Global Political Issues

Lecture 5:
Cosmopolitanism (again)

§1. Varieties of cosmopolitanism

*Moderate Distributive Justice Cosmopolitanism*

There are principles of justice governing the distribution of goods among people in the world.

*Extreme Distributive Justice Cosmopolitanism*

There are no principles of justice governing the distribution of goods among British people that are not also principles governing the distribution of goods among people in the world.

An inconsistent triad…

A There are principles of justice governing the distribution of goods among a group of people only if these people are part of the same society/socio-economic system.

B There are principles of justice governing the distribution of goods among all of the people in the world.

C It is not the case that all of the people in the world are part of the same society/socio-economic system.

§2. Moral equality

Human beings have equal moral worth…

Does this mean that we have precisely the same moral duties towards every human being…?

Does it mean that we have precisely the same *basic* moral duties towards every human being…?

T1 ‘…if it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it…’

(Peter Singer, *Famine, Affluence and Morality*, p.231)
‘The fact that a person is physically near to us… may make it more likely that we shall assist him… but this does not show that we ought to help him rather than another who happens to be further away… If we accept any principle of impartiality, universalizability, equality, or whatever, we cannot discriminate against someone merely because he is far away from us…’

(Peter Singer, Famine, Affluence and Morality, p.232)

We have the same positive duties towards all human beings.

We have a positive duty to help a nearby British person in need if we do not thereby sacrifice anything of comparable moral importance.

We have a positive duty to help a distant Malawian person in need if we do not thereby sacrifice anything of comparable moral importance.

Do we have precisely the same negative moral duties towards every human being…?

‘An equal consideration principle that would rule out [these] kinds of behaviour… would be accepted by almost everyone (with the exception perhaps of a few extreme racists), so if that were all moral cosmopolitanism meant, we could safely say that we are all cosmopolitans now.’

(David Miller, Global Justice and National Responsibility, p.27)

§3. Pogge on global justice

‘…compatriotism makes no difference to our most important negative duties…’

(Thomas Pogge, Cosmopolitanism: A Defence, p.87)

‘As citizens, we have a fundamental duty of justice: not to collaborate in imposing an unjust institutional order upon them.’

(Thomas Pogge, Cosmopolitanism: A Defence, p.88)

Here an institutional order is unjust if it either violates human rights or produces gross inequalities…

We have the same negative duties towards all human beings.

We have a negative duty towards other British people not to collaborate in imposing upon them human-rights-violating or gross-inequality-producing institutions.

We have a negative duty towards Malawian people not to collaborate in imposing upon them human-rights-violating or gross-inequality-producing institutions.
Are British people currently collaborating in the imposition upon Malawian people of human-rights-violating or gross-inequality-producing institutions…?

T6 ‘…severe poverty is an ongoing harm we inflict upon the global poor.’

(Thomas Pogge, World Poverty and Human Rights, p.1)

P1 The global framework is a human-rights-violating/gross-inequality-producing institution.
P2 British people are partly responsible for the imposition of this framework upon Malawian people.
C British people are partly responsible for the imposition of a human-rights-violating/gross-inequality-producing institution upon Malawian people.

P1 The current generation of British people benefits from the failure of previous generations of British people to discharge their negative duty not to impose gross-inequality-producing/human-rights-violating institutions upon previous generations of Malawian people.
P2 The current generation of Malawian people suffers as a result of this same failure of previous generations of British people.

The key premise…

P3 If Michael wrongs Boris, and Theresa receives a benefit as a result of Michael wronging Boris, but Sajid suffers a loss as a result of Michael wronging Boris, then Theresa has a duty of justice to compensate Sajid.
C The current generation of British people has a duty of justice to compensate the current generation of Malawian people.

What is required for the British people to discharge this duty of compensation…?

§4. Moral arbitrariness

T7 ‘The accident of where one is born is just that, an accident… any human being might have been born in any nation… Recognizing this… we should not allow differences of nationality or class or ethnic membership or even gender to erect barriers between us and our fellow human beings… We should recognize humanity wherever it occurs, and give its fundamental ingredients, reason and moral capacity, our first allegiance and respect.’

(Martha Nussbaum, Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism)

T8 ‘…persons should… face worse opportunities because of their nationality or their citizenship… To do so would also be to penalize people for morally arbitrary reasons.’

(Simon Caney, Cosmopolitan Justice, p.395)
P1  It is unjust if people’s distributive shares are influenced by morally arbitrary factors.

P2  A person’s nationality is morally arbitrary.

T9  ‘Nationality is just one further deep contingency (like genetic endowment, race, gender, and social class).’

(Thomas Pogge, Realizing Rawls, p.287)

C  It is unjust if people’s distributive shares are influenced by their nationality.

An aspect of a person is morally arbitrary in the no responsibility sense if and only if it is something for which this person cannot be held morally responsible.

An aspect of a person is morally arbitrary in the no discrimination sense if and only if it is unjust if this person’s distributive share is affected by this aspect of them.

P3  If a factor is morally arbitrary in the no responsibility sense then it is also morally arbitrary in the no discrimination sense.

T10  ‘Virtually everyone thinks that people with greater needs should be given additional resources.’

(David Miller, National Responsibility and Global Justice, p.33)

Divided World…

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References