

Nickolas Diaz

Critical Thinking

Mr. Kobayashi

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Lifeboat Ethics: Case of Helping the Poor

Garrett Hardin, brings into light a worldwide dilemma in the paper, as he explains that many reasons poor countries can't be helped by rich countries. He puts into perspective the harsh truth of why and how third-world countries should be helped to reduce the amount of death and environmental damage in the future. This essay will showcase the summary of the article, some criticisms, and some comments on the essay addressed.

To summarize the article, the author's thesis is that rich countries do not have an obligation to help poor countries as they will jeopardize their resources. The first premise Garrett argues is that wealthy nations do not have enough capacity to take in everyone in third world countries. The author explains this dilemma with a lifeboat, as the rich nations are in the lifeboat with limited capacity and the poor are in the water. There are only three options. One is to take in everyone who is struggling and overload the boat thus sinking, fill in the boat's capacity and struggle in the next few years and potentially dive under, and lastly is to fence everyone off. The second premise Garrett writes about is that sharing wealth with poorer countries is detrimental for both parties. For example, the World Food Bank is meant to deposit food and disperse it to anyone in an emergency. However, the issue is that the rich countries pooled their resources together and poor countries would completely deplete them for their selfish gains. The third premise is that the ratio of poor to rich is already too much and is increasing rapidly. There are around two-thirds of poor countries to rich. This already creates a big problem if all of the rich

countries help the poor. As we help the amount of poor people would increase and make the problem even worse. In addition the poor are very bad for the environment as they cause a lot of pollution and environmental damage. To sum it all up, helping the poor is not optimal as rich countries cannot help the poor, poor countries can take advantage of the rich countries' help and lastly helping the poor would increase their population thus adding to the problem.

The first criticism is that the lifeboat analogy is not completely correct. It is missing the fact of how the rich countries can steal resources from poorer countries, and how some leaders of these countries can destroy their own countries, for example, communism with Russia and Cuba, hyperinflation from Venezuela and bad dictatorship from North Korea. The lifeboat analogy is way more complicated than all rich countries wanting to help poor countries but instead, it is like a dog chasing its tail, and not achieving anything. There is also no complete divide between the rich and the poor. There are always going to be poor people in every rich country and there are countries that are between rich and poor. The second criticism is that the author seems to believe that the growth rate in poorer countries is constant and will not go down. Garrett does not foresee this because the circumstances of each country can affect the birth rate for example death, and poverty can increase the birth rate as it puts the people in more of a survival mode and less education means that people get married earlier than normal. If the poorer countries had less death and poverty then people would get married earlier and have more children. Which is the exact opposite of what the author foresaw. The third criticism is that providing technology and infrastructure to poor countries will be a disaster as they will grow exponentially and overpopulate the earth. Despite the growth of poor countries, their population will not exceed the population cap. A poor country without infrastructure will produce an enormous amount of waste and pollution. In contrast, if they had better infrastructure, they would be richer and their

population cap would be higher. Rather than throwing away old food, computers, cars, and materials, it may be possible to donate them to the poor like the World Food Organization does. By reusing them, you can help the environment while helping to solve poverty as well.

The first take on the issue is that the case for helping or not helping the poor is way more complicated than just one paper. The issue needs a good look from some of the smartest people on earth and it needs to be backed up with lots and lots of data and lots of trial and error data from over the years. A world leadership or worldwide objective needs to also be implemented, which has the power to convince every country to chip in on the issue. Without all of these things happening, the problem of poverty will never be solved. The second take on the issue is that the paper is not very credible. First of all the paper was published in 1974 which is 50 years before the year 2024. The world has changed a lot in 50 years and it should be considered outdated. Secondly, the author did not cite his sources and it would be hard to fact-check his work. The paper has no coauthors, which means that there is a chance that no one saw his work before he published it. However, he is very credible himself as he has a PhD in microbiology and is a renowned author on this type of issue. The third take on the issue is that he does a good job showing the reality that when it comes to helping the poor, as it is not all just one simple solution and why and how he makes us think critically about the psychology of it all.

To conclude Garrett argues that rich countries do not have an obligation to help poorer countries because if wealthy countries helped they would sink themselves, and providing for poorer countries would increase the problem as poorer countries would grow in population more. Lastly, poorer countries would take advantage of rich nations' aid. A criticism against the paper is that the lifeboat analogy is not completely up to reality and that the growth rate for poorer countries is constant and will not go down over time with wealth. Aiding technology and

infrastructure will help reduce population and pollution. A take on the issue is that the case for helping the poor is more complicated than a yes or a no, and that the paper is not very credible by itself. Lastly he shows the criticality of the issue.