

INTERNATIONAL POLITICS DEPARTMENT OF ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY

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# Recognising Recognition

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Can the underlying assumptions of  
redistributive justice be addressed through  
a dialogue with theories of recognition?

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## Declaration

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## Abstract

This paper argues for the essentiality of recognition to redistributive theories of justice in order to sufficiently alleviate global poverty, a matter that within theories of international justice predominantly surrounds the question of responsibility. Through an investigation on the moral requirements and capabilities behind our global relationships, this paper assigns special responsibility to alleviate poverty to the affluent, defined as all those with relatively high standards of living who enjoy luxuries. Drawing on Pogge for evidence for a causal relationship between the poor and the affluent due to a shared world economic system elaborates the basis of claims for redistribution. However, the contemporary engagement in redistributive justice will be demonstrated to solely address the symptoms of poverty. The reason for this is claimed to lie in the world economic system's impact on the value structure of the affluent in a way that makes them regard everything as depending on economic power. Thus the form redistribution takes is a purely economic redistribution. Due to this influence, the poor are merely cognitively recognised in their physical existence as suffering from lack of economic power but not as moral agents. By drawing on Honneth and Fraser, a moral form of recognition, namely equal status recognition, is introduced that proves to be an essential component of justice and moreover has the ability to alter the form of redistribution to what is labeled redistribution based on solidarity. As illustrated in a practical example on the Fairtrade model, this theoretical exchange of the underlying form of recognition that impacts that on the form of redistribution empowers the poor as granting them independent agency and ultimately enables redistribution based on solidarity to be more sufficient in addressing global poverty.

## INTRODUCTION

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*'In 2000, more than 1,000 million people were below the \$1 a day line for income poverty, itself often thought to be unrealistically low; comparable numbers were judged to be below minimum levels on measures such as adequate nourishment, and access to clean drinking water'.<sup>1</sup>*

*– David Miller*

It is natural for work on global poverty to start by listing different data and statistics in order to give an account of the suffering of today's world. However, stating that millions over millions of people are starving may make the suffering of the poor appear to be enormous but only seldom one can grasp its actual severity. Furthermore; as Julian Saurin shows, a great deal of data 'is not only limited as a measure of the human condition, but often grossly misleads both the inquiry into, and the description of that condition, not least because of the tendency to fetishise the question of development'.<sup>2</sup> What debates on global poverty are actually about - the quality of human life - is almost impossible to exercise.

Due to this, this paper will follow Peter Singer and 'begin with the assumption that suffering and death from lack of food, shelter and medical care are bad'.<sup>3</sup> There is no doubt that millions of people suffer and die from severe poverty; malnutrition and a lack of water every single day. The question what this state of affairs implies for the rest of us living on this planet; most of whom able to alleviate the situation; is the basis of an ongoing debate.

Within international theories of justice the suffering of the poor seems to predominantly surround the question of responsibility. As Miller says, there is a large normative gap

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<sup>1</sup> Miller; D., *National Responsibility* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 232.

<sup>2</sup> Saurin, J. 'Globalisation, Poverty, and the promises of Modernity' *Milleninium Journal of International Studies*, 25 (1996), p. 662.

<sup>3</sup> Singer, P. 'Famine, Affluence and Morality', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 1 (1972), p. 231.

between 'identifying a state of affairs as intolerable and identifying agents, individual or collective, who have a responsibility to remedy it'.<sup>4</sup> The best account of this matter is captured in the world views of cosmopolitan and communitarian thinkers on the question of whom we grant morally equal standing and thus feel obliged to assist.

Communitarians are of the opinion that the moral agent or bearer of rights has first and foremost obligations towards his fellow citizens and direct community; thus in its initial form is uniquely state-centric. Ethical cosmopolitanisms on the other hand see themselves as 'citizen of the world' for which they extend their moral obligations to the global realm and claim that the interests of all persons should be given equal moral standing.<sup>5</sup>

Despite engagement in this debate, redistributive justice has not shown to alleviate global poverty to any sufficient degree. Multiple reasons for this are given such as infrequent engagement in monetary donations by individuals to charities, administrative problems within aid organisations or corruptness of government elites in third world countries which may well be regarded as contributing factors.<sup>6</sup> However, this dissertation will argue that even in a perfect and ideal world where redistribution could be exercised without any limitations, redistribution would be insufficient in addressing global poverty as it only addresses the symptom or representation of injustice not its actual cause.

Arguing further that all theories of distributive justice are constituted by some form of recognition; the reason for this insufficiency is believed to be found in the underlying form of recognition that redistributive justice is based on.

Hence, a form of recognition required to make redistribution sufficient will need to go beyond material redistribution. In accordance with this, this dissertation will attempt to

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<sup>4</sup> Miller, D. *National Responsibility*, p. 232.

<sup>5</sup> Erskine, T. 'Normative IR Theory', in *International Relations Theories – Discipline and Diversity*, edited by Dunne, T.; Kurki, M.; Smith, S. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 42-44.

<sup>6</sup> See Miller, *National Responsibility*, p. 232; Nagel, T. 'Poverty and Food: why charity is not enough' in *Food Policy* edited by Chris Brown and Henry Shue (1977) and Singer, *Famine Affluence*, p. 229-243.

answer the question: **Can the underlying assumptions of redistributive forms of justice be addressed through a dialogue with theories of recognition?**

This will proceed in three sections; the focus of the first being on the basis for claims of redistributive justice. An investigation on the moral requirements and capabilities behind our global relationships shall assign special responsibility to alleviate poverty to the affluent people, defined as ‘all those with relatively high standards of living who enjoy luxuries’.<sup>7</sup> However, these will be shown to not solely be based on a shared humanity but on a deeper rooted outcome responsibility. It will be drawn on Thomas Pogge who brings evidence for a causal relationship between the poor and affluent, mainly due to a shared, but imposed, world economic system.<sup>8</sup> Due to which; individuals, governments or international organisations feel obliged to redistribute part of their wealth in form of monetary donations and aid provisions. However, the contemporary engagement in redistributive justice will shown to be solely addressing the symptoms.

In the hope that through a critique of contemporary redistribution the reason of the insufficiency can be identified, the second section will first of all consider the arguments of Sandel and Zizek who claim that the world economic system impacts on the value structure of the affluent in a way that makes them regard everything as depending on economic power. From this it will then be suggested that the poor are thus not accordingly recognised as having moral agency. Introducing Axel Honneth’s three inter-subjective patterns of recognition shall help to determine on which basis the poor are recognised by the affluent and how they ideally should be.<sup>9</sup> Through Nancy Fraser, who promotes a dual-axis of justice in which both redistribution and recognition are co-fundamental, the paper hopes to gain

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<sup>7</sup> Lichtenstein, J. ‘Absence of an unfond heart: Why people are less giving than they might be’, edited by Deen k. Chatterjee (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 76.

<sup>8</sup> Pogge, T. *World Poverty and Human Rights – Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms* (Cambridge, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> Honneth, A. *The Struggle for Recognition* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995).

evidence for the essentiality of recognition to justice and moreover a relation to redistribution.<sup>10</sup> If this is found to be correct, it will be possible to alter the form of recognition which should ultimately alter redistribution in a way that it becomes sufficient in the address of world poverty.

The final section will further help to reveal the hidden assumptions behind purely economic redistribution as well as the ability of modern capitalism for commodification of global poverty. Based on the theoretical establishment in the previous two sections; the weakness of a purely economic redistributive model will be illustrated on the practical example of Fairtrade; a model for redistribution of wealth by promoting products to consumers in the first world under the promise that the products were produced under fair working conditions and that the producers in poor countries will be given a fair share of the selling price. This section will conclude by bringing evidence for the change of redistribution through the consideration of recognition and thus will shown to result in a sufficient in the address of global poverty.

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<sup>10</sup> Fraser, N. and Honneth, A. *Redistribution or Recognition? – A Political-philosophical Exchange* (London, Verso, 2003).

## SECTION ONE: THE BASIS OF REDISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

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*'Beyond the bland and superficial agreements that hunger and destitution should be ended, sceptical and self-seeking views are common. Poverty is indeed seen as a problem –for the poor. The rich and powerful often see no reason why they should help end distant poverty'.<sup>11</sup>*

– Onora O'Neil

### Introduction

The following section will commence by showing that in debates regarding global poverty, tracing back the origins of responsibilities can present a real challenge. Whereas in former times interaction has been limited to state borders in the case of war and clear lines could be drawn; nowadays these lines become blurry as we are able of harming people across perceptible borders. With the help of Peter Singer it will be asked whether it is necessary to find responsibility in order to assign responsibilities for ending the suffering of the poor when we consider that half the world's population has the capability to assist. Introducing communitarian moral beliefs to Singer's cosmopolitan world view shows that there is a need for a stronger motivational heart in order to address the problem. This gap will be filled by Thomas Pogge who presents a cosmopolitanism removed from uncompromising philanthropic reasoning by giving evidence for the causal relationship between the poor and affluent, which due to today's state of globalisation and a shared world economic system can be upheld neither theoretically nor practically. Resulting from this, most individuals, governments or international organisations feel obliged to redistribute part of their wealth in form of monetary donations and aid provisions. Redistributive justice, however, will be shown to be insufficient in addressing the cause for poverty as it focuses solely on its representation. In the final part it

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<sup>11</sup> O'Neil, O. *Faces of Hunger: An essay on poverty, justice and development* (London, Allen and Unwin, 1986), p. xi.

will be suggested that the reason for this can be traced back to the way we recognise certain issues aligned to our historical development.

## Obligation and Responsibility

Among international theories of justice the suffering of the poor seems to predominantly centre around the question of responsibility. Tracing responsibility for the suffering of whole countries was previously a straightforward exercise considering the state or community-centric and bounded way humans have engaged with each other in the past. One of the best illustrations for this is our engagement in wars, in which it was nation states declaring war to other states and in its process harming each other's population and causing suffering. Responsibility for today's suffering in the face of global poverty however presents itself as a true challenge regarding the tracing back of responsibility; not least because of the different opinions concerning its origin. At least two main ways in which our interactions have changed notably can be identified; for one, we are at a point historically where we are able to cause harm to people without regard of state borders, arising from the fact that we are not purely associated with our home communities anymore and the people we interact with have become larger than your direct community; and further, our technological progress and development creates awareness of the severe suffering in other parts of the world.

Important to mention here is that the term responsibility used above is not considered to contain any statement about the just or unjust nature of a war but mainly concerns the ability and necessity of investigating how the harm of people came about. However; it is the domain of normative theory, defined as 'a body of work which addresses the moral dimension of international relations and the wider question of meaning and interpretation generated by the

discipline' which enabled us to solve some of the moral dilemmas surrounding warfare and are believed to have enriched the debates on global injustices such as severe poverty.<sup>12</sup>

The use of normative theory allows drawing on moral philosophers like Peter Singer who was among the first in his field to address the injustice of global poverty. As he says himself, 'philosophers have no special role to play in public affairs, since most public issues depend primarily on an assessment of facts'.<sup>13</sup> However, his clearly provoking argument is of a particular kind, aimed at making people think critically, forcing them to question their behaviour and moral standards.

Singer is of the opinion that global suffering and death are 'not inevitable, not unavoidable in any fatalistic sense of the term'.<sup>14</sup> Outlining the devastating circumstances of people in East Bengal in his famous article *Famine, Affluence and Morality* from 1972; Singer names a cyclone and civil war as reasons; however, he states that 'nevertheless, it is not beyond the capacity of the richer nations to give enough assistance to reduce any further suffering'.<sup>15</sup> Believing that the decisions and actions of human beings can generally prevent this kind of suffering, he argues toward responsibilities unrelated to an external category such as that of another country in war. Other scholars have presented the matter in a similar light; for example Onora O'Neil who poses the question 'if many are hungry and desperate what is there to do but provide food – at once?'.<sup>16</sup>

This kind of responsibilities that are based on the mere capability to help are commonly revered to as remedial responsibilities; 'responsibilities we have to relieve harm and suffering

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<sup>12</sup> Brown, C. *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches* (1992), p. chapter 1.

<sup>13</sup> Singer, P. in the documentary 'Examined Life' by filmmaker Astra Taylor. Available from: <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/examined-life/> [Accessed 05 July 2012].

<sup>14</sup> Singer, *Famine*, p. 229.

<sup>15</sup> Singer, P. *Famine*, p. 229.

<sup>16</sup> O'Neil, *Faces Hunger*, p. 3.

when we are able to do so'.<sup>17</sup> According to this, it seems to be the case that remedial responsibilities develop naturally with relative affluence.

In his classic account of political obligation John Hurt states that 'philosophers have tended to see one question as fundamental: on what basis, in terms of what reasons, should we legitimately ascribe political obligations to people?'<sup>18</sup> This describes Singer accurately, who, despite saying that we only ought to morally prevent something bad from happening if we do not thereby sacrifice anything morally significant, clearly places moral obligation on those having the means to end it without taking other options into considerations.<sup>19</sup> Singers claim is uncompromising, direct and leaves no doubt on who he believes should take responsibility for global poverty. Despite entailing a lot of power, it is often said not to be convincing enough for moral commitment.<sup>20</sup>

Remarks that he would be treating poverty 'as if it were a natural phenomenon like an earthquake', make arguments like Singer's seem superficial or as Andrew Kuper puts it, as presenting 'royal road' to the far more complex problem of global poverty.<sup>21</sup> Even engaging in the counter-argument that he chooses simplified illustrations, like the pond analogy purposely, as it serves to demonstrate the apparently complex demands of global justice in terms of basic intuitions, cannot offset his neglect of motivational factors like distance and

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<sup>17</sup> Miller, *National Responsibility*, p. 231; Note: The 'we' used by Miller but also Singer and Pogge, refers to the affluent as he presumes that the reader lives just as the author himself in the developed and rich part of the World.

<sup>18</sup> Horton, J. *Political Obligation* (London, Macmillan, 1992), p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Singer also offers a more moderate version of how much we ought to give, however, at the same time makes clear that the one presented above is closer to the truth. See: Singer, *Famine*, p. 241.

<sup>20</sup> Lichtenberg, J. 'Absence of an unfond heart: why people are less giving than they might be' in *The Ethics of Assistance – Morality and the Distant Needy*, edited by Deen K. Chatterjee (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.75.

<sup>21</sup> Miller, *National Responsibility*, p. 237 and Kuper, A. 'Debate: Global Poverty Relief – More than Charity: Cosmopolitan Alternatives to the "Singer Solution"', *Ethics & International Affairs*, 16, no.2 (2002) p. 108 – for a reply to Kuper also see: Singer, P., 'Poverty, Facts, and Political Philosophies – Response to "More Than Charity"', *Ethics and International Affairs*, 16 (2002) p. 121.

emotional ties.<sup>22</sup> These limits to the persuasiveness of Singer's arguments will remain as long as its motivational heart is not subject to further investigation. To say it in Singer's words published in a later article, 'if it is supposed to be a mistake to have a map of moral obligations as flat as mine, then where, on a morally superior landscape, should the peaks, plateaus and escarpments be placed?'<sup>23</sup>

### Communitarian and Cosmopolitan Worldviews

The consequences of historical factors such as a state-centric past and the related Christian heritage of the West becomes evident in how it has shaped our motivations and the way we conceive our moral obligations towards others. While, Singer believes that 'a moral point of view requires us to look beyond the interests of our own society'; other people object to this as they are of the opinion that our moral obligations are predominantly limited to the people in their immediate surroundings.<sup>24</sup>

This debate over whom we grant moral equal standing and thus feel obliged to assist can be illustrated in the two distinct world views of cosmopolitanism and communitarianism.

Communitarians are of the opinion that the moral agent or bearer of rights has first and foremost obligations towards his fellow citizens and direct community. This derives from the belief that the good life can only be exercised within the community as their visions are based on a shared enquiry that cannot be pursued or even known by solitary individuals. As such, they are opponent to the idea that 'social unity can be sustained by such a weak bond as shared principles of justice' but rather are inherent through a common culture, including

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<sup>22</sup> In which Singer asks the reader to consider a situation in which he walks past a shallow pond in which a child is drowning, to highlight that the passer-by has the moral duty to intervene and rescue the child even if it is at the cost of his clothes. See: Singer, *Famine*, p. 234.

<sup>23</sup> Singer, P. 'Outsiders: our obligations to those behind our borders' in *The Ethics of Assistance – Morality and the Distant Needy*, edited by Deen K. Chatterjee (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 12.

<sup>24</sup> Singer, *Famine*, p. 237.

shared language, which must be protected from decay.<sup>25</sup> That communitarianism can nowadays often be understood as state-centric is only due to a fragile historic achievement, and should not be 'abandoned in the naïve expectation that people's natural sympathies are global in scope'.<sup>26</sup> Ethical cosmopolitanisms on the contrary see themselves as 'citizen of the world' for which they extend their moral obligations to the global realm and claim that the interests of all persons should be given equal consideration.<sup>27</sup>

According to the above definition, it becomes evident that Singer's universalism does not rest upon an implausible account of motivation but rather on cosmopolitan claims based on a shared humanity. However, the notion that the moral obligations we have towards our own relatives, friends and countryman shall be globally extended to strangers in the distance, people we are unfamiliar with and living in foreign countries, still does not find universal acceptance. From this, the conclusion could be drawn that the difference lies in the modes of association, namely whether people regard themselves predominantly as part of either as humanity or community. Hence, it is an associational relationship, not causal one that leads to responsibilities in this case.

Chris Brown claims that it was during the Enlightenment in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century that the term cosmopolitanism has been used widely and notions of morality were produced that rejected the old medieval view of given structures but demanded a focus on the individual as being equal.<sup>28</sup> The most impressive statements of the time are represented in the works of Immanuel Kant during the Enlightenment period in Germany. According to him, 'moral action is a

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<sup>25</sup> Kymlicka, W. *Contemporary Political Philosophy – An Introduction* (Oxford, Oxford university Press, 2002) 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 271.

<sup>26</sup> Kymlicka, *Political Philosophy*, p. 270.

<sup>27</sup> Erskine, T. 'Normative IR Theory', in *International Relations Theories – Discipline and Diversity*, edited by Dunne, T.; Kurki, M.; Smith, S. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 42-44.

<sup>28</sup> Brown, C. *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1992), Capters 1-3.

matter of choosing principles of action that reflect the demands of duty'.<sup>29</sup> The ability to choose these principles of action arise from the fact that Kant sees the individual as a moral agent existing prior to society, able to distinguish between duty and own interest. What he calls the categorical imperative, a moral law that we have within us, make us subject to universal laws which we create all together. As such their worldview was hostile to communitarian thinkers which formed the Anti-Enlightenment. The German romantic philosopher Hegel denies that it is possible to think of individuals in isolation from the community which has shaped and constituted them through common culture, language and the like.

However; despite this deeply rooted hostility, the demand to find a common ground for cosmopolitan and communitarian morality seems to constantly grow stronger. Toni Erskine speaks for many when she writes that an

*'[...] important question for both moral philosophers and normative theorists of international relations is how we get from where we are currently standing, steeping in our own immediate circumstances, with our own particular ties and communities, to concern for those with whom we share neither kinship nor country, neighbourhood nor nation'*<sup>30</sup>.

To illustrate this, this paper will draw on David Miller. Being a renowned nationalist, the theoretical starting point of his work lies within the communitarian tradition that is to be addressed. Miller is of the opinion that communitarian responsibilities arise when people are linked together by ties arising from 'shared activities and commitments, common identities, common histories, or other such source [...] this in particular imposes responsibilities toward any member of the relevant community who is harmed or in need'.<sup>31</sup> Miller illustrates the

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<sup>29</sup> Kant, I. *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (Cambridge, Hackett Publishing, 1785) 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Translated by James W. Ellington (1993), pp. 30.

<sup>30</sup> Erskine, T. "'Citizen of nowhere" or "the point where circles intersect"? Impartialist and embedded cosmopolitanisms', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 28 (2002), p. 459.

<sup>31</sup> Miller, D. 'Distributing Responsibilities', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 9 (2001), p. 462.

above through an example of a group of hikers which go on a climbing trip in the mountains together and one of the members of the group gets injured. According to him, in this situation the responsibility for bringing aid to the injured rests collectively upon all members of the group. Although Miller might define the basis for communitarian responsibilities fairly loosely, adapting his definition and the presented example would result in an opening of the bounds of communitarian moral obligation. It cannot be argued that some poor and affluent countries have a common history as in the case of India and the British Empire. In cases where poor countries have been a former colony of an affluent country, claims for a responsibility to compensate for the harm arising from suppression are common.<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, observing the global extend of our political and economic affairs, it can be argued that this can be understood as an engagement in shared activities. Based on this, we are all linked to each other and by forming a group of members also need to collectively take care of each other – inclusive of the global poor who are in need. And indeed, when considering our engagement in a shared world economic system, we all, to varying extents are participants in at least one major group outside of the shared humanity claimed by Singer. It can be suggested here that the groups Miller was concerned with are based on traditional forms of human involvement; however, modern forms of interaction can be of a much larger scale. In the light of today's state of globalisation and interconnectedness of all countries it appears almost impossible to persist with strict communitarian claims and resist a general responsibility to assist.

The word 'strict' here attempts to express that for the purpose of this paper it is important to understand the challenges of communitarianism in today's state of globalisation and the necessity of cosmopolitan arguments towards the alleviation of global poverty. Whereas in the past it might have been acceptable to claim responsibility only toward the people within one's

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<sup>32</sup> Miller, *National Responsibility*, pp. 250-252.

own community as they were the only ones one would engage with; today's global interconnectivity does not leave this freedom anymore as we, through our way of life, through the products we buy and consume etc. engage with people all over the world and according to the above, thus have a responsibility towards them. However, this does not require an agreement or a reading in a highly egalitarian sense. Thus, concerning the two worldviews it appears that the actual discussion should not be about one presenting the true path to follow but the level to which one accepts certain claims. Hence, it would be possible to agree to claims for a general responsibility towards everyone on this planet based on a shared humanity, but would preserve the right for a special responsibility towards relatives and immediate surroundings.

It is important here to emphasise that this change from identity based responsibility grounded on the question of whom one associates with and thus feels obliged to help, to causal responsibility arising from the fact that our modern way of interconnectivity demands a wider association, is a non-voluntary one but subject to the causality of global social factors such as our contemporary market system. Whether one's responsibility is based on an association with humanity or community, one's causal responsibility remains detached from that.

### Arguments for Causal Responsibility

A scholar who is known as a major proponent of the above presented argument for extended moral obligations due to economic interconnectivity is Thomas Pogge. He refrains from dilated theoretical arguments for cosmopolitan engagement but starts by drawing on real world demands, taking global interconnectedness for granted. Thus, his cosmopolitanism appears one step further focusing solely on the responsibilities arising from the current state of affairs and not doubting to whom they are assigned to.

Despite both Singer and Pogge belonging under the umbrella of cosmopolitanism if seen as a label, Pogge's cosmopolitanism derives from a different source from that of Singer. They both share the opinion that global poverty is intolerable and that there is something wrong with the moral norms and values of affluent people in first world states who fail to address the issue appropriately over extended theoretical debates. Furthermore, they both clearly state that modern technology informs our knowledge about the existing circumstances in which the poor find themselves to the extent that there remains no room for ignorance of the problem and its severity.

However, despite the two placing the responsibility to end the suffering of the world's poor on the affluent, their motivation to do so varies. While Singer bases responsibilities to assist on altruistic claims of a shared humanity due to which we are obliged to help purely because we have the capability; for Pogge these responsibilities originate from the belief that the affluent have brought about the suffering in the first place. According to him, responsibilities arise from the structural harm the affluent oppose on the poor due to the global economic system. Poverty in his view should be regarded as a violation of human rights and is something first world states greatly contributed to through 'the policies [...] they pursue and the international order [they] impose'.<sup>33</sup> He rigorously describes how rich countries no longer practise slavery, colonialism, or genocide but still enjoy crushing economic, political, and military dominance over the rest of the world.<sup>34</sup>

The responsibilities raised by Pogge can be referred to as outcome responsibilities, defined as 'the responsibilities we have for the gains and losses resulting from our actions'.<sup>35</sup> Pogge agrees with the remedial responsibilities presented by Singer, but believes that these arise from a deeper rooted causal responsibility. Thus the affluent do not only have the positive

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<sup>33</sup> Pogge, T. 'Priorities of Global Justice', in *Global Justice* edited by Thomas Pogge (Oxford, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2001), p.22.

<sup>34</sup> Pogge, *World Poverty*, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> Miller, D. *National Responsibility*, p. 231.

duty to assist the poor but a negative duty to not harm them. As such, Pogge is not opposed to a possible priority-for-compatriots without undermining a greater universal responsibility as discussed above. However, he sets clear limits to it when saying, ‘we may well have less reason to benefit foreigners than to confer equivalent benefits on our compatriots. But we have as much reason not to harm foreigners as we have to inflict equivalent harms on compatriots’.<sup>36</sup> On the question of whether the affluent would have a positive duty in the absence of a negative duty Pogge remains neutral, it can be suggested that this is merely because his theory is based in the real world in its current state in which this scenario does not apply.

Due to the different paths of reasoning through which Pogge and Singer arrive at a responsibility to take action against the suffering of the poor; Pogge manages to bypass the motivational vacuum that Singer is accused of. Singer was criticised for failing to present motivationally strong arguments for remedial responsibilities; as from a non-engagement in these responsibilities, we might let the poor die but there were no bad consequences attached to the affluent refusing to assist. The significant difference with Pogge’s argumentation lies in the fact that if we are causally responsible for the suffering of the poor then not taking action to prevent their starvation may be considered equal to actively killing them. As a result, Pogge manages to close the motivational vacuum by offering an entirely different account of where our responsibilities arise from. Moreover, he gives evidence for a causal relationship that we cannot resist in identifying with as well as ultimately turning ‘Good Samaritan’ relationships into relationships of justice. This occurs, however, at the expense disregarding important aspects of cosmopolitanism, if not its very foundation, namely the unconditional and unrelated nature on which claims for assistance for anyone in need find pursuance. In a sense, Pogge’s cosmopolitanism seems migrated from its origin, almost to the extent that his argument could persist without it.

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<sup>36</sup> Pogge, *World Poverty*, p. 12.

## Pure Redistributive Justice

In order to comply with the responsibilities the affluent owe to distant strangers it has become common practice to engage in forms redistribution, as the under-fulfilment of human rights as in the case of the poor is believed to be based predominantly on economic inequality, thus redistribution is most often carried out in monetary form through redistribution of wealth.

Despite Pogge's argument aims for a distributive justice that does not solely redistribute an already given pool of resources, thus improving on the given maldistribution, but one that allows the creation of new economic ground rules that 'regulate property, cooperation, and exchange and thereby condition production and distribution'; on one view, he also defends redistribution in its standard form that aims for an economic order under which each participant would be able to meet her basic social and economic needs.<sup>37</sup> Hence;

redistribution contains various aspects within Pogge's argument concerning world poverty and human rights; however, redistribution is mostly aimed at revising the institutional form.

As such, he proofs Richard Rorty wrong for supporting the wide spread assumption and common reason against redistribution of wealth, that world poverty is too large a problem to be eradicated at a cost that would be bearable for the affluent countries. What Rorty presumes is that ending poverty of 2,800 million human beings would result in a negative impact on our own national development such as the capacity to provide social justice and decent live in our communities. However; Pogge reverses this by giving an account of the enormous extend of global inequality in wealth according to which it would take 'just 1.2 percent of the aggregate annual gross national incomes of the high-income economies' to eradicate severe poverty worldwide.<sup>38</sup> This is a case for whose sake we should spend the money gladly; especially

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<sup>37</sup> Pogge, *World Poverty*, p. 176.

<sup>38</sup> Pogge, *World Poverty*, pp. 7-8.

considering that in other cases such as natural catastrophes we give similar amounts to rebuild where there is nothing left without damage or notable difference to our own life circumstances.

Regarding redistribution of wealth as the best means to end poverty; almost every Western state as well as corporations, charity organisations and individuals engage in monetary redistribution of wealth by donating parts of their GDP, profit or income.

Despite this engagement, redistributive justice has not been shown to alleviate global poverty to any sufficient degree. Multiple reasons for this are given, such as infrequent engagement in monetary donations by individuals to charities, administrative problems within aid organisations or corruptness of government elites in third world countries.

The idea of charity as a way to address our moral obligation and decrease the divide between the rich and the poor has long established roots. Thomas Aquinas who lived between 1225- and 1274 already stated that ‘the bread which you withhold belongs to the hungry; the clothing you shut away, to the naked; and the money you bury in the earth is the redemption and freedom of the penniless’.<sup>39</sup> This bears similarities with the argument presented by Singer who believes that we should give away until we reach the level of marginal utility – meaning until giving away more would make ourselves suffer. But also other modern scholars agree that charity is a familiar remedy; Thomas Nagel regards it especially appropriate when inequality of wealth is paralleled with an inequality of power. According to him, ‘the worst effects of market inequalities should be dealt with by charity: charity of the rich nations toward the poor’ and further, the ‘only motive available for parting the wealthy from their

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<sup>39</sup> Aquinas, T. ‘Summa Theologica’ quoted in Singer, P. ‘*The Bread Which You Withhold Belongs To The Hungry: Attitudes To Poverty*. Available from: <http://www.utilitarian.net/singer/by/2002---03.htm> [Accessed 20 July 2012].

possession seems to be generosity - or appeal to the duty of charity'.<sup>40</sup> Despite the fact that Nagel here speaks of the engagement of nations; charity in the form of monetary donations is usually understood as an act by the individual. As such, a reason for an insufficient engagement in this form of redistribution can also be traced back to a lack of individual involvement.

Another form of wealth redistribution is of course the engagement in donations on a larger scale; either by charity or non-governmental organisations collecting the individual's donation or through government spending. These forms are targeted mostly at development aid. While foreign donations of food are criticised for depressing demand in local markets, thus undermining the foundation of a independent economy in poor nations, monetary donations are believed to have the potential to enhance the income of the poor. However, this must be spent wisely as direct transfers to poor households bare the danger of creating dependency. A worthy investment for the eradication of poverty appears to be the targeting of money at programmes that provide 'help for self-help' such as basic schooling, school lunches, vaccinations, safe water, housing, rail, road and communication links and similar.<sup>41</sup> Such projects played an important role in now developed countries like India and thus can be believed to work in others.

But unfortunately good intentions do not always lead to success. In reality development assistance has done little for the development of poor countries – at least in relation to the money invested. Drawing on scandals about misspending or sums of money lost in administrative processes, one could suspect the source of insufficiency of delivering aid lies there. However, others are convinced that most aid is not aimed at promoting development but that it is, for example, politicians who 'allocate it to benefit those who are able and willing

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<sup>40</sup> Nagel, T. 'Poverty and food: why charity is not enough' in *Food Policy – The Responsibility of the United States in the Life and Death Choices* edited by Peter G. Brown and Henry Shue (New York, The Free Press, 1977) p. 56.

<sup>41</sup> Pogge, *World Poverty*, pp. 8-9.

to reciprocate: export firms in the donor countries and political-economic elites of strategically important developing states'.<sup>42</sup> Proof for this can be found in reports of aid allocations like the UNDP Report which shows that only 19 percent of all official development assistance is received by 43 percent of the least developed countries and only 8.3 percent is targeted at to meet basic needs of the poor.<sup>43</sup>

A very different reason for the insufficiency of redistributive justice is presented by Miller who is of the opinion that it is not only external factors, but rather internal factors like defective economical and political structures or the corrupt nature of a poor state that count a reasons for the ongoing suffering of the poor. Miller's scepticism derives from facts presented in a case study in which two counties, Malaysia and Ghana faced equally bad conditions when gaining independence from Great Britain in 1957, while Malaysia's average income today is ten times higher than in Ghana which suffers from dire poverty.<sup>44</sup> As both of the countries were exposed to the same external factor, Miller draws the conclusion that national factors are primarily responsible for unequal development.

This presents a point of view which aims to undermine the claims for a direct responsibility of affluent states due to structural factors or capability, thus presenting the danger of providing an excuse for non-engagement. Miller demands that correctives be placed upon current forms of responsibility allocations on the affluent states alone and thus tries to promote a dual-responsibility rather than a non-engagement per se. According to him, human citizens should be responded to both 'as agents capable of taking responsibility for the outcomes of their actions *and* as vulnerable and needy creatures who may not be able to lead decent lives without the help of others' (emphasis in original).<sup>45</sup> Miller's demands for responsibility of

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<sup>42</sup> Pogge, *World Poverty*, p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> UNDP Report 2000, p. 79 and UNDP Report 2001, p. 190 stated in Alesina, A. and Dollar, D. 'Who Gives Aid to Whom and Why?', *Journal of Economic Growth*, 5 (2000), pp. 33-63.

<sup>44</sup> Miller, *National Responsibility*, p. 241.

<sup>45</sup> Miller, *National Responsibility*, p. 237.

suffering third world countries would give the poor agency; something often neglected in redistributive theories of justice. Miller though is heavily opposed to the way Singer represents the poor as innocent children in his pond analogy, who came into the predicament they find themselves in without own contribution. Seen as having agency, at least the adult poor should take responsibility for their children; ‘bringing children into existence bears responsibility to provide primary care for them’.<sup>46</sup>

To whatever extent redistributive justice might gain by Miller’s claims, his argument which ‘traces back human misery to bad national policies and institutions in the poor countries’, labelled by Pogge as ‘explanatory nationalism’, cannot take account of significant international interdependencies as outlined above. Hence, third world countries are led into corruption, a path that persisted through most countries colonial influence as their bureaucratic processes were rarely revised after gaining independence and are often additionally aggravated through tight restrictions of the IMF and other international institutions. Overall, the persistence of world poverty despite attempts of wealth redistribution cannot fully be explained in national terms.

Although it cannot and certainly will not be expressly doubted that the above factors can be regarded as participatory or additive factors; the above findings lead to the belief that there must be other reasons for the insufficiency of redistribution. This paper will even go as far as to claim that even in an ideal world – meaning a world in which all of the above would not occur and redistribution can be exercised as in its theoretical outline – redistribution would be insufficient. It is believed that current efforts for redistribution or even the attempt to establish a solid redistributive programme into policy have thus far failed or clearly not worked as efficiently helped as many people as they could and should have.

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<sup>46</sup> Miller, *National Responsibility*, p.237.

The reason for this is believed to be found in the fact that redistribution merely addresses the symptom or representation of the injustice of global poverty but not its actual cause. What is meant by this latter statement shall be illustrated with an example given by Reinhold Niebuhr in his book 'Moral Man and Immoral Society', in a different context from the original:

*'The Negro schools, conducted under the auspices of white philanthropy, encourage individual Negroes to higher forms of self-realisation; but they do not make frontal attack upon the social injustices from which the Negro suffers'.<sup>47</sup>*

Here - as in the case of redistribution as this paper claims – the unequal treatment of black people who were refused education as they were regarded inferior to white people is claimed to be addressed through the building of 'Negro schools'. However, the actual injustice of racial segregation, which fails to grant the black people the same recognition as the white people, thus resulting in different or better unequal treatment remains completely unaddressed. Today racial segregation has been largely ended within Western domestic law, and even though racial discrimination persists in some parts of the world, it can be said that black people are recognised as equals to the extent that calling them 'Negros' as Niebuhr did is regarded as politically highly incorrect. Niebuhr well notably wrote the above in 1932, which brings evidence that the recognition of a problem and thus whether we address its symptom or its actual cause can change over time.

This can also be perceived by looking at other matters that are found to be an essential part of human life but have not been regarded in these terms in earlier societies. An example of this

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<sup>47</sup> Niebuhr, R. 'Moral Man and Immoral Society' (1932) Available from: <http://www.colorado.edu/ReligiousStudies/chernus/4800/MoralManAndImmoralSociety/Section6.htm> [Accessed 20 July 2012].

would be that the access to internet is nowadays officially claimed to be a human right.<sup>48</sup> As such they reflect the human development and adapt their standards to today's world.

From this, one could conclude that the reason for the insufficiency of redistribution lies in the fact that the real injustice done to the poor is not recognised accordingly, and thus all it seems to address in its current form is its representation in the face of suffering.

## Conclusion

This section has argued that redistribution proves to be insufficient in addressing the matter of world poverty. It did this by first of all investigating the origins of redistributive justice which are believed to be located in the causal responsibility the affluent living in first world states have towards the poor, mainly due to a shared, but imposed, world economic system. Thus causal responsibility has been found to overpower claims for remedial responsibility based on the mere capability to produce relief as well as the commonly debated question of whom we associate ourselves with – humanity or community- and thus grant moral equal status and feel obliged to assist. This was presented through the particular world views of communitarianism and cosmopolitanism. Having further investigated a variety of factors having the potential to cause the insufficiency of redistribution, they were found to be contributing, but the real reason to be lying in the fact that redistribution only addresses the symptoms of the injustice of poverty but not its real cause. As such what makes redistribution insufficient is not, as commonly believed, a lack of motivational factors but rather structurally induced misrecognition that impacts upon the form of redistribution used to address world poverty.

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<sup>48</sup> Regeringskanslet – Government Offices of Sweden, *The Internet - a question of human rights*. Available from: <http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/14192/a/165079> [Accessed 15 August 2012].

## SECTION TWO: THE ESSENTIALITY OF RECOGNITION

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*'The frantic abolition of all distances brings no nearness'.<sup>49</sup>*

*– Martin Heidegger*

### Introduction

Having shown that the insufficiency of redistributive justice as a relief to the enduring and long-known problem of global poverty cannot be traced back to an abdication of responsibility or a lack of motivation but to the fact that the form in which redistribution is exerted solely addresses the symptoms and not the actual cause of the injustice of severe poverty; the following section will highlight the essential role of recognition to overcome this insufficiency. The section will do this by first of all investigating on why redistributive justice proves to be insufficient, to which the answer is believed to be found within the way the world economic system impacts on our social domain and thus through a change of our value structure causes the misrecognition of the poor. It will then proceed by showing that all redistribution is based on some form of recognition; however that the currently exerted form of redistribution, labelled as economic redistribution, only is subject to a cognitive recognition of the physical existence of the poor. For this to be right, the claim for a variety of different forms of recognition will be made on which basis investigations towards a more fruitful form of recognition to underlie redistribution will take place. It will then make use of Axel Honneth's work on the different forms of recognition and which further proof misrecognition not only to have harming psychological effects but also not to comply with demands of justice. The crucial role of recognition will be further supported through drawing on Nancy

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<sup>49</sup> Martin Heidegger quoted in Dobsen, A. 'Thick Cosmopolitanism', *Political Studies Association*, 54 (2006), p. 196.

Fraser who believes that a dual axis – a combination of the presumed opposing normative paradigms redistribution and recognition - is essential for justice. At last, the section will conclude by suggesting that basing redistribution on recognition in the form of equal status will result in what has been labelled as solidarity based redistribution and enables the empowerment of the poor which ultimately leads to a sufficient address of world poverty.

### **The Concept of Recognition**

This section will start at the very point the past section has ended, namely the claim for structurally induced misrecognition which impacts on the form of redistribution used to address world poverty. As the notion of redistribution as well as its origin has found great attention thus far, it is especially the former, structurally enforced misrecognition, which will be focused upon in the following.

As discussed above, the inescapable reason for our responsibility towards the poor lays in a shared world economic system which the affluent first world countries impose upon the poor. A system that according to Pogge does not allow the poor countries to flourish and participate on equal terms and thus can be regarded to cause structural harm. As there are no considerable alternatives to the current world economic system, this structural harm appears infinite, perpetuated through every human's daily engagement. Thus far to structurally enforced harm which has been found responsible for ongoing global poverty, however, it needs to be brought into relation to the structurally enforced misrecognition of the poor which has been claimed to be responsible for the insufficient address of global poverty through redistribution. In this relationship, structurally enforced misrecognition can be regarded as a by product; subject to the underlying value structure of the world economic system. The capitalist order is regulated by demand and supply of the consumers, the people living on this planet. Within the capitalist market production and surplus-production are crucial as they are able to influence the balance between demand and supply. Within this very powerful interplay, the worker who produces

the products has become to be regarded as a means of production, a social construction which caused an objectification or ‘capitalisation’ of the workforce and labour power.<sup>50</sup> As a result, it appears that the value or worth of humans within the system we operate is highly determined by economic terms, understood as monetary power. According to this, the misrecognition of the poor can be understood to result from the influence of Capitalism on the value structure we operate on and judge others by, and which ultimately influences our engagement in redistributive justice.

Under the term ‘social nature of market exchange’ this is something often demonstrated by drawing on the work of Karl Marx.<sup>51</sup> But also other scholars like the political philosopher Michael Sandel support claims that ‘there has been a shift from having a market economy to having a market society, where people are mainly motivated by money’.<sup>52</sup> According to him this development cannot be seen as the natural progression of capitalism as it has reached an intensity over the past three decades that did not exist before. On the question of who should be to blame, Sandel claims all of us responsible for not having a public debate about which higher moral values should restrict the extension of the economic market, a debate necessary for democratic societies if we do not want the market to govern every sphere of life. So it seems like that what was once meant to trigger prosperity and freedom for all humans, does in reality impact on the morality on which we recognise others like the poor. What must be avoided though, is a simplistic portrayal in the sense that ‘if markets dominate too much, our morals go out of the window’ as the economic market as such can only be accused to be amoral not immoral.<sup>53</sup> As Sandel outlines, it is the pluralistic societies within these markets,

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<sup>50</sup> Marx, K. *Capital*. Available through: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1864/economic/ch02b.htm#490> [Accessed 20 August 2012] p. 490.

<sup>51</sup> Marx, *Capital*, p. 490 [online].

<sup>52</sup> *Michael Sandel on markets and selling Olympic torches*, BBC News Politics. Available through: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-18162657> [Accessed 20 August 2012].

<sup>53</sup> *Sandel markets*, BBC News.

all following different understandings of morality, which cause this effect. However, relating back to Pogge, within these pluralistic societies it is the first world states who dominate; 'dominant conceptions of justice are shaped by the dominant group's shared interests, which in turn are shaped by its specific role in controlling the means of economic production'.<sup>54</sup>

The reverse effect of the reification of persons, the personification of things, is addressed by the Czech philosopher Slavoj Žižek in what he calls 'capitalism with a human face'.<sup>55</sup> While capitalism, as outlined, has heavily impacted on the social domain, capitalism itself has also been impacted by a parallel movement which attempts to make capitalism work for socialism, to be understood in the sense of 'let's not discard the evil, let's make the evil work for the good'.<sup>56</sup> Although it has been stated that capitalism as such is not immoral or 'evil'; what is meant by this, is that there have been attempts to modify capitalism to have a positive notion. Evidence and reinforcement of this notion of capitalism, and thus the value structure which causes misrecognition of the poor, can be found in modern consumerism. Consumerism which can traditionally be understood as the exertion of capitalism has always been regarded separately from any kind of social engagement.

The apparent positive modification of pure capitalism to what Žižek calls 'cultural capitalism' around 1968 has been caused by a different consumerist engagement.<sup>57</sup> While before the social and economic domain have been largely separated - one would earn and spend money and on top that give something back to society as a whole - today's consumerism has the tendency to bring the two domains together in one and the same gesture. As such it became common to engage in an ethical action while consuming; as evident in the case of buying a product on the promise that a certain amount of the money spent goes towards poverty relief.

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<sup>54</sup> Pogge, *World Poverty*, p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> Žižek, S., 'First as Tragedy, Then as Farce' in *The Ethics of Charity* by Rabbletv. Available from: <http://rabble.ca/rabbletv/program-guide/2010/08/best-net/slavoj-zizek-ethics-charity> [Accessed 22 August 2012].

<sup>56</sup> Žižek, *Ethics Charity*, [online].

<sup>57</sup> Žižek, S. *First as Tragedy then as Farce* (London, Verso, 2009), pp. 12-14 and Žižek, *Ethics Charity*, [online].

A negative outcome of this development is that it gives people the impression that they can *buy* to be ethical and thus do not need to *be* ethical (own emphasis). While buying a product, one at the same time fulfils a range of moral duties such as fighting global poverty or protecting the environment. Drawing on the above, this engagement can almost be seen as repairing with the right hand what has been ruined with the left. Within Žižek's notion of cultural capitalism, however, this idea has been universalised so that most people are consuming in the strong belief to have done enough 'good' by buying certain products and thus will not question their actions – something one could describe as 'blind consumerism'. This paper claims that it is this blind consumerism that causes the real problem to be rendered invisible and the poor to be misrecognised.

Concluding from this, the affluent who find themselves faced by dire poverty and accordingly, however with misdirected intentions through the influence of capitalism, set themselves the task of remedying the suffering that they *see*. However these remedies as in the form of redistribution do not cure poverty, they merely prolong it or even contribute to it as they are only aiming at monetary equalisation. Through this limitation, the resulting form of redistribution can be described and labelled as 'economic redistribution'. What is needed then to make redistribution sufficient is a form of redistribution that exceeds pure economic redistribution. This however, can only be achieved by first of all enabling the affluent to gain back the ability to *see* – something that is believed to be achievable through the notion of recognition.

## Different forms of recognition

In case the above presented claim is correct – which would certainly explain the misrecognition of the poor – how comes we engage in redistributive justice at all? If according to the above the recognition of a human being is determined by its economic or monetary power, would the resulting effect not be the one of total non-recognition instead of misrecognition?

These are absolutely valid questions to which the answer can be detected above; the origin for the need to give capitalism a more positive notion brings evidence that there was obviously a point where it has been realised that a pure consumerist act without any ethical notions is bad. This finds support in Zizek's belief that we do not eat organic food because it makes us feel better on a physical level – he claims that most people would not even be able to tell the difference – but as he says, that it makes them feel 'warm' and good about themselves. What he describes could be labelled as a cognitive wellbeing.

Based on this, it can be said that we do recognise the poor despite their lack of economic and monetary power; however, only as far as that we cognitively recognise their physical existence. As such not exceeding the very basic form of recognition and certainly not comparable with a moral recognition of any sort. This purely cognitive recognition allows – again through the glasses of monetary power – to see their physical suffering; the very fact that they are economically badly off. The engagement in economic redistribution aims at relieving this very physical suffering and more importantly it is this kind of recognition all economic redistribution is based upon. The latter is a claim that finds confirmation in the very origin for redistribution, mainly presented through Singer who based remedial responsibilities on the mere factor that we are fully aware and knowledgeable about the living circumstances of the poor.

However, if as it has been claimed, the poor are misrecognised in this way, it might be exactly these altruistic virtues which Singer presents, that prevent 'true' recognition of the poor. This further, goes in line with an illustration Zizek uses:

*'the worst slave owners were those who were kind to their slaves and so prevented the core of the problem being realised by those who suffered from it and those who contemplated it'.<sup>58</sup>*

This would mean that Singer's claim could possibly end up as counterproductive to the aim it is meant to fulfil. Attempting to overcome the significant discrepancies in wealth between the affluent and the poor by giving away 'until we ourselves reach the level of marginal utility' conceal the required form of recognition that goes beyond economic redistribution

Apart from this, a completely different matter becomes evident namely the fact that there must be different forms of recognition existent within human interaction. For example a form of moral recognition that exceeds the basic form of pure cognitive recognition. In this case, there would be a possibility to exchange the form of recognition on which economic redistribution is currently based upon in order to make it more sufficient and appropriate in its address of global poverty.

The idea that recognition can have different forms was famously re-established by social philosopher Axel Honneth in his book 'The Struggles of Recognition', first published in German in 1992. By drawing on the work of David Mead and the young Hegel in his Jena manuscripts, he identified three patterns of intersubjective recognition: Love, Rights and Solidarity. His findings which are both highly original but at the same time firmly rooted in the history of modern social theory, were found quite controversial as they made clear that the demands of justice cannot simply be fulfilled through a fair distribution of material goods as long as some member of the society are systematically denied the recognition they deserve.

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<sup>58</sup> Zizek, Ethics Charity, [online].

According to Honneth, the continued misrecognition, as a purely cognitive recognition, can have a harming impact on the poor as well as on the affluent. The misrecognition or non-recognition as status equals can take the form of denigration or insult of the poor.<sup>59</sup> This together with the ongoing starvation due to a lack of nutrition while the affluent accumulate their possessions are by some believed to result in protest and uprising, as Honneth himself states the endurance of ‘under-privileging necessarily leads to a crippling feeling of social shame, from which one can be liberated only through active protest and resistance’.<sup>60</sup> Moreover; forms of recognition are always to be understood as reciprocal – for which one should recognise others as one wishes to be recognised. As such the affluent are subject to the harm of misrecognition as well which finds representation through a lack of self-esteem in the practical relation to self and threatens a human’s honour and dignity.

These described harming effects from misrecognition, which when reversed and the appropriate recognition granted can in this context be said to have a healing effect, appear to predominantly focus on the psychological harm that occurs.<sup>61</sup> However, there is more to that. As the recalling of Pogge will show, misrecognition stands in direct relation to the violation of human rights and as the latter is regarded as unjust so can misrecognition itself be regarded as not to comply with justice. This ultimately makes recognition a vital component of justice. The above will be illustrated through the outline of Honneth’s three forms of intersubjective recognition.

Love, the first pattern for recognition within Honneth’s taxonomy is referring to primary relationships that are constituted by strong emotional attachments among a small number of people. As such it is defined in a fairly neutral sense and includes models of friendship or

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<sup>59</sup> Honneth, *Struggle*, p. 129.

<sup>60</sup> Honneth, *Struggle*, p. 121.

<sup>61</sup> See: Honneth, A. ‘Integrity and Disrespect: Principles of a Conception of Morality Based on the Theory of Recognition’, *Political Theory*, 2 (1992), pp. 187-201.

parent-child relations as well as erotic relationships between lovers.<sup>62</sup> Although this form of recognition is neither the one currently upheld by the affluent within redistributive justice, nor believed to be the one suitable for sufficient address of poverty; love based recognition holds a crucial role as it is traditionally the first form of recognition that human beings experience and thus determining for all other forms of recognition. When a child is born, it does not have the ability to recognise itself as an individual but perceives itself as well as its needs as part of nature. Evidence for this has been presented through the fact that young children – just like some animal species - do not possess the ability to see themselves in a mirror. The first time the child perceives a significant ‘other’ is in the role of the mother; as she is the one who fulfils the primary needs of the child in its state of helplessness the child’s survival is dependent on her. It is this phase of early childhood, to which most pathological disorders can be traced back; so is the threatened loss of the mother during this phase is believed to be the cause of all mature varieties of anxiety. Moreover, it is through the precedent of the unconditional love of the mother; that the child develops its individual active willingness to produce interpersonal proximity upon which all forms of affectionate bonds are based.<sup>63</sup> This ability to reciprocate bonds like that of love is the very factor on which all forms of recognition depend. Although the other forms that will be presented are subject to different patterns of mutual recognition; it is in this phase of life during which the very ability for reciprocal recognition is gained.

However, in contrast to the other forms of recognition, love relationships which presupposes liking and attraction always contain an element of moral particularism, as they are out of the individual’s control thus cannot be extended at will ‘beyond the social circle of primary relationships, to cover a large number of partners for interaction’.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Honneth, *Struggle*, p. 95.

<sup>63</sup> Honneth, *Struggle*, pp. 95-97.

<sup>64</sup> Honneth, *Struggle*, p. 107.

The second pattern for recognition presented by Honneth, rights, differs in essential aspects as the granting of legal rights is determined by the individual and does not underlie the same moral particularism but can be extended according to rational choice. However, this pattern of recognition is still dependent on the socialisation process outlined above which builds the basis for reciprocal recognition as ‘we can only come to understand ourselves as bearer of rights when we know, in turn, what various normative obligations we must keep vis-à-vis others’.<sup>65</sup> According to this, legal relations as a form of mutual recognition, is described in the way that ‘he behaves [...] toward others in a manner that is universally valid, recognizing them – as he wishes others to recognize him – as free, as persons’.<sup>66</sup> Different to the case of love, the reciprocity for legal recognition emerges through the course of historical development; so is legal recognition accordingly to Mead in the first place only valid among people who are socially recognised as members of a set community. However, within Hegel’s definition, legal recognition becomes only legitimate when it entails a universalistic conception of morality. As Honneth says, ‘with the transition to modernity, the post-conventional principles that had already been developed in philosophy and political theory made their way into established law’.<sup>67</sup> This above shown influence of modernity on our notion of morality seems strongly familiar and goes in line with the communitarian – cosmopolitan debate presented in the first section of this paper.

However, this form of legal recognition due to which we should grant each other universal respect beyond communal barriers becomes decoupled from social esteem in its practical adaptation. This decoupling can be understood in the way that legal recognition expresses the respect for the freedom of the will of other persons, while social esteem expresses the respect the individual receives according to the value society considers him to have. Honneth explains

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<sup>65</sup> Honneth, *Struggle*, p. 108.

<sup>66</sup> Honneth, *Struggle*, p. 108.

<sup>67</sup> Honneth, *Struggle*, p. 109.

these different forms of respect on the basis that ‘we can recognise human beings as persons without having to esteem their achievements to their character’.<sup>68</sup> As according to him, the form of universalised respect always contains a *Zurkenntnisnahme*; being ‘cognizant of someone, which is semantically present in the word ‘recognition, however it is only when a situation is interpreted with practical knowledge that one moves from cognitive acknowledgement to what, since Kant, can be signified by a concept of moral respect.’<sup>69</sup> It is this latter form of recognition through moral respect that leads to Honneth third and highest form of recognition, solidarity.

Solidarity, understood as mutual esteem –granting recognition, allows people to be respected in their personal difference and thus leads to symmetric relationships which compromise the cultural self-understanding of society and ultimately enables to view ‘one another in the light of values that allow the abilities and traits of the other to appear significant for shared praxis’.<sup>70</sup> The underlying notion of this is that everyone should not only be regarded as free like in the generalization of legal rights but further recognised individually and thus leading to equalization in status. Within this transition from the recognition of legal rights to recognition based on solidarity, according to Honneth most struggles for recognition arise.<sup>71</sup> The reason for this can be believed to be found in the fact that such a transition would not only be enabling for the one recognised but also limiting for the one who grants recognition. In this sense, it demands true equality as one part can only be free if the other grants the appropriate room for this freedom.

And indeed, what has been claimed in this paper earlier goes in line with the above outlined three forms of recognition of Honneth. It appears to that it is this struggle of recognition that

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<sup>68</sup> Honneth, *Struggle*, p. 112.

<sup>69</sup> Honneth, *Struggle*, p. 112.

<sup>70</sup> Honneth, *Struggle*, p. 129.

<sup>71</sup> Honneth, *Struggle*, p. 113.

would need to be fought in order for the affluent to recognise the poor appropriately. The form of recognition that has been described in this paper as ‘cognitive recognition of the physical existence’ of the poor, can be regarded similar to Honneth’s legal recognition which are equally based on ‘cognitive acknowledgement’. Whether labelling it one or the other, in their essence they are trying to express one and the same form of recognition; a form of recognition that would grant a person generalised rights but nothing further. In the case of this paper this form of cognitive recognition has been described as misrecognition of the poor as it did not lead to a moral recognition; conceptualised in Honneth’s highest form of recognition based on solidarity and leading to equal status and social esteem.

Recalling Pogge’s words that poverty should be regarded as a violation of human rights, emphasises this; he states clearly that human rights shall not be understood as in conceptual connection to legal rights because a realisation of human rights through legal rights would not be able to recognise every culture equally.<sup>72</sup> Pogge’s demand for a conceptualisation of human rights that go beyond legal rights can be understood to be fulfilled in Honneth’s notion of solidarity.

As it is the violation of human rights through outcome responsibility that leads to poverty, upon which Pogge bases redistributive and transformational demands; it can be believed that it will be the very form of solidarity based recognition which allows for human rights to be fulfilled that can enable pure economic redistribution to be exceeded and thus creates a form of redistribution that is sufficient in the relief of poverty. Basically, it is believed that the form of recognition affects the form of redistribution; hence, the form of economic redistribution derives from its underlying form of cognitive recognition and thus is the cause for the insufficiency in addressing global poverty. Recognition based on solidarity that grants moral equal status on the other hand, is believed to alter the form of redistribution. Through this

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<sup>72</sup> Pogge, *World Poverty*, p. 46.

alternation the resulting form of redistribution would empower the poor to become independent agents by regarding them as equals.

A natural consequence from this would be the appreciation of different values from which social esteem can arise which would demand a value structure that stands unaffected from pure economic performance as well as a societal structure that enables others and limits itself by giving the necessary freedom for others to develop as equals.

### Recognition as Essential to Justice

Having demonstrated that misrecognition, as not recognising others according to Honneth's highest form of recognition based on solidarity is unjust due to the harming psychological effects it can have but primarily because it does not fulfil the human rights as set out by Pogge; the paper will continue by highlighting the essentiality of recognition to justice.

Although the impression might arise in the above claim that all redistributive theory is based on some form of recognition; to conclude from this that recognition is a mere epiphenomenon of redistribution is wrong. As will be seen, recognition has its very own relation to justice.

Being almost regarded as a 'keyword of our time'; recognition has recently attracted a lot of interest and is commonly used to describe contemporary conflicts; most of which arise from the challenges of multiculturalism supported through globalisation.<sup>73</sup> Within political philosophy; the term recognition is used to unpack the normative basis of political claims whether the issue is 'indigenous land claims or women's carework, homosexual marriage or Muslim headscarves.'<sup>74</sup> It thus appears that Hegel's struggle for recognition, as Nancy Fraser nicely summarises, 'finds new purchase as a rapidly globalizing capitalism accelerates

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<sup>73</sup> Fraser, N. and Honneth, A. *Redistribution or Recognition? – A Political-philosophical Exchange* (London, Verso, 2003), p. 1.

<sup>74</sup> Fraser and Honneth, *Philosophical Exchange*, p. 1.

transcultural contacts, fracturing interpretative schemata, pluralizing value horizons, and politicising identities and differences'.<sup>75</sup>

In the light of our modern society, Recognition appears as a progressive means to address social injustice. Its aim being the creation of a difference friendly world, it is often referred to as politics of difference or politics of identity. As such it has already been described in the outline of Honneth's first form of recognition, love, during which a child learns to reciprocate and learns to differentiate itself from others and thus is an essential component of the identity formation process. Although, Honneth's other forms of recognition lead straight on to the ideal form of recognition based on solidarity which grants equal status and thus would support claims for equal redistribution; critics regard the way Honneth arrives at this point as too all-encompassing and thus opponent to him regard recognition as an anti-thesis to redistribution. Evidence for Honneth's encompassment can be found in the integration of Kantian notions in his theory of recognition despite the fact that recognition is traditionally identified as deriving from a purely Hegelian notion.<sup>76</sup>

As a result, struggles for redistribution are conventionally disassociated from struggles for recognition; while the one thrives towards an egalitarian order where resources and goods are distributed equally, the other thrives towards cultural diversity and promotes the value of difference.<sup>77</sup> As egalitarianism and diversity in most contexts work against each other, the reason for the regard of them as an anti-thesis becomes evident. The most drastic distinction between the two terms are to be found in claims that redistribution is a matter of justice while recognition rather belongs to the realm of ethics; redistribution often understood as a matter of fairness and equal moral consideration, seeks to eliminate disparities between social actors

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<sup>75</sup> Fraser and Honneth, *Philosophical Exchange*, p. 1.

<sup>76</sup> Quoted from above: 'it is only when a situation is interpreted with practical knowledge that one moves from cognitive acknowledgement to what, since Kant, can be signified by a concept of moral respect'.

<sup>77</sup> Fraser and Honneth, *Philosophical Exchange*, pp. 11-16.

and as such is traditionally located in the domain of justice. Recognition on the other hand emphasises the ‘qualitative conditions needed for human flourishing [...] rather than fidelity to abstract requirements of equal treatment’ and thus seems at first sight to fall under the domain of ethics.<sup>78</sup> Accordingly the decoupling of the two would go as far as to say that redistribution belonging to justice focuses on ‘the right’ whereas recognition belonging to ethics focuses on ‘the good’.

If the above separation is right, then anyone who would claim that both redistribution and recognition can be combined under the umbrella of justice – like it has been the case in this paper so far – is believed to run the risk of philosophical schizophrenia.<sup>79</sup> Contra this wisdom, both Honneth and Fraser are of the strong belief that in order to solve the problems of today’s world both redistribution and recognition are needed. To illustrate that neither one can be overlooked in the present constellation they draw on 9/11 which made painfully clear that struggles over religion or nationality are imbricated to an extent that makes recognition impossible to ignore and at the same time economic inequalities are growing as neoliberal forces promote corporate globalization which makes redistribution impossible to ignore.<sup>80</sup>

Both are of the opinion that the relation of the two remained mostly under-theorised as partisans of each term frantically upheld their positions. However; although Honneth agrees that they must be seen in relation, he regards recognition as fundamental and redistribution as derivative to it. The belief in a hierarchical order among the two clearly does not go in line with earlier claims made in this paper as equal material distribution does not automatically follow from the granting of universalised legal recognition. Drawing on the colonial period for example, shows that despite the independence of a country and the resulting legal

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<sup>78</sup> Fraser, N. ‘Recognition without Ethics?’, *Theory Culture Society*, 18 (2001), p. 23.

<sup>79</sup> Fraser, Ethics, p. 23.

<sup>80</sup> Fraser and Honneth, *Philosophical Exchange*, pp. 2-4.

recognition as status equals did not bring with it an equalisation of economic power and resources. Without illustrating this further, it can be said that it is impossible to reduce redistribution in its essence to recognition or –as earlier discussed – recognition to redistribution.

This claim is supported by Fraser whose theoretical communalities and agreement with Honneth part at this very point. Being of the opinion that recognition and redistribution are co-fundamental and thus mutually irreducible, she promotes what she calls the ‘dual-axis of justice’.<sup>81</sup> In order to arrive at this notion of justice towards which both recognition and redistribution contribute on their own terms as two sui generis normative paradigms, however, are not regarded as conceptually incompatible; Fraser offers a redefinition of recognition. According to her, the aim of a recognition as politics of difference and identity in its essence demands nothing else as the universal accreditation of distinctiveness, thus it aims towards recognition of distinctive values as equal in status with others. Defining recognition as status equality turns around the presumed incompatibility with redistribution as claims for status equality and class equality do not corrupt each other but can work together.

The redefined recognition allows granting the necessary subjective freedom and thus unlike Honneth’s reduction ad absurdum that morally entitles everyone to social esteem, it regards everyone as having ‘an equal right to pursue social esteem under fair conditions of equal opportunity’.<sup>82</sup> This way, egalitarian claims for liberty of everyone can be upheld and within it everyone can still determine what the good life is for him. Moreover, it makes recognition a matter of justice and not purely one of ethics; if recognition is seen as status equality then misrecognition would be seen a status subordination which ‘denies some individuals and

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<sup>81</sup> Fraser and Honneth, *Philosophical Exchange*, pp. 22-26.

<sup>82</sup> Fraser and Honneth, *Philosophical Exchange*, p. 32.

groups the possibility of participating on a par with others in social interaction'.<sup>83</sup> This ultimately locates the injustice of misrecognition in social relations and not in psychologically harming effects – a point already made earlier but which only derived through the integration of Pogge's conception of human rights and whose validity is now supported further. The location of the injustice in social relations over psychological effects further allows regarding the misrecognition as a 'matter of externally manifest and publicly verifiable impediments' such as the one of the capitalist society and the world economic system as outlined in this paper.<sup>84</sup>

From this it can be concluded, that defining recognition as status equality instead of politics of difference and identity in the first place eradicates all claims for the incompatibility of recognition and redistribution under the umbrella of justice. Furthermore, bringing evidence for a possible influence of our world economic system on forms of recognition supports the overall claim of this paper that the form of recognition, cognitive recognition, entailed in contemporary economic redistribution results in an insufficient address of world poverty. Thus, an approach that redresses the misrecognition that derives from the economic structure of society, is at the same time able to redress maldistribution and on top of that would enable to reduce inequality without creating 'stigmatized classes of vulnerable people perceived as beneficiaries of special largesse' of the affluent.<sup>85</sup>

## Conclusion

All in all, this section has shown that it is the externally caused impediments through the world economic system which are additionally prolonged through everyone's daily consumerist engagement, that cause the affluent to only cognitively recognise the poor and

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<sup>83</sup> Fraser and Honneth, *Philosophical Exchange*, p. 31.

<sup>84</sup> Fraser and Honneth, *Philosophical Exchange*, p. 51.

<sup>85</sup> Fraser and Honneth, *Philosophical Exchange*, p. 77.

thus has the effect of denying groups the possibility of being on par with others in social interaction since within this context the poor are treated as objects, and not a moral agents. Hence, they only are regarded as passive objects in redistribution policies that aim at a pure economic redistribution. Using equal status recognition in contrast, allows the poor to be recognised as moral equal subjects with equal status in social interaction. As a result, poverty policies in the notion of solidarity based redistribution have to recognise agency and focus on the empowerment of the poor. Moreover, it would result in the design aid programmes with their active input and that are adapted to their expressed differences and particularities. This moves the focus away from pure economic redistribution to context specific redistribution based on solidarity which itself leads to sufficient policies for the reduction of global poverty.

## SECTION 3: THE CASE OF FAIR TRADE

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*‘Justice is not an externally imposed requirement – it binds only insofar as its addressees can also rightly regard themselves as its authors’.*<sup>86</sup>

– Nancy Fraser

### Introduction

This section aims at illustrating on the practical example of Fairtrade what has been theoretically established in the previous two sections. Through outlining the concept of Fairtrade it will be attempted to show that Fairtrade is intended to be used to decrease the growing gap in wealth and resources between the affluent and poor and thus is to be regarded as a form of redistributive justice. However, based on an illustration of the resulting different outcomes for the Fairtrade producers in poor countries, the consumers and the Fairtrade organisation as well as their partners; it will be claimed that Fairtrade does in fact is subject to purely economic redistribution and as such will be held insufficient in the address of global poverty. The reasons of Fairtrade to promote a redistributive concept that benefits the different parties in unequal terms will be shown not to derive from deceitful motives or to be based on some conspiracy as some might think but derive through the impact of the world economic system. Impacting on the value structure of the affluent to the extent that the value of something will be determined solely by economic power, the capitalist world economic system will be claimed the cause for the poor to only be cognitively recognised as suffering from a lack of economic power. It will further be shown how capitalism effectively manages

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<sup>86</sup> Fraser and Honneth, *Philosophical Exchange*, p. 44.

to commodify the suffering of the poor within the Fairtrade concept to a product that can be sold on the market. Through the theoretical shift of exchanging the form of cognitive recognition that underlies economic redistribution, to equal status recognition, the ideal form of solidarity based redistribution will be achieved and hence allows for structural change that enables the affluent to see the poor as equal partners with individual agency and thus able to deliver subjective assistance. This shall be shown to foster a dialogue in which the affluent and poor participate on an equal par to discuss the forms Fairtrade should take in order to create equal outcomes for every party involved and moreover to be sufficient in the alleviation of global poverty.

### **The Concept of Fairtrade**

The Fairtrade model is aimed at the alleviation of poverty through the redistribution of wealth and resources among the affluent and the poor. Aiming to be a strategy for ‘the creation of opportunities for producers and workers who have been economically disadvantaged or marginalized by the conventional trading system’; they promote goods produced in third world countries to consumers in the first world at a higher selling price under the promise that the goods were produced under fair working conditions and that the producers in poor countries will be given a fair share of the selling price.<sup>87</sup> In order for the consumer to recognise the Fairtrade goods, they will be labelled with the Fairtrade Mark. For a product to display the Fairtrade Mark it must meet the international standards which are set by the Fairtrade’s very own international certification body FLO (Fairtrade Labelling Organisation). The vision of Fairtrade as they state themselves, is one of ‘a world in which justice and sustainable development are at the heart of trade structures as that everyone, through their

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<sup>87</sup> Fairtrade model. Available from: [http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/what\\_is\\_fairtrade/fairtrade\\_certification\\_and\\_the\\_fairtrade\\_mark/the\\_fairtrade\\_mark.aspx](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/what_is_fairtrade/fairtrade_certification_and_the_fairtrade_mark/the_fairtrade_mark.aspx) [Accessed 28 August 2012].

work, can maintain a decent and dignified livelihood and develop their full potential'.<sup>88</sup> To achieve this, they a number of key objectives such as a minimum price guarantee, an additional Fairtrade premium, pre-financing schemes as well as they set standards on the conditions for the production and trade of a product.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Fairtrade Vision. Available from: [http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/what\\_is\\_fairtrade/fairtrade\\_foundation.aspx](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/what_is_fairtrade/fairtrade_foundation.aspx) [Accessed 28 August 2012].

<sup>89</sup> Fairtrade Standards. Available at: [http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/what\\_is\\_fairtrade/fairtrade\\_certification\\_and\\_the\\_fairtrade\\_mark/fairtrade\\_standards.aspx](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/what_is_fairtrade/fairtrade_certification_and_the_fairtrade_mark/fairtrade_standards.aspx) [Accessed 28 August 2012].

## Mal-exercised redistribution

The Fairtrade model as outlined above can clearly be said to be a practical example for redistributive theory as it fosters the equal distribution of wealth from the affluent which pay a higher price for products produced under fair conditions to the poor which receive a fair price for their work. However, although the model is thought to be decreasing the gap between the affluent and the poor and thus create equality it is in fact criticised to result in different outcomes for the producers in poor countries, the consumers of Fairtrade products and the Fairtrade organisation as well as its business partners who sell the product in the first world. This is supported by economist Dr Peter Griffiths who in a talk given to the European Coffee Symposium states that ‘Fairtrade is fantastic; it is fantastic at making rich Europeans think that they are good. It is fantastic at making money for European companies. Is it fantastic for the farmers in the third world?’ which he then clearly denies by ruling out a couple of negative effects of the Fairtrade model.<sup>90</sup> According to him, the main issues with Fairtrade can be located in the fact that they hold no record of how much money goes to the farmer, they do not set any limits on how much extra can be charged for Fairtrade products when sold in the first world and most importantly they do not present any criteria for the countries that join the Fairtrade model. This results in the following; the consumer pays average of 15 per cent extra for ie an Fairtrade coffee in the belief that this would be the amount passed on to the producer; thus the psychological wellbeing of the consumer increases due to the belief that he has engaged in an apparent ethical act and moreover fulfilled his duty to ‘give back’ sufficiently.<sup>91</sup> The Fairtrade Organisation as well as the in the selling process involved business partners has the perfect opportunity to increase its earnings, as from the lack of standards on selling price and farmers pay – for which the latter is only restricted by a

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<sup>90</sup> Griffiths, P., *Why Fairtrade isn't fair*. Available from: [http://www.griffithsspeaker.com/Fairtrade/why\\_fair\\_trade\\_isn.htm](http://www.griffithsspeaker.com/Fairtrade/why_fair_trade_isn.htm) [Accessed: 28 August 2012]. Also see: Griffiths, P. ‘Ethical Objections to Fairtrade’, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 3 (2012), pp. 357-373.

<sup>91</sup> Griffiths, *Fairtrade* [online].

promised minimum pay to the producer that 'at least covers the costs of sustainable production', however, does not demand a passing on of a maximum surplus the seller might have made.<sup>92</sup> Additionally, bureaucracy costs can be claimed to be too expensive to pass on a countable amount to the producer. The producer in the third world country find himself to be the very least beneficiary as despite receiving a promised minimum pay this does not exceed the costs of sustainable production for which he will not be able to gain independence. Moreover, the guarantee of the minimum price also entails a trading outside the world economic market which is not necessarily in the interest of the producer as it would attribute him a special status that would impact his ability to be regarded as equal within trade relations and further decrease independence. The praised Fairtrade premium reward that admittedly might benefit the direct community of the Fairtrade farmer at the same time result in unequal standards compared with the wider community and causes greater disparities and suffering for farmers not participating in the Fairtrade model. Just to mention one more, the objective of the Fairtrade organisation to enable pre-financing of the producers if needed, will create liabilities and thus adds to the dependence on Fairtrade.

From this one can undoubtedly conclude that Fairtrade as a form of redistributive justice fails to fulfil its supposed aim to alleviate global poverty. This can further be supported through the fact mentioned by Griffiths that Fairtrade mainly operates in 'rich countries' countries like Mexico and Costa Rica.<sup>93</sup> Griffiths uses 'rich' here to disrobe the Fairtrade countries as they have 70 times the GDP of a country like Sierra Leone and thus measured by African standards is 'well off'.

However, the reason of Fairtrade to promote a redistributive model that benefits the different parties in unequal ways is not believed to derive from deceitful motives or to be based on

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<sup>92</sup> Fairtrade Minimum Price. Available from: [http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/what\\_is\\_fairtrade/fairtrade\\_certification\\_and\\_the\\_fairtrade\\_mark/the\\_fairtrade\\_minimum\\_price.aspx](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/what_is_fairtrade/fairtrade_certification_and_the_fairtrade_mark/the_fairtrade_minimum_price.aspx) [Accessed 28 August 2012].

<sup>93</sup> Griffiths, *Fairtrade* [online].

some higher conspiracy but to derive from the belief in redistributive justice which however misdirected honest intentions through the impact of the world economic system. The above outlined insufficiency of the redistributive attempts of Fairtrade is a perfect illustration of what in this paper has been labelled economic redistribution, a redistribution which only aims at monetary redistribution and not a structural alternation in any way. Evidence for this can claim to find in the fact that Fairtrade does not change the producer- supplier relation which massively impact on the resulting differences between the parties. Quite opponent to this, the current form of economic redistribution is confirmed and prolonged through the consumer's engagement in Fairtrade. According to Zizek, the consumers who upheld predominant conceptions of Fairtrade and thus economic redistribution cannot be blamed for their naive actions as they are part of a system that does not allow them to question their actions and thus are 'blind' to see the real injustice of poverty.<sup>94</sup> Within the capitalist system the suffering of the poor has been turned into Fairtrade goods that can be sold and bought on the market. Through this imbrication the consumer does not need to actively engage in ethical actions anymore but can simply buy to be ethical. Due to this, by buying a Fairtrade coffee, he is made believe to 'buy into something bigger, buy into a coffee ethics'.<sup>95</sup>

In fact, this is merely the result of the dominance of the world economic system which impacts on our value structure through which the value of a person is judged on economic terms, and is further aggravated through models like Fairtrade that foster a purely economic redistribution. As a consequence; within the Fairtrade model, the poor are only cognitively acknowledged in their suffering due to their lack of economic power. Evidence for this can be found in a statement on their official website which reads that 'it is recognised that the degree of progress depends on the level of economic benefits [the poor] receive form Fairtrade'; what was meant to highlight the importance of the Fairtrade model does indeed show the lack of

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<sup>94</sup> Zizek, *Tragedy*, pp. 51-53.

<sup>95</sup> Zizek, *Tragedy*, p. 53.

reflection on the question of whether this form of redistribution should be altered as it clearly does not increase the ability of the poor to maintain the standard of progress and thus will always make the poor depend on the affluent's 'generous' engagement.<sup>96</sup>

From this it can be concluded that economic redistribution which is based on a form of cognitive recognition of the poor's suffering from material needs only results in an dependence of the poor but does not address the cause of their poverty as for this a form of subjective help would need to be provided that includes the poor as equal partners in the solution process and thus would make their degree of progress not be entirely dependent on the level of economic benefits granted by the Fairtrade organisation.

### **Introducing equal status recognition**

This structural change like this is believed to be achieved through a theoretical change of the form of recognition from a mere cognitive one to one of equal moral status. The result of an underlying form of equal status recognition would be a redistribution based on solidarity.

While remaining within the Fairtrade model, the minimal consequences should be the empowerment of the poor by regarding them as moral equals with having their own agency in social interaction. As recognition is exercised on the principle of reciprocity, the empowerment of the poor would entail the formation of unions that allows them to collectively thrive for economic development and better working conditions as well as it would increase their selling and buying power. Through this, the work of the Fairtrade farmers will be regarded a prestigious as the one of the workers in the developed world. As

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<sup>96</sup> Fairtrade Standards [online].

Martin Luther King Jr. said, 'by the time we finish eating breakfast we have relied on half of the world', towards which they would be seen to make a noteworthy contribution.<sup>97</sup>

In order for this development to equals in status to take place, the Fairtrade organisation and business partners would though need to grant the necessary space; however, through the ability of the poor to actively determine the form Fairtrade policies take on, entailing their expressed visions of the good life, Fairtrade would gain a real partner to support the fulfilment of the vision of 'a world in which justice and sustainable development are at the heart of trade structures as that everyone, through their work, can maintain a decent and dignified livelihood and develop their full potential'.<sup>98</sup> The consumers would be able to engage in the Fairtrade process not as blind consumers but as aware of their obligations to alleviate global poverty, as well as outside the Fairtrade system.

## Conclusion

This section has illustrated on the practical example of Fairtrade how a purely economic redistribution that is based on a mere cognitive recognition of the poor is insufficient in the address of global poverty as it purely benefits the ones already affluent. Through a theoretical shift of the form of recognition as granting equal status it was possible to show which structural change this would bring about. The resulting notion of redistribution based on solidarity would benefit all parties involved in the Fairtrade process and moreover entail the possibility of alleviating the suffering of the poor through a sufficient address of the cause for

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<sup>97</sup> King, M. L. Jr. quoted in DeCarlo, J. *Fair Trade and How it Works* (New York, The Rosen Publishing Group, 2011), p. 13.

<sup>98</sup> Fairtrade Vision [online].

global poverty – hence justice for the poor could be achieved through an imbrications/combination of the two normative paradigms of redistribution and recognition.

## CONCLUSION

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This paper began by asking the question: Can the underlying assumptions of redistributive forms of justice be addressed through a dialogue with theories of recognition? It started with a numerical exposition of poverty to illustrate the severity of the suffering of half the world's population. However, numerical expositions of this kind were said to lead more to the confusion and an overwhelming of the reader than to an active engagement against this state of nature due to the scope of the problem. Indeed, there are clear limits to the measurement of the human condition, as debates on global poverty actually are about the quality of life. Due to this, the argument in this paper has been based on the assumption that 'suffering and death from lack of food, shelter and medical care are bad' which leads to a controversial debate on what this state of affair implies for the rest of us living on earth.<sup>99</sup>

Within international theories of justice the suffering of the poor seems to be centred on the question of responsibility. Tracing back the origins of responsibilities in the case of global poverty however, can present a real challenge following the increasing blurriness of borders due to globalisation. Through introducing Peter Singer, it was asked whether it is necessary to find responsibility in order to assign responsibilities for ending the suffering of the poor when we consider that half the world's population has the capability to assist.<sup>100</sup> Despite his argument it has been shown that there is need for a stronger motivational heart to confirm to obligations to address global poverty, especially regarding communitarians who traditionally only assign responsibility to people in their immediate surrounding and community.<sup>101</sup> By illustrating that responsibilities limited solely to small communities cannot sustain this form

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<sup>99</sup> Singer, P. *Famine*, p. 231.

<sup>100</sup> Singer, P. *Famine*, pp. 229-243.

<sup>101</sup> Erskine, *Normative Theory*, pp. Xx.

due to the state of globalisation and interconnectivity, the paper then drew on Thomas Pogge who presents a cosmopolitanism removed from an philanthropic reasoning and remedial responsibility by giving evidence for the causal relationship between the poor and affluent.<sup>102</sup>

Resulting from this, most individuals, governments or international organisations feel obliged to redistribute part of their wealth in form of monetary donations and aid provisions.

Redistributive justice, however, is claimed to be insufficient in addressing the cause of poverty as it focuses solely on its representation. From this it has been concluded that what makes redistribution insufficient is not, a lack of motivational factors but rather structurally induced misrecognition that impacts upon the form of redistribution used to address world poverty.

Structurally induced misrecognition has been shown to derive from the influence of the world economic system on the value structure, causing the affluent to determine the worth of wellbeing based on economic power. By drawing on Michael Sandel and Slavoj Zizek it became evident that the dominance of capitalism has caused a reification of persons – which resulted in a shift from *having* a market economy to *being* a market society, which resulted in an understanding of ‘capitalism with a human face’ in the notion of cultural capitalism.<sup>103</sup>

Evidence of this was shown to be found in modern consumerism, which brings the two domains of social and economic engagement together. As this imbrication becomes universalised and perpetuated, the affluent become ‘blind’ to what their intentions are and thus the misrecognition of the poor persists unaltered.

It was then claimed that contemporary redistribution, labelled economic redistribution, merely underlies a cognitive recognition of the physical existence of the poor, and has the effect of denying groups the possibility of being on par with others in social interaction since within

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<sup>102</sup> Pogge, *Human Rights*.

<sup>103</sup> Sandel markets, BBC news [online] and Zizek, Ethics Charity [online].

this context the poor are treated as objects and not moral agents. Hence, they are regarded as passive objects in redistribution policies that aim at purely economic redistribution.

However, the claim for a purely cognitive recognition in distinction to a moral recognition has allowed the conclusion that there must be different forms of recognition existent within human interaction, highlighting the possibility that changing the current form of recognition that leads to economic redistribution would also alter the form of redistribution. By drawing on Axel Honneth's three patterns of intersubjective interaction, namely Love, Rights and Solidarity it was seen that the highest form of recognition is solidarity, in which humans mutually recognise each other as equal in status.<sup>104</sup> From this it has been concluded that the misrecognition of the poor as not recognising them as status constitutes a violation of human rights and thus is unjust; which as a consequence makes recognition itself a vital component of justice.

The relation of recognition as essential to justice could only be fully established by drawing on Nancy Fraser who rescinds claims for recognition as a mere politics of identity and difference, predominantly dedicated to an ethical focus on 'the good life' and thus in alleged anti-thesis to egalitarian redistributive justice, representing 'the right'. Showing that recognition and redistribution cannot be reduced to an epiphenomenon of each other but are to be regarded as two *sui generis* and at the same time co-fundamental normative paradigms of justice, she conceptualises the 'dual-axis of justice'.<sup>105</sup>

A side effect of the integration of redistribution and recognition as normative paradigms of justice; is the creation of a middle ground cosmopolitan and communitarian claims. Through the definition of recognition as status equality and the resulting compatibility with redistribution it is at the same time possible to combine notions of cosmopolitanism which

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<sup>104</sup> Honneth, *Struggle*.

<sup>105</sup> Fraser and Honneth, *Philosophical Exchange*.

seeks to grant equal standards for everyone with notions of communitarians that emphasise cultural diversity. This middle ground opens the door to a universalistic recognition of every human as equal but in possession of their own agency.

Using equal status recognition in contrast to cognitive recognition, leads to redistribution based on solidarity that allows the poor to be recognised as moral equal subjects with equal status in social interaction. As a result, poverty policies in the notion of solidarity based redistribution have to recognise agency and focus on the empowerment of the poor. This theoretical outline has, through a practical illustration of the case of Fairtrade, been shown to enable a shift from a redistributive model that benefits the parties involved unequally and does not foster sustainable development to aid programmes designed with their active input that are adapted to their expressed differences and particularities. This moves the focus away from pure economic redistribution to context specific redistribution based on solidarity which itself leads to sufficient policies for the reduction of global poverty and outside the Fairtrade model might even imply a complete reassessment of global economic relations.

(14,985 words)

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