

**Ethics**  
**Prof. Vineet Sahu**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology-Kanpur**  
**Module No. #01**  
**Lecture No. #36**  
**Discussing Thomas Pogge's 'Real World Justice' - Part - 3**

We had talked about, some of the sections of the paper. And now, we talked about, well, the ecumenical nature of Pogge's claims, that well, it cuts across theories.

(Refer Slide Time: 00:24)

**5. Engaging Broadly Consequentialist Conceptions of Social Justice**

- There is a shared institutional order that is shaped by the better-off and imposed on the worse-off. This institutional order is implicated in the reproduction of radical inequality in that there is a feasible institutional alternative under which so severe and extensive poverty would not persist. The radical inequality cannot be traced to extra-social factors (such as genetic handicaps or natural disasters) which, as such, affect different human beings differentially. Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, p. 199. (p. 42.)
- So, the better-off are harming the worse-off 'in upholding a shared institutional order that is *unjust* & avoidably (re)producing radical inequality' (p.42)
- The minimum common core of broadly consequentialist theories: "Most broadly consequentialist theorists agree that a national economic order is unjust when it leaves social and economic human rights unfulfilled on a massive scale even while there is a feasible alternative order under which these human rights would be much better realized."

It is anti-reductionist. So, it talks. It does not put in alliance with any particular theory. Rather, it tries to ecumenically or in a catholic spirit, tackle the various objections raised. And therefore, not bound by a particular theory. Now, going ahead with his, what he terms as ecumenical approach, he engages broadly with Consequentialists conceptions of social justice. So, that there can be various strains of Consequentialist theories, regarding social justice.

So, he asks in his words, a very minimal requirement, which is common to perhaps, most if not all Consequentialist conceptions of social justice. He reads that, I quote from him that, there is a shared institutional order, that is shaped by the better-off, and imposed on the worse-off. This institutional order, is implicated in the reproduction of radical inequality. In that, there is a feasible institutional alternative, under which, so severe and extensive poverty would not persist.

The radical inequality, cannot be traced to extra social factors, such as genetic handicaps, or natural disasters, which as such, affect different human beings differentially. Now, this is quoted from his book, and also from the article, that we are currently going through. So, his claim is, that well, how the world order, benefits the better-off at the cost of the worse-off. And, what he eliminates here, in this point, if you read, is that, if there is an alternative order, then this poverty would not be so severe, and would not persist.

And, for those, who would like to argue, or who have, because this paper is in response to the criticism, that he is received against the theories, put in his book. So, some of those criticisms where, that the radical inequality cannot be traced to, extra social factors, such as genetic handicaps, or natural disasters, which as such, affect different human beings differentially. So, poverty is not in effect, in which the affluent or innocent bystanders, or neither is it a result of chance, or genetic handicaps, or natural disasters.

It is to Pogge's reading very strictly, a result of the global institutional order, which benefits the better-off, and is implicitly upheld by the better-off. So, very clearly, he puts forth the claim, that the better-off are harming the worse-off, in upholding a shared institutional order, that is unjust and avoidably, producing or reproducing radical inequality. Though, this is a very crucial reiteration of his claim, that the better-off are harming the worse-off.

Now, notice, the words used. That, when he says, in upholding, what is he denying over here. He is denying, that well, the institutional order are not parallel orders, running in different countries or regions. That, the poor and the rich are a part of an institutional order, if there is a macro level to talk about. That, there are not, various micro levels running, and parallel to each other, unaffected with each other.

His claim, when he says that, a shared institutional order is that, there is a single macro order of which, these are facets. And, that macro order is unjust. That is a claim, that he is made. And, we talked about historical wrong doing. And, how it carries forward, across generations. And therefore, it brings forth the duties of reparation, and avoidably. So, this single macro order, that

is unjust, and it avoidably produces or reproduces, radical inequality. It is avoidable.

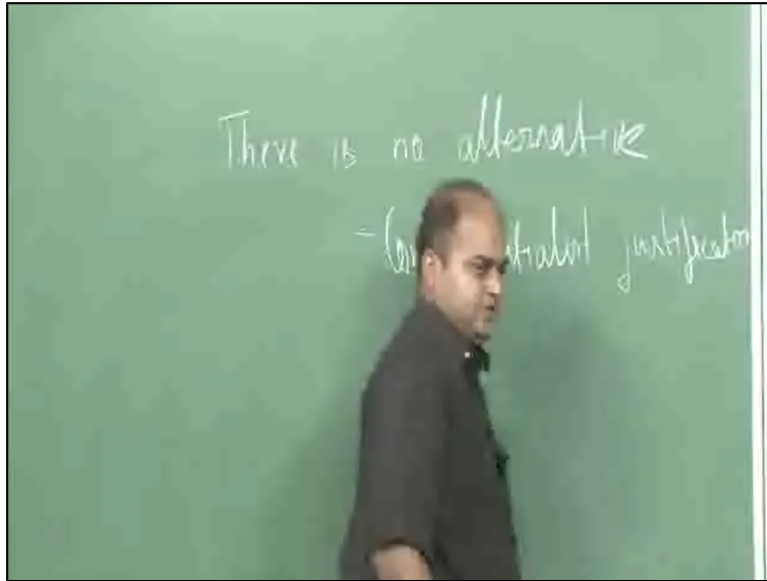
That means, a tweaking in the global institutional order, can avoid this poverty. And, this recurrence of poverty, both in earlier times and the new, his prediction reading here is that, this will continue creating poverty. So, this production and reproduction of radical inequality, will continue, if this institutional economic order is to continue. So, what is it about the Consequentialist theories here.

So, Pogge's minimum claim, from the Consequentialist theories is that, he sums it up saying that, most broadly Consequentialist theorists agree that, a national economic order is unjust, when it leaves social and economic human rights, unfulfilled on a massive scale, even while there is a feasible alternative order, under which, these human rights would be much better realised. So, Consequentialists are judging a system, by the consequences it brings forth.

So, the various strains of Consequentialist, is that well, what Pogge is asking for, that well, what is perhaps, the minimum common, among the various Consequentialist theories, that any system is unjust, when it leaves social and economic human rights, unfulfilled on a massive scale, even while there is a feasible alternative, under which, these human rights would be much better realised.

Now, I would read into this, that well, when he crucially mentions that, while there is a feasible alternative. This is almost an attack against the, Consequentialist theories that go about, claiming that, there is no alternative so, that world poverty takes place, because there is no alternative. Or, any frequent Consequentialist justification, does claim, that well, there is a no alternative, and therefore, we need to take this particular step.

**(Refer Slide Time: 07:08)**



So, this claim, that there is no alternative, this is a frequent Consequentialist justification. Now, this is what, he is trying to. Because, he is engaging the Consequentialist. He is saying that, there is a possible alternative order, in which these human rights, would be much better realised. So, the classical Consequentialist justification has been that, there is no alternative. Be it Utilitarian, or any strain of Utilitarian's, that there is no alternative, therefore we stick to the decision, that we have to take.

So, this justification, that there is no alternative, does not hold in this case. Because, that is why categorically, perhaps putting forth this condition, that there is a feasible alternative, under which these human rights, would be much better realised. Is there any comment, that you would like to engage in this slide?

**(Refer Slide Time: 08:18)**

- An institutional order is human-rights violating when it foreseeably gives rise to greater insecurity in access to the objects of human rights (physical integrity, freedom of movement, adequate nutrition, etc.) than would be reasonably avoidable through an alternative feasible institutional design.
- Moral claim on institutions translate into moral claim on individuals designing and upholding them - no institutional escape!
- The seed of the problem in the evolving world economic order since the 1990s.
- Critics attacked the above usage of human rights violation vis-a-vis human rights violation like torture, war crimes etc.
- Considering the above passive/active distinction, author rechristens them as 'official disrespect for human rights, but not as human rights violations'

Now, an institutional order is human rights violating, when it forcibly gives rise, to greater insecurity, in access to the objects of human rights. Physical integrity, freedom of movement, adequate nutrition, etcetera, then would be reasonably avoidable, through an alternative feasible institutional design. So here, Pogge is trying to put out, that well, what are the consequences required, from a fairly good institutional order.

Well. It should guarantee the minimum rights, which it codifies, physical integrity, freedom of movement, adequate nutrition, etcetera. And, an institutional order that, is human rights violating? So, the author reads the current global institutional order, as human rights violating. Because, it does not bring about, these minimum human essentials, which to his understanding, is very much feasible in an alternative institutional design.

So, moral claim on institutions, translate into moral claim, on individuals designing and upholding them. No institutional escape. Now, this is a very relevant applied issue that, the author talks about is that, when we have frequently seen cases, that well, individuals throwing up their hand and claiming, that well, we cannot do anything, because it is a part of a system.

Now, the author here, is breaking that chain. He is trying to say, that well, the moment you are a part of a system, you are upholding the system. And therefore, even if there is any moral wrongdoing on part of the system, the individuals upholding them, do not get any levee for that

systems. So, the frequently given excuse, that it is a part of a system, and that the individual cannot help it, cannot do anything.

That is where, in fact, just as Socrates does in Crito, pre-empting civil disobedience, that well, when we follow, or uphold an institutional order, we also inherit the moral qualities of the institutional order. Ultimately, pegging moral responsibility on individuals, rather than on systems. Because, perhaps going ahead a convenient way of evasion, of moral responsibility comes in the invention of this entity called a, Corporation.

Which, has all legal rights of a person, but nowhere a moral responsibility to the corporation. So, that is where, this Pogge makes a very interesting, and very relevant interjection. That, when people tend to give an excuse, that it is a part of a policy, and there is nothing that can be done about it. Well. They are not absolved of moral responsibility, of making such a claim. Because, by upholding the very system, they are responsible for the moral stand of the system.

So, there is no escape in obfuscating moral agency, into institutional or organisational level. So, Pogge starts to see. He is particularly done this work, considering a period post 1990's. The 15-year period, from 1992, till date. And there, he finds the genesis of a new world economic order, evolving in the 1990's. Now, this goes on to empirically show in his book, that how this evolving world economic order, since the 1990's, is structurally flawed, and morally wrong.

That, it always brings about poverty, and achieving equality in such an institutional order, is almost impossible. So, there have been critics, who have attacked his usage of human rights violation, which he mentions as, when the institutional order, does not provide the minimum essentials, or promotes, in the first bullet when we talk about, that it forcibly gives rise to greater insecurity, in access to the objects of human rights.

So, an institutional order, is human rights violating, when it forcibly gives rise to, greater insecurity in access to the objects of human rights. So, this term of human rights violation, has again been objected to by critics. That well, this is perhaps, lowering down the definition of human rights violations. So, the critics have attacked, that well, if not being able to give rights, is human

rights violation, then how would you perhaps, term human rights violation, which are like torture and war crimes, which are perhaps more active than passive.

So, this is of course, almost a nomological clarification, that the author makes that, considering the human right violation, by not providing the minimum essentials, can be termed as passive. And therefore, he rechristens them as official disrespect for human rights, but not as human rights violation. However, that does not majorly affect the spirit of his argument. And, this is perhaps, just as a passing retort, to one of the critics.

**(Refer Slide Time: 13:46)**

**6. The causal role of the global institutional order in the reproduction of severe poverty**

- Critics allege that the incompetence, oppression & corruption prevalent in poor countries is responsible for the severe poverty, not the global institutional order.
- local factors & global factors - multiplicative, not additive - the global order multiplies the development of local inefficiencies.
- Development economics suggest change from reforming local order, author disagrees.
- Analogy: Two factories releasing toxins into river - cumulative effect exceeds simple addition.

Now, coming to the penultimate section of the article. It talks about, the causal role of global institutional order, in the reproduction of severe poverty. So, we see a structure, how a Philosopher engages, with a topic in Applied Ethics. So, he first brings about the problem, that how there can be a different situation, and how it is responsible. And now, towards the end, he is coming out to give the details of the, what exactly in the global institutional order, causes this reproduction of severe poverty, and he ends by proposing the solution.

And in fact, he has gone ahead in acting, and making a difference to the world out there, and not limiting this to an, academic intellectual intercourse. So, how he analyses, this causal role of the global institutional order, in the reproduction of severe poverty. Well. His tirade, or his disagreement, is primarily with development economists, a strain of them, who alleged that the

incompetence operation and corruption prevalent in poor countries, is responsible for the severe poverty, not the global institutional order.

So, this is the fundamental worldview difference in approach, that the author takes, compared to the prevalent antipoverty brigade today. So, the dominant worldview on eradication of poverty would like to hold, local or national incompetence operation and corruption in poor countries, as responsible for this severe poverty, and not the global institutional order, as the author accuses. To this, the author is loyal to his stand of course, and he talks about local factors and global factors.

But, he sees the relation, as not additive, but as multiplicative. So, the global order multiplies, or aggravates, the development of local inefficiencies. So, it is a factor, that we can almost look around, and relate to. Say, in Indian scenario, why is there corruption in the electoral system. Why is the ability, as we talked about earlier, the ability to spend money, crucial, in winning an election? And thereby, causing a vicious cycle, for collection of money, to win the next election.

And therefore, putting the leaders or the politicians, in a vicious cycle of corruption. So, this, according to the author, is an effect of the global system, which aggravates, the corruption at the local levels. Whereas, development economists would like to see, a failure in governance, as responsible for poverty. But, what the author would like to emphasise is that, it is the macro or the global institutional order, that the imposition of a western model of democracy in the Indian scenario.

Where, thinking still continues largely at the communitarian level, rather than at the individual level. So, having small pockets of self-governing entities, like the panchayats, what Gandhi dreamt of, versus, a massive impersonal government. So, how these macro systems, influence, or aggravate the problems of inefficiency, and corruption, and incompetence in poor countries.

In fact, it goes on to give in the examples are, Africa, and Africa, countries of Africa, would very well fit in over here. Because, we find that, how does the world order, which is in need of say, natural raw material, which is available in these nations, deal with these nations, to buy them up.



So, the moment one, the macro order recognises a ruling entity, and gives legitimacy to that ruling entity of a nation, it perhaps influences that ruling entity, to oppress, or to be corrupt, to continue having that recognition of being a ruling entity.

So, these macro factors, influence or aggravate the, inefficiencies and incompetence and corruption in, at the local levels. So, the author in a way, is giving a clean chit, to the inefficiency, and incompetency at the local level. So, the development economics suggests, a change from reforming local order. The author on the other hand, is arguing for a top-down approach, not a bottom-up approach, as the development economists would suggest.

So, he gives this analogy of, two factories releasing toxins into river. And, the cumulative effect, exceeds the simple addition. So, it is not a simple addition, when he talks about local and global factors. That, the global factors, aggravate the local inefficiencies. And therefore, the entire situation becomes, multiplicative of inefficiencies, rather than, a simple additive of inefficiencies.

**“Professor - Student conversation starts”** is there any anything, you would like to question over here. This analogy, I did not get it. Okay. This analogy, if you are familiar, if you have read in the article, it talks about two factories, which are polluting, releasing toxins into a river. And, down below, these toxins interact and bring about, much more pollution, than they would have, when caused individually. So, the effect downstream of this pollution of these two factories, is not just a simple addition of, what Factory-A and Factory-B are polluting.

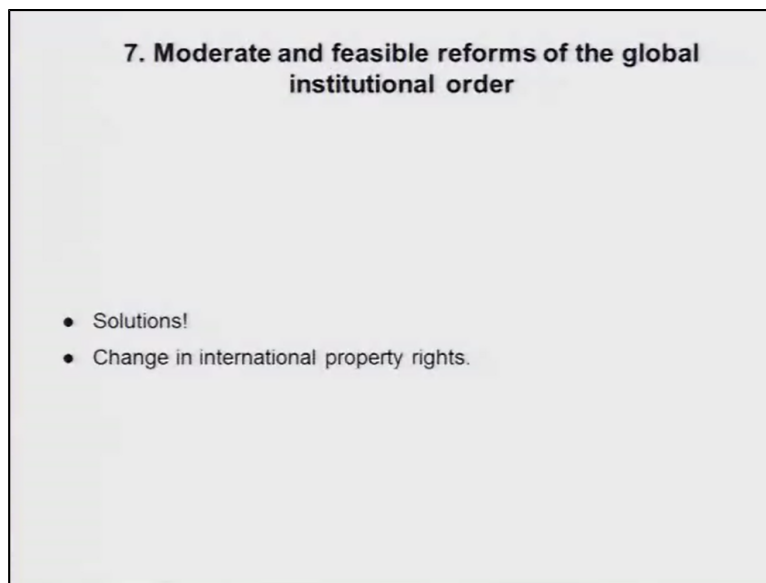
But because, they together, they cause much more harm. Okay, let me make it simpler. Say, effluence of Factory-A, kills all the plant products in the river. The pollutants of Factory-B, damages all the animal products in the river. Now, whether polluting in two different rivers, there would still be a, kind of a still rejuvenating system possible. But, if they are polluting into the same river, because the flora and the fauna interact to keep the system cleaner.

So now, if they are both polluting into the same river, it would definitely be a lethal combination, that would cause much more harm. It will almost make it a dead river, with no scope of

regeneration. So, this is an analogy, in fact he uses. Analogy is a very powerful tool of demonstration of proof, very frequently used in Indian Philosophy, and not very popular in the western tradition. Because, analogy also has its weaknesses, where the similarity between, what are compared analogically, may not be very sharp.

But here, it does take an example of an analogy, to elaborate his difference between, the local and the global factors, and how they interact with each other, to create much bigger harm. However, the bulk of the responsibility, still remains with the global factors, to the author's claim. Is that okay. Shall we proceed. **“Professor - Student conversation ends”**

**(Refer Slide Time: 21:12)**



So, here we come to the end. And, he talks about solutions. He talks about, change in international property rights. In fact, he is currently working on the foundation of a health impact fund, to re- channelise investment in pharmaceutical industry, from more affluent markets, to more necessary issues that need to be tackled, but do not generate so much of revenue. But, that is of course, the details of his empirical work.

But, this is now a classic example, of a work in Applied Ethics, where we find a Philosopher puts forth his claims, uses his philosophical progress, tackles the established world order, challenges us to think for ourselves, and not rely on the claims of the specialists. And thereof, he arrives at an alternative world order, or a world order that can be modified to eradicate, problems that we

are facing, to eradicate these problems in the time, that we are living in.

So perhaps, it is a call for individuals, for generalists, or people, to think about systems and see, that many of the follies that we face, are institutional side effects. And perhaps, the solution is not within the system. And, the system needs to be tinkered, to bring about a solution. So, this is a classic case of an active Philosopher, who is in fact, has been working in the area of Applied Ethics, and in Departments of Applied Ethics, to bring about a real change in the world.

So, this is for many of the critics, who find that well, where does the Philosophy or Theorising, connect with the world out there. This is a clear example of, where it has. So, this is an example of, how an idea can, shake up the world of ideas, and start translating itself, into the world of reality, or practicality, in the same life. Right. So, any comments, or anything about the paper, that you would like to talk about.