

In criticizing Rawls' model for global justice, Lavender puts forth three major criticisms: (1) "Rawls' model fails to adequately address the assurance problem" (pg.9), and secondly, (2) Rawls' model lacks the means necessary to deal with aggressive states" (pg. 12). If, for example, poor and developing nations play by the rules. Rawls' model fails to propose an effective international institutional mechanism to ensure that other nations, especially "aggressive nations", will honor their treaty obligations as well as respecting the human rights of the peoples of poor and developing nations, and will seek to promote fair outcomes for rich and poor nations like through international negotiations, especially as they pertain to trade and economic practices. Finally, (3) Rawls' model is not sufficiently sensitive to global socio-economic inequalities and "leaves open the possibility of an extremely unbalanced distribution of power" that will "allow inequalities to rise"(pg. 8). I essentially agree with all three criticisms Lavender makes regarding Rawls' model for global justice and my comment will primarily reinforce and amplify these criticisms, drawing on criticisms of Rawls model advanced by Thomas Pogge.

Why is Rawls willing to tolerate the global inequality between rich and poor nations and the abject poverty that so many peoples of poor, undeveloped countries suffer from? To answer this question we should ask of Rawls a "Rousseau-like" question regarding the origins of global inequality and the poverty of third world peoples. In essence, Rawls blames poor nations themselves for their own poverty. More specifically:

"The great social evils in poorer societies are likely to be oppressive governments and corrupt elites...[as well as] the religious and philosophical traditions that underlie its institutions."

What, however, Rawls' overlooks concerning the origins of global inequality and poverty, per Thomas Pogge's criticism, is that "poverty breeds corruptibility" and if elites are corrupt and oppressive of their own people, it's because foreign governments and multinational corporations of advanced industrialized nations have sought to corrupt the ruling elites of poorer societies and provide them with the tools for oppressing their own people. Pogge has a very different answer to our Rousseau-like question regarding the origins of global inequality and the poverty of the

peoples of poor and developing countries. As Pogge sees it:

“In a world with large international inequalities, the domestic institutions of the poorer societies are vulnerable to being corrupted by powerful political and economic interests abroad. This is something we see all around us: politicians and business people from the rich nations self-servingly manipulating and interfering with the internal political, judicial, and economic processes of third-world societies.” Rawls fails to see how rich and powerful developing nations (or the ruling elites of these nations) have used their superior power and advantages to impose an unjust global institutional order that perpetuates global inequalities that benefit these ruling elites and the peoples of advanced industrialized nations while harming the peoples of poor and developing nations by fostering trade practices and international treaties that serve to exploit them, deprive them of use of their own country’s land for growing staples, imposing sweat shop working condition in which they toil under, and supporting their corrupt leaders while they oppress and violate their human rights.

In the international arena, rich and poor nations do not meet as equals at the negotiating table. Rich nations have a superior and unfair advantage vis. a vis. poor and developing nation. Poor and developing nations may have the natural resources, cheap labor, and domestic markets that rich industrialized nations want, but they don’t have the superior scientific and technical know-how, abundance of investment capital and organizational capabilities, wealthy consumers and lucrative home markets, and military power that are to the advantage of rich, industrialized nation in the pursuit of their interests.

Rawls should have acknowledged that great differences in wealth equate to great difference in bargaining power. The ruling elites of rich nations and multinational corporations can use their superior position and bargaining power to shape the rules of international institutions and trade practices to their advantage while imposing a coercive, exploitative and unjust order on the peoples of poor and developing countries. U.S. trade deals with China, for example, allows Apple Inc. to makes huge profits from I-Phones manufactured by Chinese workers who work eleven hour shifts, six days a week for \$1.50 per hour in hazardous working conditions. A second reason why Rawls is willing to tolerate global inequality and third world poverty is that he does not think it’s feasible to extend the egalitarian principles of his domestic

model of justice – i.e. his difference principle for regulating inequalities to benefit the worst off members of society and his fair equality of opportunity principle – to his global model of justice because hierarchical societies, especially those with state religions, would reject these principles. But if the point of his original position is to create just principles that “decent people” in the global order would choose, why shouldn’t “decent people” apply his difference principle to global justice and condemn unjust and harmful socio-economic inequalities and human rights violations rooted in the traditional religious, ethnic and sexist prejudices that oppress and prevent the peoples in poor and developing countries from advancing to a higher stage of socio-economic development?

Finally, Rawls seems to think that gross socio-economic inequalities in the global world do not really matter as long as societies respect human rights. However, it is a very thin list of human rights that Rawls’ enumerates and his shortened list is too much of an unacceptable accommodation by him to hierarchical societies to ignore the *full* list of human rights of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, especially if the point of a global model for justice is to champion human rights as the moral standard for guiding the conduct and relationships of the international community of nations.

This brings us to the last criticism Lavender has regarding Rawls – i.e. his model is unable to deal with aggressive states. ‘Aggressive states,’ as Lavender’s paper suggest, are states that give lip-service to human rights and the equality of other nations but who are ruthless in the pursuit of the interests of their people (or interests of the ruling elite of their societies) and do not feel obliged to honor the standards of conduct as prescribed by Rawls’ Law of Peoples because they can impose their will on weaker nations without fear of repercussion due to the lack of an effective world government or institutional mechanism to rein them in and protect others from their predations. Rawls refers to “outlaw states” in his model as the type of aggressive and expansionist states typified by the Nazi regime and the 16th and 17th century empire-building nations and colonial powers of Spain, France and the Hapsburgs. History is rich in examples of powerful and aggressive states that have sought to build empires through some variant of an imperialist foreign policy. Military conquest and colonization was the preferred method of the

Spanish conquistadors. But empires can be achieved using other methods of imperialism. Economically powerful nations can gain control of the economic development of other weaker and undeveloped nations through “free trade” and financial loans. Affluent nations also might gain leverage by means of cultural imperialism – i.e. imposing its culture and lifestyle and forms of entertainment on poorer and underdeveloped nations. My question for Lavender: would you include the United States as an example of an “aggressive state?”