characterised as symptoms of a long-standing political apathy and disaffection – people do not consider politics worthy of the time and energy to sift through the tremendous informational noise to identify concrete truths and become

⁷⁴⁸ Studies have shown that this perception of “white” identity under threat is a dominant motivation of voting for Trump. See Olga Khazan, “People Voted for Trump Because They Were Anxious, Not Poor,” *Atlantic*, 23 April, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/04/existential-anxiety-not-poverty-motivates-trump-support/558674/>

⁷⁴⁹ See reports on the Cambridge Analytica’s illegal use of Facebook user profile to influence voters during the 2016 US Presidential election: Tim Adams, “Facebook’s week of shame: the Cambridge Analytica fallout,” *Guardian*, 24 March 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/mar/24/facebook-week-of-shame-data-breach-observer-revelations-zuckerberg-silence>

better informed. Some, as just described, become credulous followers of political myths and actively join the anti-cosmopolitan end of the ideological spectrum. Others simply do not vote or even look at news headlines. Formal political participation and party membership have been on a gradual decline for decades after the Second World War, and citizens are generally sceptical and distrustful of their democratic system, treating world politics as synonymous with “duplicity, corruption, dogmatism, inefficiency, undue interference in essentially private matters, and a lack of transparency in decision making.”⁷⁵⁰ The 2016 US presidential election, despite its polarising nature, was ultimately decided by only 55 percent of the voting-age population, while in 2008 nearly 64% eligible citizens cast a vote.⁷⁵¹ The “Brexit” referendum to decide whether or not to leave the European Union – had a decent 72 percent turnout, but two facts make it a disheartening spectacle: the turnout of those aged between 25 and 39 – the group that will be longer and more deeply affected by the result and generally favour to stay in the EU – was about 64 percent, significantly lower than 90 percent in the group aged 65 and over; a surge in searches of questions such as “what is the EU” on Google began after the voting day, revealing surprisingly uninformed decision-making on a major political issue.⁷⁵² Although young people generally hold more progressive values, they demonstrate an increasingly low level of political participation, which has pushed politicians away from them to attract older voters, which in turn, has deepened young voters’ feeling that politics has little to offer.⁷⁵³

The hindsight from former British Prime Minister Tony Blair serves as a useful reminder to politicians and political theorists alike not to overestimate their appeal:

the single hardest thing for a practicing politician to understand is that most people, most of the time, don’t give politics a first thought all day long. Or if they do, it is with a sigh....., before going back to worrying about the kids, the parents, the mortgage, the boss, their friends, their weight, their health, sex and

⁷⁵⁰ Colin Hay, *Why we hate politics*, Vol. 5., (Polity, 2007), 1-8.

⁷⁵¹ Gregory Wallace, “Voter turnout at 20-year low in 2016,” *CNN*, 30 November 2016, <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/11/11/politics/popular-vote-turnout-2016/index.html>

⁷⁵² Toby Helm, “EU referendum: youth turnout almost twice as high as first thought,” *Guardian*, 10 July 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jul/09/young-people-referendum-turnout-brexit-twice-as-high>

⁷⁵³ *Economist*, “Not turning out: Millennials across the rich world are failing to vote,” 4 February 2017, <https://www.economist.com/international/2017/02/04/millennials-across-the-rich-world-are-failing-to-vote>

rock ‘n’ roll.... For most normal people, politics is a distant, occasionally irritating fog. Failure to comprehend this is a fatal flaw in most politicians.⁷⁵⁴

7.3.3. Public engagement as the key mission

Ypi’s theorist-centred account of the cosmopolitan avant-garde is therefore too elitist and detached from reality to serve as a practical roadmap towards a more cosmopolitan state. For any change in favour of global justice to occur, it is essential for cosmopolitans to acknowledge two uncomfortable facts. First, despite occasional high-profile media coverage of global justice movements or a humanitarian crisis, for most of the ordinary citizens in the global North, issues of global justice remain a superficial, remote concern worth no more than a moment of charitable attention – if they are of concern at all. Second, citizens in the North, lacking sufficient understanding of global justice, are likely to view the related issues from a common sense perspective and regard them as an unwelcome liability, requiring sacrifice on their parts in exchange for a more just world. In short, global justice is much less popular, understood and attractive than cosmopolitans expect. As David Miller has cautioned, cosmopolitans should refrain from Ypi and many other theorists’ optimism, assuming history is inevitably progressing this way, which is reminiscent of the familiar, yet seriously misguided liberal hope about the “end of history.”⁷⁵⁵ Lacking popular support, not only is fundamental political change at the state and supra-state level unlikely to happen, any changes that do somehow get pushed through could risk fierce backlash from an unready public eager to demolish the “progress” in the eyes of cosmopolitans. Lacking adequate popular support, the cosmopolitan avant-garde risks remaining a politically negligible minority, basking in the illusion of leading the way without knowing the rest of the army have gone a different direction.

For the cosmopolitan avant-garde, no task should be more important than public engagement and civic education aimed at expanding its circle of solidarity and support. Ypi indeed has made some cursory remarks on this subject, arguing in agreement with Martha Nussbaum that school is the ideal place to produce citizens espousing

⁷⁵⁴ Ilya Somin, “Time to start taking political ignorance seriously,” *Washington Post*, 8 November 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2016/11/08/time-to-take-political-ignorance-seriously/?utm_term=.0ae49a9a5676

⁷⁵⁵ Miller, “Lea Ypi on global justice and avant-garde political agency: Some Reflections”; “How ‘realistic’ should global political theory be? Some reflections on the debate so far.”

egalitarian liberal values and more easily identifying with people from different cultures.⁷⁵⁶ But it is always dubious with regards to how far the school would go to reconcile the ideal of a global citizen with that of the national citizen, particularly on subjects like history and culture.⁷⁵⁷ Besides, even if this difficulty were overcome, students with a cosmopolitan temperament would still require a certain understanding of specific global injustices and a willingness to participate in politics to become full-fledged global justice supporters. In addition, pinning hopes of cosmopolitan civic education primarily on schools neglects the current generation of citizens, as if they are hopeless and irrelevant onlookers to this important cause.

In order to garner adequate popular support and ensure that history does go its way, the cosmopolitan avant-garde must take up the reins on the matter of public engagement and civic education itself, so that it can, in Ypi's words, "establish a cultural as well as political hegemony."⁷⁵⁸ This should not and cannot be a uniform movement, given the diversity of concerns and priorities under the umbrella term of global justice. It would be far-fetched, for instance, to combine an attempt to educate the public on global warming with an appeal for greater military interference in a conflict zone. However, disparate, civic education-oriented global justice movements will share several broadly similar goals: to guide citizens' moral vision outward beyond their national borders, to relate injustice and suffering in distant places to their own political institutions, life, history and tradition, to seek reform of institutions rather than individual charity as solutions, and to energise citizens into informed political participation. On this account of the cosmopolitan avant-garde, the activist theorist will inevitably recede from centre stage into the background, assisting and informing public engagement efforts most likely from civil society organisations.

There would be no universally applicable mode of public engagement. Strategies will differ from issue to issue and from audience to audience. Non-believers in climate change, for example, would require radically different tactics of communication from believers with vested interests in the coal mine sector. In the rest of this chapter, I narrow the focus back to the issue of extreme global poverty, starting with an analysis of the publics in affluent countries, before moving on to recommend a model of public engagement.

⁷⁵⁶ Ypi, *Global justice & avant-garde political agency*, 146-7.

⁷⁵⁷ Miller, "Lea Ypi on global justice and avant-garde political agency: Some Reflections," 97-8.

⁷⁵⁸ Ypi, *Global justice & avant-garde political agency*, 151.

7.4. Understand the audience: the implications of thoughtlessness for global poverty

In a well-functioning liberal society, Tony Blair's depiction of ordinary citizens as "not giving politics a first thought all day long" would mean only a harmless retreat from public sphere into private life. However, in the presence of systematic injustice whose harm is not immediately obvious, as in the case of extreme global poverty, lack of thought spells lack of attention, awareness and interest, hence lack of resistance and motivation to seek change. To promote thinking is, therefore, the central and primary task of public engagement. In this section, I first analyse this issue with reference to Hannah Arendt's famous concept of thoughtlessness. I then relate it to the wider context of political apathy, and end with a brief discussion on the focus of public engagement by the cosmopolitan avant-garde.

7.4.1. Arendt: thoughtlessness and the banality of evil

Arendt's idea of thoughtlessness came from her observation of the trial of Adolf Eichmann, a major Nazi official responsible for organising the Holocaust. One would expect a man capable of such large-scale atrocity to be a committed ideologue with a deep hatred against the Jewish people, coupled with a strong yearning for the "glory" of exterminating them. However, throughout the trial, Arendt was astounded by his complete lack of detectable "base motives" or conviction in ideology, and by his resort to consistently "empty talk" to recall his involvement in the monstrous deeds against Jews. Eichmann repeated "word for word, the same stock phrases and self-invented clichés" and admitted "Officialese is my only language."⁷⁵⁹ Eichmann offered such banal recollection of the evil he was responsible for that it led Arendt to argue it was thoughtlessness – the utter absence of thinking – that underlies and enables such hideous crimes.

In her later systematic reflection on the issue, Arendt elaborates the perils of thoughtlessness and the ways in which the activity of thinking could "make men abstain from evil-doing or even "condition them against it."⁷⁶⁰ Thinking makes explicit the "duality of myself": it happens when "I am both the one who asks and the one who answers", and therefore it is a "dialectical and critical" process.⁷⁶¹ For this conversation within oneself to

⁷⁵⁹ Hannah Arendt, "Eichmann in Jerusalem—I," *New Yorker*, 8 February 1963, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1963/02/16/eichmann-in-jerusalem-i>

⁷⁶⁰ Hannah Arendt, *Life of the Mind* (Harcourt. Inc, 1978/1977), 7.

⁷⁶¹ Arendt, 185-186.

continue, the two parts must both be in good shape and constant agreement, like a pair of friends who keep each other company. Deciphering Socrates's perplexing claim that it is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong, Arendt explains, "because you can remain the friend of the sufferer; who would want to be the friend of and have to live together with a murderer? Not even another murderer."⁷⁶² In other words, evil-doing effectively causes a contradiction within oneself to the effect that the two friends are no longer in peaceful agreement; the dialogue thus ceases the moment wickedness occurs. Understood this way, thinking – the effort for the "two-in-one" self to remain in harmony – is essentially an introspective and private matter that happens in solitude, producing "conscience that fills a man full of obstacles" as a "side effect."⁷⁶³ Thoughtlessness in this sense is the failure, or absence, of conscience. It removes inner obstacles that could have blocked paths leading to evil-doing.

If thoughtlessness conceived as the failure of conscience explains one's direct perpetration of evil, then its other dimension – an inability to see through established bureaucratic and ideological languages makes room for tacit or explicit endorsement of, or participation in, a large, complicated political system that commits evil. Thoughtlessness in the latter sense sugar-coats cruelty, suffering and injustice by "clichés, stock phrases, adherence to conventional, standardized codes of expression and conduct."⁷⁶⁴ In Eichmann's case, it is the "officialese" – expressions such as "final solution" and "forced emigration" – that helped to numb Eichmann and numerous other Nazi Germans' sensitivity to organised killing. In the US's war on terror, it is the replacement of torture with "enhanced interrogation techniques" that makes an appalling violation of human rights in a country known for championing individual rights sound mundanely bureaucratic and acceptable.⁷⁶⁵ This kind of "ideological thoughtlessness" has little to do with individual conscience but more concerns the "naturalization of a contingent world":⁷⁶⁶ a pre-packed ideological discourse offers a convenient logic to this world, injecting individuals with complacency and an illusion of understanding, in the meantime dulling our sensitivity to suffering or hiding it so deep behind scenes that, without conscious effort, one could hardly spot it. In this sense, we could argue that thinking is no longer a private matter but is an explicitly

⁷⁶² Arendt, 187-8.

⁷⁶³ Arendt, 191.

⁷⁶⁴ Arendt, 4.

⁷⁶⁵ Jacob Schiff, "The Varieties of Thoughtlessness and the Limits of Thinking," *European Journal of Political Theory* 12, no. 2 (April 2013): 99–115.

⁷⁶⁶ Schiff, 106; Patrick Hayden, "Superfluous Humanity: An Arendtian Perspective on the Political Evil of Global Poverty," *Millennium* 35, no. 2 (March 2007): 279–300.

public and political action. Thinking conspicuously precludes one from conformism “when everybody is swept away unthinkingly by what everybody else does and believes in”: from thinking arises judgment – not a sweeping generalised opinion to be applied indiscriminatingly to all issues, nor ideological assertions repeated often enough to assume the appearance of unquestionable truth, but judgment of particular matters on a case-by-case basis.⁷⁶⁷

7.4.2. Thoughtlessness and global poverty

It is the second kind of thoughtlessness that marks the world of ordinary citizens and poses a great challenge to the cosmopolitan avant-garde. It certainly cannot be argued with any plausibility that these citizens do not have conscience or morality. They are our friends, neighbours, colleagues, the person who served your dinner at the restaurant and the person who delivered your parcel to your doorstep – law-abiding, friendly and sympathetic. But in the meantime, they are also unfortunately consumers of multiple ideological discourses. Extreme global poverty is arguably a major political evil in and of itself in a rich world, and could further generate other related, mutually reinforcing evils, such as exploitation, poor health and education, violent conflict... While domestic corruption and governance inefficiency can partly explain extreme poverty, more important and fundamental causes could be traced to an unjust international system – plenty has been said on this in the first and second chapter. Many ordinary citizens, however, accept unquestioningly a discourse that centres around free market, competition and individual responsibility,⁷⁶⁸ which encourages them to work hard and move forward to sustain their lives of material abundance while thinking the poor are simply lazy losers in the market. Most citizens buy into the nationalist discourse that stresses the idea that each country should mind its own business, reducing foreign aid to unnecessary, overly charitable handouts at the cost of domestic welfare. Also lingering is the colonial discourse, which crudely bifurcates the world into the developed and undeveloped, explaining the dualism with every possible factor – geography, culture, values, and natural resources – but brushing by the manifold legacy of past imperialist conquest and colonial rule. Lastly, there is the capitalist, consumerist discourse, conjuring up needs one would never have imagined and luring one into thinking that the key to personal fulfilment lies in owning one thing after another;

⁷⁶⁷ Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, 192.

⁷⁶⁸ Hayden, “Superfluous Humanity,” 296.

when consumption is the source of pleasure, why bother to dig up the exploitative production chains behind the apple of your eye?

To say ordinary citizens buy into these ideological discourses is not to say they are ideologues. Their ideological beliefs are, paradoxically, both deep rooted and superficial: deep rooted in the sense that the truth value of these ideas is often taken for granted and challenges to them can result in offence; superficial in the sense that the assertions are far from settled, systematic and coherent. Empirical research on belief systems of the general public lends proof to this argument. In a 1968 essay entitled *The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics*, Converse has famously challenged the elite imagination of the public as ideologically sophisticated, arguing that ordinary citizens hardly have structured political beliefs, often giving highly inconsistent responses to the same issue over time as if their attitudes are random.⁷⁶⁹ Subsequent research has shown that contrary to the intellectual assumption that people choose political parties according to their beliefs, their attitudes are in fact the *result* of their partisanship, which is often determined by arbitrary factors such as family background.⁷⁷⁰ For citizens who barely take time to systematise and digest their ideological beliefs, they could be more accurately portrayed as consumers of ideologies on hot offer, paying little heed to issues tucked deep into the bottom of the shelf. Extreme global poverty, in consequence, would appear to be not just an issue of lower priority, but a non-issue.

7.4.3. Political apathy

The problem of thoughtlessness cannot be fully understood without being placed in the larger context of prevalent political apathy. There have been a variety of theories to explain this indifference to politics. A typical explanation points to a shift in public culture and values – people are becoming more individualistic and atomistic, preferring to tend to their own private business and treating civic duties less seriously.⁷⁷¹ This is certainly a significant and credible change. However, as Colin Hay argues, it resembles more a re-

⁷⁶⁹ Philip E. Converse, "The nature of belief systems in mass publics (1964)," *Critical review* 18, no. 1-3 (2006): 1-74.

⁷⁷⁰ Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes, *The American Voter* (University of Chicago Press, 1980; Donald R. Kinder and Nathan P. Kalmoe, *Neither liberal nor conservative: Ideological innocence in the American public* (University of Chicago Press, 2017).

⁷⁷¹ For such argument see Robert D. Putnam, "Bowling alone: America's declining social capital," in Lane Crothers and Charles Lockhart eds. *Culture and politics: A reader* (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2000), 223-234; and Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and postmodernization: Cultural, economic, and political change in 43 societies* (Princeton university press, 1997).

description of the same problem in different terms than an explanation of the phenomenon; to understand why voters, particularly young voters, are politically disengaged, it is important to examine the “supply-side factors” – what politicians, political parties and government has to offer to potential voters.⁷⁷²

Hay points to one important but largely overlooked source of de-politicisation – the rise of public choice theory in academia from 1960s, and the concurrent rise of neoliberalism in a globalising world. As a variant of rational choice theory, public choice theory builds its models based on the assumption that political actors are rational, selfish and interest-maximising agents. It seeks to explain how politics in a world of competing interest groups fails to meet expectation to correct market failures. In so doing, it has encouraged its audience, on the one hand, to assume the worst from politics, and on the other, to restore their trust in the economic efficiency of the free, open and competitive market – the latter being the core belief of neoliberalism⁷⁷³ on its ascendance to a dominant ideology. The result is that even politicians themselves start to see politics as a ‘pathogen’, or an unwelcome interference that could easily be kidnapped by interest groups. Consequently, the belief takes hold that public policy decisions had better be made by independent research institutes and commissions made up of neutral technocrats, such as the central bank – not politicians. In addition, globalisation has also to some degree dulled politics, by bringing in forces rarely subject to policy regulation at the local or even national level.⁷⁷⁴

A more restricted definition of what counts as political also means elections run on narrower grounds and fewer issues of policy. Adding onto this trend is the marketisation of electoral politics – political parties, like private companies, engage in “branding” activities and see potential voters as “consumers.”⁷⁷⁵ Rather than conducting fact-based, truthful debate on policies, parties rely on personal charisma of the leader and building a brand image that gains more trust becomes a more important concern than making better arguments. More importantly still, seeing voters as consumers with pre-existing preferences leads political parties to relinquish effort to persuade and change opinions, adopting instead

⁷⁷² Hay, *Why we hate politics*, 48.

⁷⁷³ As an overused term, neoliberalism has no uncontested definition, but it should be unproblematic to treat belief in market efficiency as one of its core principles. For discussion around its definition and usage see Sean Phelan and Simon Dawes, "Liberalism and Neoliberalism," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*, February 2018, accessed 1 June 2019, <https://oxfordre.com/communication/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-176>.

⁷⁷⁴ Hay, *Why we hate politics*, 123-152.

⁷⁷⁵ Jennifer Lees-Marshment, *Political marketing and British political parties: The party's just begun* (Manchester University Press, 2001).

a strategy of preference accommodation,⁷⁷⁶ further discouraging any active and critical thinking.

The realm of the political has therefore become stigmatised, shrunk, uninteresting, and uninformative. With the cost of obtaining quality information to make informed voting decisions on the rise and the potential impact of the decision on the decline, staying ignorant on politics ends up being the rational choice.⁷⁷⁷ Foreign aid is a typical example in this case. While aid to foreign countries, especially undemocratic ones, will certainly raise objections from the domestic constituency, addressing these objections could also serve as a good opportunity for public education. However, a substantial amount of aid has nowadays been transferred from each country to technocratic, international agencies, such as the DAC, the OECD, the World Bank and the IMF, which will then be responsible for its distribution. The issue of aid and development has thus been politically neutralized at home,⁷⁷⁸ and the opportunity to subject its importance, effectiveness and necessity to public debate is reduced. Consequently, the public in affluent countries are misinformed on this issue, often placing their estimated percentage of foreign aid in their national budget significantly higher (around 10 percent, in stark contrast to the actual less than 1 percent and demonstrating disapproval in the meantime.⁷⁷⁹

7.5. Revisiting the purpose of public engagement

Thoughtlessness is not just an innocuous withdrawal into the private sphere. It has allowed conformist subscription to dominant ideologies and naturalised the deeply unjust world, and it is no exaggeration to regard it as the fundamental cause of public inactivity on the issue of global poverty. Tackling thoughtlessness and promoting informed, critical thinking, therefore, is crucial for any meaningful public engagement efforts in order to motivate the general public to problematise the natural, generate a stronger objection to the neoliberal world order and cultivate solidarity with distant others. The mere provision of factual knowledge about severely unmet needs elsewhere would not suffice; the issue must be

⁷⁷⁶ Hay, *Why we hate politics*, 120.

⁷⁷⁷ Russell Hardin, "Street - Level Epistemology and Democratic Participation," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 10, no. 2 (2002): 212-229.

⁷⁷⁸ Clair Apodaca, "Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy Tool," April 2017, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, accessed 1 June 2019, <https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-332?rskey=b9t4Sm&result=1>.

⁷⁷⁹ Milner and Tingley, "Public opinion and foreign aid: A review essay."

made relevant and thought-provoking, and the tools and resources to facilitate the formation of a more considered opinion should also be provided. In a time when thoughtful challenge to the perceived common sense is rare, thinking itself, constitutes a political act. Therefore, by continually engaging the general public to think and placing important issues in the political limelight, the cosmopolitan avant-garde also encourages a much-needed return to the public life. A more thoughtful public will join the cosmopolitan avant-garde in casting doubt on problematic practices and institutions of the state and pushing for political reforms that will end up reducing poverty beyond their borders.

In the rest of the chapter, I will suggest a reflective model of public engagement designed for what I call the avant-garde NGO. I have analysed in the previous chapter why the current INGO sector faces a collective action problem and could not genuinely engage the public towards a paradigm shift; as a solution, I have recommended that INGOs abandon their traditional charity approach, pool their resources and work in unison. While recognising that other agents within the cosmopolitan avant-garde such as politicians and individuals could have important roles in public engagement, I believe the following strategy will work best for the avant-garde NGO, given its human and monetary resources and extensive knowledge of development issues.

7.6. Defamiliarisation: from art to political communication

Many avant-garde artists from the late 19th and early 20th century are well-known not only for their art, but also for their unimpeded expression of their fervent commitment to radical political ideas: Gustave Courbet and Pablo Picasso, for instance, are outspoken socialists, while others saw anarchism as “congenital to avant-garde psychology.”⁷⁸⁰ The messages conveyed in their works resonated with and amplified the voices of the like-minded, irritated the old-fashioned, and enlightened the undecided. Avant-garde art became particularly effective in communicating political ideas and connecting with the general public because, as Ypi pointed out, these artists were able to innovate without causing a radical rupture from tradition.⁷⁸¹ In addition, however, I want to suggest another reason: works of the avant-garde innovated in such a way that they effectively de-familiarised the general public from the everyday world they take for granted, and thus made them

⁷⁸⁰ Renato Poggioli, "The Avant-Garde and Politics," *Yale French Studies*, no. 39 (1967): 185.

⁷⁸¹ Ypi, *Global justice and avant-garde political agency*, 155-173.

susceptible to new ideas. The technique of defamiliarisation, I argue, is both transferrable and essential to the avant-garde NGO, in order to counteract thoughtlessness.

7.6.1. Defamiliarisation as an art technique

The idea of de-familiarisation comes from *Art as Technique*, a seminal essay first published in 1917 by the Russian literary theorist Viktor Shklovsky⁷⁸². He argues that a fundamental feature of art, or in his words, “poetic language,” is to make the “habitual” and “unconsciously automatic” world unfamiliar. Similar to Arendt, Shklovsky describes everyday life as marked by “algebraic” mental activity: “we apprehend objects only as shapes with imprecise pretension... We see the objects as though it were enveloped in sack. We know what it is by its configuration, but we see only its silhouette.”⁷⁸³ As a result of this “automatism of perception,” he argues, life “is reckoned as nothing.”⁷⁸⁴ It is art that provides people with fresh perspectives that revitalise their perception of everyday world:

Habitualization devours work, clothes, furniture, one's wife, and the fear of war. "If the whole complex lives of many people go on unconsciously, then such lives are as if they had never been." And art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged.⁷⁸⁵

The key to defamiliarisation is to innovate not so much in content as in form. Shklovsky argues that this effect “is found almost everywhere form is found,” and he illustrates this through two methods used by Tolstoy.⁷⁸⁶ One is to refrain from naming everyday objects in description or narratives. Tolstoy, for instance, describes the process of “flogging” in a detailed way without naming it (“strip people who have broken the law,” “to hurl them to the floor,” and “to rap on their bottoms with switches,” “to lash about on the naked

⁷⁸² Victor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," in Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis eds. *Russian formalist criticism: Four essays* (University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 3-24.

⁷⁸³ Shklovsky, 11.

⁷⁸⁴ Shklovsky, 11.

⁷⁸⁵ Shklovsky, 12.

⁷⁸⁶ Shklovsky, 18.

buttocks”) before he asks a rhetorical question on the savageness of this practice.⁷⁸⁷ The second method is to choose an unfamiliar narrator to tell a familiar story. Shklovsky uses Tolstoy’s story *Kholstomer*, which adopts the perspective of a horse, as an example. The horse observes and reflects on mundane human occurrences of trade and private ownership: “The words ‘my horse’ referred to me, a living horse, and seemed as strange to me as the words ‘my land’, ‘my air’, ‘my water’...And people strive not for the good in life, but for goods they can call their own.”⁷⁸⁸ By adopting a non-human perspective, Tolstoy forces his reader to rethink what they take as the natural, therefore producing a unique aesthetic experience.

In addition to bringing novel artistic enjoyment, defamiliarisation has a political dimension relevant to our present purpose. This is apparent even from the examples of Tolstoy that Shklovsky himself uses. Description of the details of flogging without naming it magnifies the cruelty of inflicting physical pain; the human obsession with claiming as many material and living things as “mine”, and ranking individuals according to their earthly possessions, narrated by a horse, creates a sense of absurdity and strangeness to the institution of private property. To be sure, defamiliarisation is not confined to literature. Artistic work denouncing the cruelty of war is not rare, but Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica* stands out by sparking renewed attention to the bombing of a Spanish town. One could argue that this is thanks to his cubist, abstract and bizarrely distorted representations of the mother, baby, the horse and the bull, whose faces of agony resemble an imaginative nightmare more than reality. Bertolt Brecht, the famous German theatre practitioner, makes the political dimension of defamiliarisation more explicit and proposes that the theatre should create *Verfremdungseffekt* – translated variably as distancing effect, estrangement effect, alienation, or, not surprisingly, defamiliarisation – by “stripping the event of its self-evident, familiar, obvious quality and creating a sense of astonishment and curiosity about them.”⁷⁸⁹ Brecht is critical of the traditional “dramatic theatre, where the spectator empathises and identifies with the characters on the stages, treating suffering and pain as unfortunate but inescapable;”⁷⁹⁰ in what he calls the “epic theatre”, techniques such as the use of a narrator on the side, harsh lights, placards and actors directly addressing the audience are used to

⁷⁸⁷ Shklovsky, 13.

⁷⁸⁸ Shklovsky, 14.

⁷⁸⁹ Peter Brooker, "Key words in Brecht’s theory and practice of theatre,” in Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sack eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht* (2nd ed.) (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 185-200.

⁷⁹⁰ Bertolt Brecht, *Theatre for pleasure and theatre for instruction*, 1964, accessed 1 June 2019, <http://artsites.ucsc.edu/faculty/gustafson/FILM%20162.W10/readings/pleasure%20and%20instruction.pdf>

alert and startle the spectator, to expose them the “laws of cause and effect”, so that at the end of the play, they say:

“I’d never have thought it – That’s not the way - That’s extraordinary, hardly believable – It’s got to stop – the sufferings of this man appall me, because they are unnecessary – That’s great art: nothing obvious in it – I laugh when they weep, I weep when they laugh.”⁷⁹¹

7.6.2. Defamiliarisation and the avant-garde NGO

It is in this political dimension that defamiliarisation could usefully serve the avant-garde NGO in making their initial contact with the general public. It has become clear now that thoughtlessness is the other side of the same coin to what Shklovsky calls the “automatism” of perception: if everyday occurrences and objects all appear natural, there is simply no reason to trouble oneself with even the slightest self-doubt. The purpose of deploying this technique in public communication is then to plant a seed of doubt to impede a portion of our numerous habitual, knee-jerk responses to everyday objects, consumption needs and news headline, so that they are problematised. Broadly speaking, on the issue of extreme global poverty, the following topics, among others, should be prioritised to receive defamiliarisation as they are the aforementioned dominant ideologies:

Table 2

| Topic | After defamiliarisation, people are reminded that... |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Global connectedness | I am materially connected to distant other through complex global chains of consumption and production; my actions have consequences previously invisible to me |
| Historical injustice | My country is affluent partly thanks to the ruthless wealth accumulation from invasion, slavery and oppression in history. |
| Sense of entitlement | My wealth is not all attributable to my hard work – without a range of morally arbitrary factors such as my family background, race, gender, talent and nationality, I would not be living the life I have now. |
| Materialism and consumerism | Probably, my urge to buy that luxury bag was the result of commercial brainwashing. |

⁷⁹¹ Brecht.

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Global order/international trade | My country has been ally with that obviously unjust, repressive regime for decades/My country has been a real bully in its negotiation with that small nation. |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The avant-garde NGO will be well-suited to defamiliarise these topics, based on the current INGOs’ decades of experience in campaigning, advocacy and front-line poverty alleviation work in the global South. However, an occasional instance of defamiliarisation will not revolutionise one’s values and opinions – in fact, one will more likely experience only a transient moment of strangeness before falling back into her comfort zone. This practice needs to become more systematic and purposeful in order to have an extensive reach over a sustained period of time from various angles. The avant-garde NGO will need to not only borrow methods explored and proven effective by artists from all areas, but also actively collaborate with them, in order to be able to constantly innovate on forms of representing familiar themes. To illustrate how defamiliarisation serves as a method of public engagement, consider the four scenarios and their potential effects.

Scenario 1: Sale booth

The avant-garde NGO sets a booth at a local community market. The commodities on sale are everyday objects: bags, pens, coffee, decorations, etc. Instead of lining them clearly priced on the table, the vendor encloses them inside large paper bags with no price tags. Attached to the papers bag is a small paragraph, on how this particular unnamed commodity is produced. Customers read the paragraph and then guess a reasonable price to cover all the costs involved in this production process. For instance, “the graphite in this commodity is mined from Sri Lanka by a family business; the multiple layers of wood in this product comes from trees that spent 10 years growing in a Canadian forest; the sourced materials are then processed, moulded and assembled into the final product by 300 workers working six days a week located in a southern province in China, before they spend ten days on the sea, three days on the road to be in front of you”.

Scenario 2: A café that overcharges⁷⁹²

⁷⁹² This is adapted from Oxfam’s campaign video to raise awareness on tax dodging, entitled “Would you pay 20 euros for a beer?,” accessed 9 June 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BansS5e-2vE>.

The avant-garde NGO sets up a cafe booth to sell coffee and muffins of average local prices. When customers pay, however, they are told by the waiting staff they have to pay an additional sum of money, because the previous customer simply ran away without paying and someone has to bear the costs. The customers, feeling cheated, would engage in an argument, while the waiting staff maintains that their demands are perfect reasonable. Before the argument escalates, the customers will be told that this is only a social experiment. They will then be asked: if dodging one's coffee bill expecting others to bear the costs appears so unjust to you, have you protested to , say, Starbuck's tax dodging?

Scenario 3: Unfair Running Match

The avant-garde NGO organizes an “Unfair Running Match” at a local school with a reward for the winner, and parents are invited to watch. The contestants, however, have to go through a blind draw before the match. Some students pick the “malaria” draw that puts a heavy bag attached to their back; some who are luckier get the “millionaire parents” draw that moves their starting line 20 meters forward, while others with the “violent conflict” draw are instructed to run backwards five meters, for every 20 meters they run forward. Despite the obvious unfairness, a ceremony will still be held to give award to the winner.

Scenario 4: Yoko Ono-Styled Instructions

At a street corner, the avant-garde NGO offers box of book clippings excerpted from *Portfolios of the Poor: How the World's Poor Live on \$2 a Day*,⁷⁹³ which details how the poor manage limited financial resources to live life to the maximum. Above the box, a big, minimalist poster is put up with a few lines of words that imitate Yoko Ono's instruction pieces:

Recall the most expensive purchase last month

Read a clipping,

Befriend the person in your mind,

and explain your reason of purchase

⁷⁹³ Daryl Collins, Jonathan Morduch, Stuart Rutherford, and Orlanda Ruthven, *Portfolios of the poor: how the world's poor live on \$2 a day* (Princeton University Press, 2010).

These scenarios exemplify how avant-garde NGO could apply the technique of defamiliarisation to public engagement. While the underlying messages will invariably surround the several themes I have identified, the forms of message can be infinite – painting, literature excerpts, performance art, stage play, concept art, video clips, game – any imaginable media form could be deployed. As different demographic groups of people may have a diverse range of preferences of media, considerations must be given to what media form might prove more effective to reach a particular group in order to ensure the widest possible coverage. One advantage of this technique is that it challenges people’s habitual views but avoids offending them, by creating a relaxed space where individuals could introspectively examine what has appeared natural. Used appropriately, it could even be enriching and entertaining but still thought-provoking. This creates an incentive for ordinary citizens to engage with the avant-garde NGO, and in this regard, this strategy is superior to the traditional charity approach of public engagement. More importantly, defamiliarisation builds up a stronger solidarity by drawing on material and historical connections, which are thicker than ties of humanity. As I have argued in a previous chapter, the avant-garde NGO, having abandoned the charity approach and branding exercise, will not strike the general public as ‘yet another organisation trying to get money out of their pockets’; feeling no burden to donate money, individuals are more likely to see their time spent on an avant-garde activity well rewarded with enlightening perspectives.

A widely tested assumption in social psychology research in recent decades is that that people desire to hold correct attitudes (from their subjective perspective).⁷⁹⁴ From this it could be inferred that if repeated use of defamiliarisation does succeed in shaking one’s self-assurance in a certain belief, two possible outcomes would follow: either one will dismiss the new information and/or come up with refutation or additional justification in order to restore and strengthen her existing beliefs; or one may start searching for an alternative belief that is deemed correct. The latter scenario is the preferred outcome of defamiliarisation and the possibility of the former scenario should be minimised in practice. However, to my best knowledge, defamiliarisation as a concept borrowed from literary theory has not been applied in social science research in relation to persuasion and attitude change, and therefore it is difficult to determine the likelihood of the two possible outcomes. In practice, defamiliarisation will have to be tested iteratively by the avant-garde NGO, so

⁷⁹⁴ Richard E. Petty and Duane T. Wegener, "The elaboration likelihood model: Current status and controversies," in Shelly Chaiken and Yaacov Trope eds., *Dual-process theories in social psychology* 1 (Guilford Press: 1999): 37-72.

that through trial and error an optimal method of deploying this technique could be found. We could expect this optimal method to be culture-sensitive and vary from place to place – in some places people might prefer defamiliarisation to be more informative and thought-provoking, and in others a more playful, participatory style could produce a better result.

It is important not to exaggerate even the theoretical effects of defamiliarisation. One's ideological beliefs should not be expected to be toppled and renovated in a sweeping move. To recapitulate, the purpose of adopting defamiliarisation in public engagement is to draw attention to neglected issues and in the meantime, plant a seed of doubt and epistemic humility beneath one's rarely questioned ideological beliefs. In other words, this technique is adopted to 'prep' as many individuals as possible for further attempts at persuasion. To supply these attitude-changing alternatives would be the second prong of the avant-garde NGO strategy, as I will elaborate in the following section.

7.7. Heuristic communication

Defamiliarisation draws attention to and potentially activates thinking on issues ordinary citizens would otherwise remain thoughtless on, by creating a space of doubt from the natural and familiar. However, there is no guarantee that people from different backgrounds holding various values would reach conclusions akin to what cosmopolitans expect. After all, with charity being the dominant paradigm regarding poverty beyond borders, with the stigma and stereotypes attached to poor people in general, it is understandably difficult for uninformed citizens to come to see extreme poverty as requiring substantive action on their part. It is therefore necessary for the avant-garde NGO to actively lead the thinking process towards desired outcomes; in other words, the organisation needs to make a conscious attempt at effecting attitude change. One obvious approach is to present the general public with sound, compelling arguments reminding them of their moral obligations – these arguments abound in the global justice literature and may just need some simplification to make them lay people-friendly. However, while educating entry-level global justice theorists in bulk would appear irresistibly appealing, in this section I caution against this direct persuasion approach. Instead, I propose heuristic communication as a viable alternative, based on insights from decades of research in social psychology around the issue of persuasion.

7.7.1. The social psychology of persuasion

Self-talk as the key to attitude change

Early research on persuasion predominantly treats attitude changes as a learning process, positing that individuals passively absorb and comprehend the content of a message before being persuaded.⁷⁹⁵ This theory was soon replaced in the 1960s by the Cognitive Response Model, which has remained influential ever since. Rather than seeing individuals as passive processors of information, the Cognitive Response Model locates the most critical determinant of attitude change in people's own inner thoughts in reaction to the message: persuasion is likely to succeed if the communicator sparks thoughts favourable to her message, and when thoughts critical of the message are produced, persuasion tends to fail.⁷⁹⁶ In other words, people are "self-talk persuaders" – it is often themselves, not the communicator or the persuasive message itself that causes the change of attitude.⁷⁹⁷

Dual-process models

While the Cognitive Response Model suggests that prompting favourable thinking on the persuasion target could achieve attitude change, it is obviously unrealistic to expect people to expend large cognitive resources on every issue they encounter. Decades of research in social psychology has established that there are two distinct ways of information processing: one is much quicker, more intuitive and automatic, and more reliant on issue-irrelevant cues; the other slower, more thoughtful and effortful, and more sensitive to the quality of argument. Two similar theories dominate the field today:⁷⁹⁸ the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) terms the two routes the central and peripheral route, whereas Heuristic-

⁷⁹⁵Richard M. Perloff, *The Dynamics of Persuasion: Communication and Attitudes in the 21st Century* (6th ed.) (Routledge, 2017), 222-4.

⁷⁹⁶ Anthony G. Greenwald, "Cognitive learning, cognitive response to persuasion, and attitude change," *Psychological foundations of attitudes* (1968): 147-170; Richard E. Petty, Thomas M. Ostrom, and Timothy C. Brock eds. *Cognitive responses in persuasion* (Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1981).

⁷⁹⁷ Douglas T. Kenrick, Steven L. Neuberg, and Robert B. Cialdini, *Social psychology, goals in interaction* (4th ed.) (Boston: Pearson, 2005), 143-179.

⁷⁹⁸ According to Perloff in *The Dynamics of Persuasion*, ELM provides a more comprehensive framework regarding factors such as the source, message and receiver, while HSM has a greater emphasis on heuristics. But it is common to group both under dual-process theory.

Systematic Model (HSM) calls the two the heuristic and systematic route.⁷⁹⁹ Several insights from these models are worth mentioning here. Put simply:

- Both routes could lead to attitude change;
- Attitudes as a result of the peripheral/heuristic processing could be affected by a variety of mental shortcuts, such as source credibility and physical attractiveness of the communicator, so that the least cognitive effort is needed for the present purpose;
- The central/systematic route is more likely to cause changes that would persist over time. Activation of the central/systematic route, however, requires (1) personal motivation and (2) ability – issues that one has more personal involvement in and better knowledge on will tend to be systematically considered.⁸⁰⁰

Resistance to persuasion

While lessons from successful persuasion are valuable, it is also important to understand why persuasion sometimes fails. It is found that people are generally motivated to resist perceived attempts to change their minds. The prominent psychological reactance theory argues that persuasion can be perceived as a threat to much valued individual autonomy and freedom, and trigger resistance as a result.⁸⁰¹ Other motivations to resist persuasion include concern of deception and reluctance to change.⁸⁰² As a result, people may choose to avoid the persuasive attempts, contest the message and persuader, or process information in a biased way.⁸⁰³

7.7.2. Direct persuasion vs. heuristic communication

⁷⁹⁹ Shelly Chaiken, A. Liberman, and A. H. Eagly, "Heuristic and Systematic Information Processing within and beyond the Persuasion Context," in J. S. Uleman and J. A. Bargh eds. *Unintended Thought* (New York: Guilford, 1989), 212-252; Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo, "The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion," in Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo eds., *Communication and persuasion* (Springer, New York, NY, 1986), 1-24.

⁸⁰⁰ Perloff, *The Dynamics of Persuasion*, 240.

⁸⁰¹ This theory was first proposed in Jack W. Brehm, *A theory of psychological reactance* (New York: Academic Press, 1966); for a review of relevant research see Michael Burgoon, Eusebio Alvaro, Joseph Grandpre, and Michael Voulodakis, "Revisiting the theory of psychological reactance: Communicating threats to attitudinal freedom," in J. P. Dillard & M. Pfau eds., *The persuasion handbook: Theory and practice* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002), 213–232.

⁸⁰² Marieke L. Fransen, Edith G. Smit, and Peeter WJ Verlegh, "Strategies and motives for resistance to persuasion: an integrative framework," *Frontiers in psychology* 6 (2015): 1201.

⁸⁰³ Fransen, Smit, and Verlegh.

The above findings from social psychology, although summarised very succinctly, suffice for our present purpose: they suggest two important reasons why persuasion that utilises normative global justice arguments would rarely succeed in public engagement. One reason is that members of the public would probably not take even the best-crafted normative arguments seriously. Notwithstanding the severity of global poverty, citizens in the global North, having lived in complete isolation from this issue, will struggle to find it personally relevant, and will possess little pertinent knowledge as well. Consequently, they lack the motivation to activate their central/systematic route to give arguments, however well-made, any serious consideration. Secondly, direct persuasion could backfire in public engagement, inadvertently consolidating the opposite stance by triggering psychological reactance. Normative in nature, global poverty arguments typically start with a diagnosis of the undesirable status quo and often end up pointing out or redefining duties on the part of individuals and/or the state in the global North. Therefore, normative arguments are essentially a more elaborate way of saying “you should do X” and could be perceived as a “controlling language”⁸⁰⁴ that tries to intervene in one’s freedom. Psychological studies have found that two reactions ensue from the perception of being manipulated – anger as an emotional response and counter-arguing, or the generation of negative thoughts as the cognitive response.⁸⁰⁵ Recall that Cognitive Response Model states one’s own thoughts in response to the message holds the key to persuasion – it could be postulated that normative arguments, when presented to the general public, may not only be unproductive, but even could strengthen opposite views.

The same social psychology evidence, however, lends support to what I call the heuristic communication approach. As its name suggests, this approach aims to provide prompts, information, and aides to guide citizens to discover or reshape their own attitudes. By giving individuals more space to think on their own, this approach is less likely to arouse resistance and more likely to produce desirable attitude changes. To reach as many citizens as possible, this approach acknowledges global poverty as a marginal concern for most residents in the global North, and devises prompts and heuristics of varying levels of cognitive demand that suit different levels of interest.

It should be noted that heuristic communication is part of a larger political strategy employed by the avant-garde NGO to expand its public support with the ultimate purpose

⁸⁰⁴ Stephen A. Rains, "The nature of psychological reactance revisited: A meta-analytic review," *Human Communication Research* 39, no. 1 (2013): 47-73.

⁸⁰⁵ Rains.

of bringing about institutional changes. Therefore, it should consciously eschew the charity paradigm. As a follow-up from defamiliarisation, heuristic communication works to further problematise and politicise extreme poverty, encouraging citizens to note the necessity of systematic and political changes and the futility of charitable donation-based solutions. If successful, heuristic communication will aid more citizens to form views favourable to the causes of the cosmopolitan avant-garde and ultimately build up its support base. Below I discuss several ways to perform heuristic communication.

7.7.3. Availability heuristic: supplying the right information

A major, much-explored mental short cut is called availability heuristic: impression of frequency and probability is affected by “the ease with which instances come to mind.”⁸⁰⁶ In other words, the more easily we recall something, the more likely or frequently we believe it tends to happen. For instance, consumers who could better remember antidepressant advertisements regard depression as more prevalent than it is.⁸⁰⁷ Another example would be that media coverage towards more sensational crime stories and critical of the criminal justice system has led the general public to see themselves experiencing a “law and order crisis” despite comparatively low crime rates.⁸⁰⁸ Now consider this availability heuristic in the context of global poverty communication. Decades of charity-based public communication by INGOs have made images of a helpless person/child asking for help or a community wrecked by natural disasters constantly available, generating and sustaining the enduring impression of poverty in underdeveloped countries as an isolated, apolitical, unfortunate incident. It is therefore difficult to expect the general public saturated in charity appeals to see themselves, the global economic and political system and their own country politically connected to this issue, as part of the cause and potential solution.

But in the meantime, the same mental shortcut has the potential to break the charity paradigm. If the INGO sector acts in unison to refrain from their charity appeals and instead immerse the general public with factual statements on the severity, avoidability and political nature of global poverty, an alternative narrative could be made readily available.

⁸⁰⁶ Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, "Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases," *Science* 185, no. 4157 (1974): 1124-1131; Thomas Gilovich, Dale Griffin and Kahneman eds., *Heuristics and biases: The psychology of intuitive judgment* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁸⁰⁷ Soontae An, “Antidepressant direct-to-consumer advertising and social perception of the prevalence of depression: Application of the availability heuristic,” *Health communication* 23, no. 6 (2008): 499-505.

⁸⁰⁸ Michael O’Connell, “Is Irish Public Opinion towards Crime Distorted by Media Bias?” *European Journal of Communication* 14, no. 2 (June 1999): 191–212.

As this heuristic works through the peripheral route, such factual statements need and should not be complex or rich in information. Rather, brevity is a merit. These statements could take the form of, for example, concise quotations from trustworthy sources, such as high-profile academics, research institutes or notable international agencies such the World Bank or United Nations. Alternatively, for heavily partisan constituencies, endorsement from political celebrities from their own party could promote the reception of these messages. The general public's lack of in-depth knowledge on poverty could even turn out to be an advantage, as it makes them more susceptible to repeated assertions.⁸⁰⁹

Providing such simplified information without elaboration may strike critics as superficial, but it could potentially produce profound attitude changes. Below I will use Pogge's famous 'international borrowing privilege', as discussed in Chapter 2, to illustrate how making certain information easily available could bring people closer to Pogge's conclusion. Using A to stand for an affluent country and D for a developing one, we can break Pogge's argument into the following components:

Table 3

| Historical/factual claims | Normative assumptions |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A lent D a large sum of money for development at time X. | Creditors should be reasonably satisfied that a development loan will be used transparently, responsibly and for the stated purpose. |
| D's government/ruler at time X was unelected and perceived as lacking legitimacy. | The international community should not expect unelected government to represent its people. Its loan requests need to be assessed with extra caution. |
| A substantial portion of the development loan was misappropriated by unelected government officials/ruler to enrich themselves. | People should not repay loans they did not borrow in their name or have not benefited from. |
| D's current government is repaying the debt with its revenue collected from tax payers. | |

⁸⁰⁹ Ralph Hertwig, Gerd Gigerenzer and Ulrich Hoffrage, "The reiteration effect in hindsight bias," *Psychological Review* 104, no. 1 (1997): 194-202.

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Citizens in D will be better off if the debt repayment is used for development purposes. | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|

Combining the factual claims and normative assumptions gives us three conclusions:

- 1) ‘A should not have lent D the development fund in the first place’
- 2) ‘If A did decide to give the development loan, it should have been more vigilant and asked for greater transparency and accountability in the use of the money.’
- 3) ‘Failing 1) and 2), citizens in D should not be asked to repay that money.’

Now imagine that the cosmopolitan avant-garde is trying to advocate for country A to cancel the debt that D owes. For uninformed citizens, this motion would appear counter-intuitive and objectionable, as repaying one’s debt is universally expected and it is in their country’s interest to collect the debt. Instead of directly advocating for the conclusion ‘we should cancel D’s debt to us’, the avant-garde NGO could try to supply the following information in concise statements:

| |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>We lent D a large sum of money for development at time X.</p> <p>D’s ruler received zero vote when he was in power.</p> <p>He built a large palace and bought luxury goods with that money.</p> <p>We never thought to ask how that money was spent.</p> <p>Now the hardworking citizens of D are repaying that debt, while half of them are struggling on \$1.90 a day.</p> <p>This money could otherwise create XX jobs, XX schools and XX hospitals.</p> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The above information would all be factual and leave little room for dispute. We can expect an ordinary citizen to have knowledge of the normative assumptions listed in Table 3 as they can be considered common sense. If the cosmopolitan avant-garde makes the factual information easily available, by for instance, creating short Youtube advertisements or putting up eye-catching posters, we can expect those originally opposed to debt write-off to absorb the information over time, which, once combined with their common sense

normative knowledge, will lead them to the conclusion that cancelling the debt is not as counter-intuitive as it first appears to be. In the short term, the cosmopolitan avant-garde could win more support for this particular campaign of debt cancellation. But attitude change like this could be cumulative and produce long term impact: for instance, we can also expect citizens more informed on the debt cancellation issue to demonstrate more support to abolish the ‘international borrowing privilege’ and reform the international development funding system to make it more transparent and accountable, and to show more understanding as to how local elites in developing countries are incentivised to seize power. Heuristic communication, like defamiliarisation, should be used iteratively in order to create profound, accumulative attitude change in the long run.

7.7.4. Moving towards involvement: framing and narratives

The availability heuristic relies on the peripheral route to produce attitude changes, but these changes may not persist, or could be counteracted just as easily. It is therefore desirable to find ways to deepen heuristic communication towards the central/systematic route. Research indicates that more in-depth, thoughtful engagement tends to happen when there is a higher level of personal involvement or cognitive ability (knowledge). Fulfilling the latter condition seems unsuited for mass public engagement and more appropriate for small, deliberative settings, but making global poverty more personally relevant, however, might be achievable in public communication, through framing global poverty differently or using narratives.

Presenting the same issue in different ways and angles – or in technical terms, framing the same issue differently – is known to be effective in eliciting significantly diverging responses. It seems that the key to framing to elicit desired attitudes lies in demonstrating to the audience that the issue at hand aligns with their existing values. It has been demonstrated, for example, that framing immigration with a highlight on their economic contribution increases positive responses whereas the frame emphasizing crime rate brings negative attitudes.⁸¹⁰ A more comprehensive and recent study on six controversial political issues in the US, including same-sex marriage, universal health care and military spending found that frames that *agree with* one’s moral values hold the key to changing attitudes. For instance, telling conservatives that “same-sex couples are proud and patriotic Americans”

⁸¹⁰ Juan-José Igartua and Lifan Cheng, "Moderating effect of group cue while processing news on immigration: Is the framing effect a heuristic process?," *Journal of Communication* 59, no. 4 (2009): 726-749.

significantly boosted their support for this community; by contrast, telling liberals that increased military spending could help the worse-off “achieve equal standing and overcome the challenges of poverty and inequality” managed to change minds.⁸¹¹ The two messages respectively tap into group loyalty (patriotism) and equality, which are prized values of the two separate camps.⁸¹² Framing persuasive messages in accordance with the target group’s core values does not help in shaping or changing their values, but proves to be effective in changing their attitude on topics they would otherwise find morally questionable.

These recent insights suggest that framing global poverty in ways that appeal to one’s deeply held moral values could make the issue sound more relevant and thus better interest those previously indifferent. The highly influential Moral Foundation Theory, based on thousands of surveys gathered from different cultures, proposes five distinct moral foundations that underpin human moral judgments: liberals attach more importance to care (protection from harm), and fairness (reciprocity), whereas conservatives value ingroup loyalty, authority (respect), and purity (sanctity).⁸¹³ Seen from this framework, global poverty has so far largely been framed only *partially* from the care value, with a focus on how residents in the North are expected to unilaterally provide aid without mentioning how the harm was done in the first place. Consequently, emphasising the harm side could lead some to see global poverty as a greater issue. In the meantime, it is worth considering how to tap into the other value foundations. Take the authority/respect value. Research finds that in stark contrast to other lines of arguments, telling Australians they are much less generous compared to the United Kingdom in terms of aid-giving substantially boosted support for foreign aid, possibly due to the fear of breaking international norm or the desire to be seen as a generous giver.⁸¹⁴ Similarly, learning that the US spends little on aid proved to be highly effective in reducing opposition to foreign aid.⁸¹⁵ In both cases, the authority/respect value is clearly at play. Alternatively, global poverty could be framed as a thorny political issue, which any country proactive and courageous enough to take on could reap great international support and be applauded for demonstrated leadership. This frame may be appealing to patriotic citizens and thus tap into the ingroup loyalty value. Another possible

⁸¹¹ Matthew Feinberg and Robb Willer, "From gulf to bridge: when do moral arguments facilitate political influence?," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 41, no. 12 (2015): 1665-1681.

⁸¹² Feinberg and Willer.

⁸¹³ Jonathan Haidt, *The righteous mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion* (Vintage, 2012).

⁸¹⁴ Terence Wood, "Can Information Change Public Support for Aid?," *The Journal of Development Studies* (2018): 1-15.

⁸¹⁵ Reuben Hurst, Darren Hawkins and Taylor Tidwell, "Americans love to hate foreign aid, but the right argument makes them like it a lot more," *Washington Post*, 4 May 2017.

frame concerns reciprocity: any poverty reduction-related cost for now, it could be argued, will be covered and outweighed by profits brought by invigorating dormant and populous markets and unlocking a labour force into an aging world.⁸¹⁶ Along similar lines, it could also be said that less extreme poverty means less extremist ideologies and less regions to militarily maintain peace and order, which cost far more than poverty alleviation. Arguments regarding why we should care more about extreme poverty vary and abound, and it is a pity that the more “unorthodox” ones that could potentially make the issue more relevant to people holding different values have largely been neglected.

Besides adopting alternative frames, telling stories also has the potential to increase personal involvement in global poverty. Arendt also prescribes this antidote to the problem of thoughtlessness: for her, stories, as retrospective narration of past actions, serve to reveal meaning of actions that might appear vague to the actual doer; also, stories “isolate concrete slices of our world”, and thus makes it cognitively practical to pay heed to the particulars.⁸¹⁷ Nussbaum endorses storytelling as well, contending that it cultivates “the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person’s story, and to understand the emotion and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have.”⁸¹⁸ Research in recent years provides theoretical foundation and empirical proof to the persuasive power of narratives. The widely influential transportation theory states that individuals reading stories are “transported into a narrative world,” which is an immersive, convergent process where the reader identifies with the character(s) in the story and becomes closed off from the real world.⁸¹⁹ This attention-consuming process leaves much less cognitive resource to generate counterarguments, therefore minimising psychological reactance;⁸²⁰ in addition, readers experiencing a high level of transportation demonstrate a more favourable attitude towards the protagonist.⁸²¹ These mechanisms suggest that appropriate use of narratives – not

⁸¹⁶ Coimbatore K. Prahalad, *The fortune at the bottom of the pyramid (revised and updated 5th anniversary edition): Eradicating poverty through profits* (FT Press, 2009).

⁸¹⁷ Schiff, “The varieties of thoughtlessness and the limits of thinking,” 109-110.

⁸¹⁸ Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating humanity: A classical defence of reform in liberal education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 10-11.

⁸¹⁹ Melanie C. Green and Timothy C. Brock, “The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives,” *Journal of personality and social psychology* 79, no. 5 (2000): 701-21.

⁸²⁰ Elizabeth Louisa Gardner, “Ease the resistance: The role of narrative and other-referencing in attenuating psychological reactance to persuasive diabetes messages,” (PhD thesis. University of Missouri--Columbia, 2010); Emily Moyer-Gusé, and Robin L. Nabi, “Explaining the effects of narrative in an entertainment television program: Overcoming resistance to persuasion,” *Human Communication Research* 36, no. 1 (2010): 26-52.

⁸²¹ Green and Brock, “The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives.”

necessarily just in the verbal form, but audio, picture and video as well – could potentially make poverty-related experience and observations more visceral, resulting in the feeling of personal relevance to certain aspects of the issue. To be sure, development INGOs are already well-versed in story-telling to persuade people to support their organisation through donation. The avant-garde NGO, however, will shift the focus away from charity to using narratives to rally citizens behind its political causes to change the state.

7.7.5. Thought experiment as a deliberative aid

Political theorists are imaginative. It would not be exaggerating to say that thought experiment is a central methodology in political theory. Plato used the ring of Gyges to invite readers to reflect on the degree to which self-interest distorts pursuit of justice, and his depiction of the Republic could be understood as a larger thought experiment to illustrate what makes a just person. Social contract theorists such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke famously use the State of Nature to justify the power of government and specify its limits, and more recent thinkers like John Rawls describe an Original Position to derive principles of justice. On what is called the “argument view”, none of these thought experiments would be indispensable to the theory, as they are merely arguments in disguise – or “picturesque arguments”, in Norton’s words.⁸²² However, a parsimoniously but vividly constructed thought experiment has the benefit of facilitating visualisation of abstract reasoning to the effect of giving the reader a sense of participation in completing an argument; furthermore, placing the argument within an imagined scenario, thought experiments typically require only common sense and moral intuition to initiate thinking, therefore dismantling cognitive barriers resulting from lack of related empirical knowledge on a given issue. These two features make thought experiments a particularly effective heuristic aid. Following Brown and Fehige’s division of thought experiments into constructive and destructive ones depending on whether they help build arguments or undermine existing beliefs or assumption,⁸²³ I discuss below how the existing global justice literature could stimulate thinking and change minds on global poverty.

⁸²² John D. Norton, "On thought experiments: Is there more to the argument?," *Philosophy of Science* 71, no. 5 (2004): 1139.

⁸²³ James Robert Brown and Yiftach Fehige, "Thought Experiments," in Edward N. Zalta ed., *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2019 Edition, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/thought-experiment>

Rawls's Original Position

In his seminal *A Theory of Justice*, John Rawls asks his readers to imagine what he calls the Original Position, where individuals deliberate on competing accounts of justice and choose one to govern their society. The deliberation takes place behind a Veil of Ignorance, which strips away any information that could cause bias, such as one's gender, class, race, and family background. Rawls intended the principles of justice to apply to a closed society, but subsequently, philosophers including Rawls have run similar thought experiments on a global scale, in an effort to determine the normatively desirable international rules or principles of justice, and produced varying arguments.⁸²⁴

Due to its open-ended nature, this thought experiment could introduce different variables for different constructive purposes in public engagement, and thus has a high level of adaptability. For instance, citizens could be invited to decide between a simplified version of the current international order and a fairer design in the Original Position. Or, citizens could be asked to provide response to a trade deal between their country and a poorer one, respectively from the standpoint of a national citizen and as a deliberator behind the veil of ignorance. Used properly, the Original Position is a good tool to draw attention to perspective one would not usually consider, demonstrate how one's moral intuition could logically lead to conclusions he would normally reject, and undermine beliefs in the justice of the current rules and system.

Singer's Shallow Pond

Peter Singer famously compares lending help to people in poverty to saving a drowning child from a shallow pool: both involve little cost and have consequential benefits. Singer intended this thought experiment to be constructive – to establish a much more demanding duty and to re-draw the line between charity and justice. However, it tends to strengthen the perceptions of global poverty as a matter of charity.⁸²⁵ Nevertheless, some amendments to the Shallow Pond story could turn it against charity and draw attention to institutional and historical factors. For example, it could be asked, if a country is flecked with thousands of shallow ponds that drowns thousands of children every day, would one still consider it to be

⁸²⁴ For instance, Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations*; Brock, *Global Justice: A Cosmopolitan Account*; Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*.

⁸²⁵ Scott Wisor, "Against shallow ponds: an argument against Singer's approach to global poverty," *Journal of Global Ethics*, 2011, 7:1, 19-32.

individual, goodwill-based obligation to save them? Citizens would then turn to reflect on why the government is failing to provide a systematic solution, such as building fences and setting up warning signs. Or consider another scenario, where girls are forbidden from learning to swim whereas boys are permitted, leading to disproportionately higher drowning rate in girls – participants of this thought experiment variant will be led to think about the historical and cultural factors. In both cases, the modified Shallow Pond thought experiment could effectively undermine charity-based perception of poverty, by drawing attention to the need to change structural factors. In a similar vein, Pogge asks readers to imagine why students with the same teacher would perform differently.⁸²⁶ While personal factors surely matter, he argues, we could not neglect external factors, such as whether the teacher responds differentially to different students, or acted with racial or gender discrimination. Drawing a parallel between underachieving students and the global poor, Pogge successfully debunks the prevalent myth that poverty is a purely domestic issue.

7.8. Deliberation to change the state from the bottom

The exemplary approaches as discussed in defamiliarisation and heuristic communication, if employed effectively and over a period of time, should be able to raise extreme global poverty from an irrelevant concern addressable by charitable donations to a major, avoidable political wrong that the states and citizens in the global North have contributed to and/or benefited from. Moreover, bombarded by information on extreme poverty and having learnt and reflected on their various connections to the global poor, more citizens will have a stronger sense of solidarity with the distant sufferers. This will be a milestone worth celebrating, but is still one step away from producing a cosmopolitan turn of the state: there must be a mechanism to channel the growing awareness into concrete institutional and policy reforms at the state level, which, as Ypi plausibly argues, will feed back into the general public to cause further and more extensive changes of belief and kick-start a virtuous cycle.

Micro-deliberation sessions seem to be a practical and promising method to overcome this last hurdle of statist cosmopolitanism. Public deliberation is a maturing practice that emerged from a growing literature advocating for more democratic deliberation and against the current models of representative democracy. It is variably called Deliberative Polls,

⁸²⁶ Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, 17.

Citizens' Juries, Consensus Conferences due to differences in procedure, size and functions.⁸²⁷ Regardless of the name the session adopts, informed discussion and reflection have proved to be capable of generating profound and surprising changes in policy preference after exposing citizens to high-quality, balanced information as well as other values and perspectives.⁸²⁸ In some cases, such shift makes an impact on public policy outcomes. Take a prominent example in Texas: a deliberative poll dramatically bolstered support for investment in renewable energy, despite its higher cost, and incorporating this input into its new energy standards, the state, ranking the lowest on wind power usage before the poll, surpassed California to lead the country in wind power ten years later.⁸²⁹

In cases where the results of deliberative sessions are not reflected in public policy outcomes, their potential impacts on political system should not be overlooked. As some deliberative sessions select participants on scientifically randomised criteria, it is argued that they produce results that are representative of the general public.⁸³⁰ This claim gives organisers the mandate to, for instance, work with the government to make sure that recommendations from a deliberating mini-public will be considered in the policy-making process and be given an official response.⁸³¹ Media coverage of deliberative sessions serves to inform a wider public, and preferences and choices demonstrated during and after deliberation gives policy-makers a valuable opportunity to "market-test" their proposals.⁸³² Moreover, becoming politically informed and engaging in public deliberation can be an effective cure to widespread political apathy, enhancing civic participation by restoring citizens' faith in the system and confidence to take part in the political process in the future.⁸³³ Given the largely positive results of experiments of public deliberation at a small scale, it is even proposed that National Deliberation Day be set up to make it compulsory for all citizens to participate in public discussion and make informed voting decisions.⁸³⁴

⁸²⁷ Robert E. Goodin, *Innovating democracy: Democratic theory and practice after the deliberative turn* (OUP Oxford, 2008).

⁸²⁸ John S. Dryzek, *Foundations and frontiers of deliberative governance* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁸²⁹ James S. Fishkin, *When the people speak: Deliberative democracy and public consultation*, (Oxford University Press, 2009), 145-7; John Parkinson, *Deliberating in the real world: Problems of legitimacy in deliberative democracy* (Oxford University Press on Demand, 2006).

⁸³⁰ Fishkin, *When the people speak*, 111-9.

⁸³¹ Goodin, *Innovating democracy*, 20-1.

⁸³² Goodin, 20-30.

⁸³³ Mark E. Warren and Hilary Pearce, eds, *Designing deliberative democracy: The British Columbia citizens' assembly* (Cambridge University Press, 2008). Gerry Stoker, Colin Hay, and Matthew Barr, "Fast thinking: Implications for democratic politics." *European Journal of Political Research* 55, no. 1 (2016): 3-21.

⁸³⁴ Bruce A. Ackerman and James S. Fishkin, *Deliberation day* (Yale University Press, 2005).

These multiple advantages demonstrate that public deliberation would be an ideal way to bridge the gap between attitude change and policy formation. Various institutional reforms have been proposed to reduce extreme poverty, and these could be used as subjects of deliberation sessions held by the avant-garde NGO. One notable example is Pogge's Global Resource Dividend, which, based on the intuition that global resources should benefit all humanity, would tax all nations 1 percent on any natural resources they have used or sold into a development and poverty reduction fund.⁸³⁵ Combatting tax evasion and establishing a more transparent global financial system are also believed to be an effective method, given Oxfam's recent estimate that the annual 150 billion US dollar loss to tax evasion could eradicate extreme global poverty "twice over."⁸³⁶ Other proposals include the Carbon Tax to levy on fossil fuels and the Tobin Tax on currency exchange transactions, reforming the international patent regime to make medication more accessible for the poor,⁸³⁷ and reforming the WTO to eliminate protectionist measures and subsidies in affluent countries to allow developing countries benefit from export.⁸³⁸ To be sure, there is no shortage of ideas.

A policy reform that is more achievable in the short term would be to pressure the government to legislate for a mandatory minimum of 0.7 percent of Gross National Income (GNI) to be spent on Official Development Assistance (ODA). The figure of 0.7 percent has been a long-standing target set by the UN, but only a few Scandinavian countries have endeavoured to meet and exceed the target, whereas the average ODA remains around 0.31 percent in the past years.⁸³⁹ Lifting the average ODA to 0.7 percent would not only more than double the current amount of foreign aid but would help maintain a steadier flow of funds to make foreign aid more effective, given that one of its major problems is volatility.⁸⁴⁰ Above all, starting with securing a higher level of foreign aid will be strategically wise for the avant-garde NGOs in affluent countries. It is a modest goal (compared to the many other proposals to reform global order), and reaching it will boost

⁸³⁵ Thomas W. Pogge, "Eradicating Systemic Poverty: brief for a global resources dividend," *Journal of Human Development* 2, no. 1 (2001): 59-77.

⁸³⁶ Larry Elliott, "Tax lost offshore could end world poverty, says Oxfam," *Guardian*, 22 May 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2013/may/22/tax-lost-offshore-end-poverty-oxfam>

⁸³⁷ Rebecca Wolitz, "Intellectual Property and Access to Medications," *Academics Stand Against Poverty*, 21 May 2014, <http://academicsstand.org/wp-content/uploads/2014-Wolitz-Intellectual-Property-and-Access-to-Medications.pdf>

⁸³⁸ Christian Barry and Gerhard Øverland, "Are trade subsidies and tariffs killing the global poor?," *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 79, no. 4 (2012): 865-896.

⁸³⁹ OECD, "Aid at a glance."

⁸⁴⁰ Bruce Jones *et al*, "Concepts and dilemmas of state building in fragile situations: from fragility to resilience."

confidence in bringing about future progressive reforms. Moreover, more knowledge around foreign aid will have a spill over effect on other related issues: the effectiveness of aid, the importance of private and non-profit sector, more systematic solutions, etc. If all affluent countries could, under the pressure of the general public, follow the UK to enshrine the 0.7 percent target into law,⁸⁴¹ an initial positive feedback loop would be established, widening the window of opportunity for the avant-garde NGO to pursue further institutional reforms.

7.9. **Some practical considerations**

I would like to address two potential practical challenges to the reflective public engagement strategy before ending this chapter. One potential challenge concerns the reachability of the conservative constituency – in the case of the US, for instance, would it engage the staunch Trump supporters? Can we expect the messages of the avant-garde NGO to reach these citizens and make a difference? If we cannot reach these people, or if we do, but find all our engagement approaches completely ineffective, could the cosmopolitan avant-garde still achieve any success? The other practical issue concerns the credibility of the messages. The cosmopolitan avant-garde organisation is political and partisan by nature, and the information it disseminates could be taken as biased and therefore untrustworthy. If so, all its engagement attempts might be doomed to produce minimal impacts.

One way to address both concerns is to highlight their practical nature, and argue that should they materialise, it is the campaign practitioners' job to either come up with equally practical corrective or innovative measures, or consult the theorist to find theoretical solutions. This reply is true to an extent. But I also want to offer some substantive responses here. To begin with, my reflective strategy perhaps works best among those generally disengaged, politically apathetic citizens. It is likely that they do not have systematic political views, and their positions on many issues tend to be ad-hoc and easily cross party lines. It is on this part of the population that I expect my reflective strategy to work most effectively. The cosmopolitan avant-garde could certainly try defamiliarisation and heuristic communication with highly engaged conservatives, but chances are that they will be much

⁸⁴¹ Parliament.UK, "International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015," accessed 1 June 2019, <https://services.parliament.uk/bills/2014-15/internationaldevelopmentofficialdevelopmentassistancetarget.html>

more apt to counter any persuasive attempts and justify their existing positions. Another practical worry is that trying to tell them that the opposite is true, no matter how subtle and gentle the approach, it may end up being confrontational. Given that the resources of the cosmopolitan avant-garde are limited, focusing on the less engaged citizens from the centre left to the centre right might prove to be more cost-effective. Few campaigns and marketing activities would succeed without identifying their niche audience. The cosmopolitan avant-garde campaign is no exception.

Strategically forsaking a part of the population might strike some as further reducing the potential impact of the cosmopolitan avant-garde. However, research has shown that the change of social norms and convention may not require as large a segment of a population as we would expect. Minority groups can and often do initiate social transformation. A ‘critical mass’ threshold, or ‘tipping point’, seems to hold the key to their success: as the minority reaches a certain percentage of the total population, its behaviours and beliefs tend to have a more contagious influence. There has been no consensus on exactly what percentage the minority group has to reach, but a recent study has put the figure at 10 percent,⁸⁴² whereas another study places the threshold around 25 percent.⁸⁴³ Social change is infamously difficult to predict, but the idea of the tipping point could serve a source of optimism for cosmopolitans.

As for the credibility issue, it is certainly essential for the cosmopolitan avant-garde to remain transparent and truthful on the factual information it supplies. The sources of information should be limited to neutral, unbiased and credible organisations, such as research and statistics branches of governments and the United Nations. But there is an issue worth even more attention than the source of information. To ensure that its messages reach the target audience, the cosmopolitan avant-garde must understand how information usually flows to the often inattentive and disengaged masses. As early as the 1940s, the communication scholars Lazarsfeld and Katz discovered the ‘two-step flow’ process of communication: information from mass media usually first reaches ‘opinion leaders’, who then relay the information to friends, colleagues and family members around them.⁸⁴⁴ In

⁸⁴² Jierui Xie, Sameet Sreenivasan, Gyorgy Korniss, Weituo Zhang, Chjan Lim, and Boleslaw K. Szymanski. "Social consensus through the influence of committed minorities," *Physical Review E* 84, no. 1 (2011): 011130.

⁸⁴³ Damon Centola, Joshua Becker, Devon Brackbill, and Andrea Baronchelli, "Experimental evidence for tipping points in social convention," *Science* 360, no. 6393 (2018): 1116-1119.

⁸⁴⁴ Elihu Katz, "The two-step flow of communication: An up-to-date report on an hypothesis," *Public opinion quarterly* 21, no. 1 (1957): 61-78.

other words, most citizens do not hear of news updates first-hand from media, but rather rely on their media-savvy associates as main source of information. Decades later, the ‘two-step flow of information’ theory still proves to be relevant. Some people may harbour deep-rooted suspicion of mass media, political parties, big businesses and the state, but they trust advice from their informed friends.⁸⁴⁵ Partisan media manage to achieve greater impact than their audience size would suggest, thanks to the efforts of interpersonal communication and persuasion from the active members of their audience.⁸⁴⁶ In an age of social media, opinion leaders continue to hold sway.⁸⁴⁷

The lesson for the avant-garde NGO is that it is unrealistic to expect to reach and persuade *all* of its target audience. Rather, it should honour development INGOs’ proud tradition of voluntarism and recruit and train volunteers who identify as opinion leaders to spread their messages. Similar proposals have been made for climate change communication, and there is no reason why the avant-garde NGO could not learn from these proposals on issues such as opinion leader recruitment, training, and retention.⁸⁴⁸ If a sizable voluntary army of opinion leaders could be built, the avant-garde NGO could even retreat into the background, working more like an information headquarters, focused on innovating specific reflective messages for their volunteers to pass on in their everyday casual chat and social media space.

7.10. Summary of chapter

In this chapter, I have provided a thoroughgoing theoretical account of the cosmopolitan-minded avant-garde NGO. While I endorse Lea Ypi’s defense of statist cosmopolitanism, I reject her rather intellectual imagination of politics and overstated role of the activist political theorist in bringing about political change. Based on Hannah Arendt’s insightful analysis on the link between thinking and politics, I argue instead for an avant-garde NGO that will proactively engage the general public, who are often indifferent or even opposed to

⁸⁴⁵ Edward Keller and Jonathan Berry, *The influentials: One American in ten tells the other nine how to vote, where to eat, and what to buy* (Simon and Schuster, 2003).

⁸⁴⁶ James N. Druckman, Matthew S. Levendusky, and Audrey McLain, "No need to watch: How the effects of partisan media can spread via interpersonal discussions," *American Journal of Political Science* 62, no. 1 (2018): 99-112.

⁸⁴⁷ Brian E. Weeks, Alberto Ardèvol-Abreu, and Homero Gil de Zúñiga, "Online influence? Social media use, opinion leadership, and political persuasion," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 29, no. 2 (2017): 214-239.

⁸⁴⁸ Matthew C. Nisbet, and John E. Kotcher, "A two-step flow of influence? Opinion-leader campaigns on climate change," *Science Communication* 30, no. 3 (2009): 328-354.

cosmopolitan doctrines, to rethink their political values and activities. I have then developed a three-pronged reflective strategy of public engagement for the avant-garde NGO, which is informed by art theories and practices as well as social science research. If these engagement attempts prove successful, the cosmopolitan avant-garde will not only see its supporters grow in numbers, but in the degree of commitment as well.

The ultimate hope is that the Northern states will respond to increasingly stronger public support for domestic policies and legislations that give more consideration to the global poor, and join hands at the global level to reform the political and economic order and accept some measure of wealth redistribution. Unlike some radical proposals to revolutionise the global order, changes along the pathway I have delineated may be slow and/or gradual, but provided they come, they will be, as Ypi has hoped, “politically effective and motivationally sustainable.”

8. Concluding remarks

This research project has spanned four politically turbulent years. When it was conceived in late 2015 and early 2016, an African American president was entering the last year of his second term, the European Union looked solidary, the Paris Agreement was just signed, and Germany was opening up its doors to a million refugees. The world had its problems, of course, but humanity seemed to be on a promising track to solve them, and cosmopolitan and progressive values appeared to dominate much of the political debate.

And then Brexiteers achieved a shock win, and Donald Trump was elected president. The conservative, xenophobic, racist political undercurrents were brought to light.

As a student of political theory, I would be blatantly dishonest to claim my research has remained value-neutral and uninfluenced by the political events that have occurred during the course of the research over the past four years. The intellectually honest thing to do is to acknowledge its value-laden nature, stay aware of how personal feelings about contemporary politics could bias the research, give opposing ideas due consideration, revise and update my own understanding of the current political landscape, and still attempt to provide well-justified arguments. I must admit being influenced by feelings of disappointment and disillusionment during the writing. When the research topic concerns finding a way to get the global North more cosmopolitan-minded, witnessing the real-world politics hurtling down the opposite direction has not been very helpful. I have not lost faith in cosmopolitanism as a sensible moral doctrine, but I have become suspicious of its moral appeal to ordinary citizens. This has in turn driven me to think more about the mentality of the general public, and to look harder for ways other than simple moral persuasion to achieve the charity-to-justice paradigm shift. In this process, I have drifted away from idealism towards realism.

I do not believe these remarks above are off the track. Political theorising is not conducted in a vacuum. Putting some reflections on the contemporary political context down on paper allows me to take a step back to examine the method of the thesis and its conclusions in fresh light. In an age of increasingly divisive politics, my project, in addition to answering its own research question, can also be seen as an attempt to rethink how the left-wing deals with politics today. Their approach is probably best summarised by Michelle Obama's famous quote during the 2016 American Presidential Election: "When they go low, we go

high.” This short slogan captures two sides of the same coin: the left-wing’s moralistic vision of politics on the one side and its disgust with anything less moral on the other. For activists on the left, political views produced by racial, gender and class stereotypes are “low”, or to use a catchier term, “politically incorrect”, and should be shamed into non-existence. But this did not prove to be very effective in the 2016 Election. While my project focuses on the issue of how global North should see extreme poverty in a radically different perspective, many of my arguments developed in the process are also intended to revisit the left-wing’s moralistic approach to politics. But before I comment further on this aspect, I should briefly review the central arguments of the thesis.

This thesis starts with the question of how we could bring about a paradigm shift from charity to justice in the way the global North addresses extreme global poverty. As I said in the Introduction, this theme echoes the “Justice not Charity” slogan of the underachieving 2005 Make Poverty History global campaign. I do not think this topic is paternalistic in nature. By asking how the affluent countries can better contribute to eradicating extreme poverty, a goal shared by the global community, I am not denying the agency and potential of the global South. In Chapter 1, I acknowledged the many and various effective ways of reducing poverty, as well the active roles that developing countries and individuals living below the poverty line could take up. However, I did choose to place my focus of research on what the global North could do better. This is out of a realistic consideration of the power and wealth imbalance between the developing and developed worlds: it is the latter who has a much greater say in making and twisting the rules of international politics and trade, and a steady flow of a small percentage of money and resources from the latter could solve a big chunk of the issue. Besides, as I have tried to show in Chapter 2, the North, without much controversy, is morally obligated to do so.

My arguments in the rest of the thesis can be divided into three clusters respectively, on moral motivation, history of the domestic charity-to-justice transition, and the political agency gap. In all three clusters I have consciously tried to avoid an overly moralistic approach and follow the realistic method of political theorising as discussed in the Introduction. On the matter of moral motivation, I discussed briefly the extent to which a sense of justice and moral sentiments could motivate actions, before I move on to explore the less moral sources of moral motivation, i.e., self-interest and fear of risks and legal punishment, whose potential I believe has been underrated in the left-wing political

discourse. Note that I do not dispute the fact that moral persuasion and the idea of justice on its own have a motivational power. What I am arguing, rather, is that we need to allow for the complexity of human nature and the numerous non-moral factors that go into ordinary people's decision-making. Without giving these factors adequate consideration and acknowledgement, the often morally charged cosmopolitan discourse will miss out on a substantial part of the population and may end up driving them into further political indifference or even antagonising them. What we need, I argue, is to stay open to the various tactics and tools of moral motivation, so that we can reach and win over as many citizens as possible.

The chapter surveying the historical evolution of the ideas of charity and justice serves to provide a very different perspective on the feasibility of the paradigm shift. Calling on the global North to deal with extreme poverty beyond borders in a justice paradigm will seem extraordinarily demanding for many people. It is somewhat reassuring to know that less than three hundred years ago, ancestors of the people who now see the welfare system in their country as a given, thought it equally outrageous to treat domestic poverty as more than an issue of charity. In addition, this historical excursion also allowed me to identify four catalytic conditions in the transition from charity to justice: avoidability, involvement, implementation, and community. These factors on one hand, lend support to my previous argument that we need to deploy various tools of moral motivation, and on the other hand highlight the key points of political communication for the last chapter.

The rest of the thesis – chapters 5 - 7, centres around the question of political agency – namely, which political agent(s) can effectively bring about the paradigm shift? Again, considering the North-South power imbalance and political disempowerment on the part of the extreme poor, I argue that we must locate suitable political agents to act as the poor's genuine advocates in affluent countries and make their voices heard. I believe development INGOs are a good choice given their expertise, track record and ambition, but I refuse to take their mission statements at face value. Instead, I gave the INGO sector a critical look in Chapter 6. Based on a review of the existing literature, I argue that INGOs situated in an extremely competitive sector have found themselves in a classic Collective Action problem: although they share the long-term goal of educating the general public and urging the global North to transition into a justice-based approach, the constant struggle for organisational survival has driven them to focus on short-term interests and prioritise

fundraising, which undercuts their own efforts of development education. Based on this diagnosis, I conclude that INGOs will need to join hands to create a collective organisation – I call it the avant-garde NGO – in order to engage and educate the public. In the last chapter, I discussed the idea of statist cosmopolitanism in attempt to provide theoretical foundation for the activities of avant-garde NGO. Afterwards, I drew on Hannah Arendt's insightful analysis of thoughtlessness and political (in)action, before recommending a set of public engagement approaches that focus on encouraging the general public to critically reflect on their values, ideological beliefs, and political activities.

The public engagement approaches I prescribe for the avant-garde NGO are intended for the issue of extreme global poverty in my thesis, but I believe they have broader potential. In an age of social media and infotainment, more individuals than ever are stranded in their comfort zones and echo chambers, with little intention of thinking whether their beliefs could be justified against competing ones. In fact, Arendt's critique of thoughtlessness applies to many on the left as well – but they just happen to be less of a problem for proponents of global justice. Adopting reflective strategies of public engagement is therefore a good opportunity for the conservatives, the politically indifferent and aloof, and for the left as well, to actively rethink their political commitments from multiple angles including – but not limited to moral persuasion, and re-affirm, revise or revolutionise their values. Human beings are not saints, and short-term selfish interests will never cease to be appealing. Only from considered and informed beliefs can mass political actions arise that are able to overcome parochialism and myopia. Other topics commonly seen in global justice debates – climate change, just war, refugees, reform of the global political order, to name a few – all could benefit from this reflective public engagement strategy.

In saying that, however, it is important to acknowledge the multiple limitations of this thesis. To begin with, as my focus is on the global North and its publics, I had to leaf through the causes and solutions to extreme poverty. Consequently, I was not able to give a detailed comparative discussion on what solution may have greater potential and feasibility and should therefore be the focus of the avant-garde NGO. Such discussion could turn out to be highly context-specific – what could work well in one country may not be as effective in another country. Therefore, more empirical exploration into the political culture, popular beliefs and the specific country's roles in reducing extreme poverty is needed before a more concrete focus can be decided. The second limitation concerns the historical probe in

Chapter 4 – it draws heavily on the history of political thought but was not adequately informed by historical contexts and details. A study of how the ideas of charity and justice evolved from a more historical perspective would probably turn out to be fruitful and give us better guidance on how to engage and educate the publics. Third, because of the scope of the research, I was unable to discuss in detail how development INGOs interact and cooperate with other political agents – the UN, the World Bank, national governments and local grassroots organisations in poor countries. If this can be more closely examined, the feasibility and obstacles of development INGOs joining hands to form an avant-garde NGO will be better illustrated. The contour of the avant-garde NGO might also be clearer. Fourth, the public engagement approach that I termed “defamiliarisation” has been freshly borrowed from literary theory, with no empirical evidence in social psychology available to back my claims up. It would be great if its potential could be tested empirically.

Just a few more remarks to conclude this thesis. Now working at the forefront of social welfare and distributive justice in New Zealand, I meet and converse with New Zealanders struggling in poverty every day. I hear about their daily challenge of making ends meet, witness how they are undernourished, insecure, harassed by various social ills, and I strongly empathise with their misfortune. But thanks to New Zealand’s social security laws, their income is more than US\$20 a day. I can only admit that having written on extreme poverty in the past four years, I still struggle to imagine life with less than \$1.90 a day. These people deserve more from this world.

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