

Rich and poor vs lifeboat ethics essay sample



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Introduction

The gap between the rich and the poor in the world has continued to increase with no solution at sight. In rich and poor nations, the difference between the rich and the poor is still widening despite various efforts aimed at reducing the gap. The wealth nations continue to be rich while the poor nations continue to be poor. This has been brought by the inequitable distribution of resources in the world and lack of world policies that would lead to equitable distribution of resources. This has been due to lack of a justifiable distribution network that would give the rich and the poor equal rights in access of resources. In this is the rule of justice that is likely to determine how we achieve equity in distribution of resources which further accounts for the richness and poverty.

Do we have the right to be rich or poor?

Peter Singer provided an important insight about the right for one to be rich or poor. Singer explores different factors and theory, which relate to the state of poverty and richness. He argues on how the rich considers it their right to be rich while the poor looks upon the rich to assist them from poverty. In the context of social justice, we fail to achieve this equity based on its formulation and the way it addresses the needs of the poor and the rich.

Inequality becomes a justifiable state of life in the society based on the resource distribution network. Singer looks at the Rawls principle of maximum rule which seeks to maximize the minimum level of welfare that exists in the society. This is a great contrast to the principle that guarantees

maximum liberty for all. Since the concern is on economic redistribution, the Singer looks at Rawls maximum principle in this context of resources in the society. (Singer, 1975)

The principle is equal to major inequality in the society. Taking an example of taxation in the society, those who are highly taxed would be justifiable to keep more as compared to those who work less. This means that there are those in the society who would be allowed to keep more even when others have less. This makes the worse-off to be worse than before and the rich to be richer than before.

But what would happen when we come to the access of basic needs like food and medical care in the society? In light of maximum principle, the poor will be obliged to pay for the medical services that they receive. In this case they will be paying for the medical services at the same price with those who are rich. The bedrock of inequality in the society is the weakness in the redistribution law.

Garret Hardin provides us with another outlook at the issue of the poor and the rich in the society. He takes the example of lifeboat ethics to justify the case against helping the poor. According to Garrett, environmentalists persuade countries, industries and people in general to take measures to protect the environment. They take the earth as a spaceship which carries us all. It is like a boat that ferries people over the ocean. In this case it is assumed that the earth belongs to us all. But does every one of us have an equal share of resources in the world? (Hardin, 1974)

According to Garret, the rich nations are taken as a spaceship in which there are other poor people pleading to be admitted in the boat. Garret looks at the capacity of the wealth nations and those who are seeking to be admitted to share the wealth of the nation. If the rich nation is taken as a lifeboat that has a capacity of 50 people with an excess capacity of 10 people, then it will have reached its maximum capacity by the time it admits the 10 people. If there are 50 others who are swimming in the water outside and begging for admission or for handouts, we will have to make a decision on the ones who we are going to admit. We may decide to admit only 10 people and leave the rest drowning or we decide to admit all people, and the boat will drown. This will be equal to a great justice but on the other hand a great tragedy since we will lose all the 150 people. This is just a moral issue regarding the poor and the rich. Does the rich nations have the right to admit immigrants from the poor nations?

This brings us to our original argument of the rights of the poor and the rich. Does the rich nations have the right to keep away immigrants from the poor nation? Does the poor nations have the right to be admitted to the rich nation? This remains to be a moral issue.

The utilitarian view

There are several multifaceted arguments that have been used in light of the arguments on the state of being poor or rich. According to the utilitarian theory the price of justice constitute of rules that works for the common good of all people. Based on the principles of utility, it postulate for the need to have a distribution system that will meet the need of all people in

the society. For example, if we take from the rich and give to the poor, we will be doing so not because the poor are entitled to some of what has been acquired by the rich, but because the rich will benefit more from the redistribution than the rich will suffer if it is taken from them.

If taken literally this may be seen as a way of confiscating from the rich and giving to the poor which again may be against moral justice. According to the utilitarian view, the principle of justice redistribution accounts for the need to have a system of social equity in which the rich will be helping the poor to meet their need. This is the view of a society which shows a sense of a man build man society as opposed to a man eat man society. This is a tendency to regard men as a means to the other man welfare.

Against the Rawls principle of maximum, utilitarianism requires us to improve the living conditions of those who are poor in the society since poverty is not their own fault. If we are all given the choice of being poor or rich, all of us would choose to be rich. No one would opt to be poor. Poverty is therefore caused by faulty resource redistribution system. No one has the right to be rich or poor. The faulty world trade system has been held responsible for increasing gap between the rich and poor nations in the world. While the rich nations strive to remain rich, the poor nations are doing their best to move out of poverty.

Arguing against Garret case against the poor, we would say that the world belongs to all of us. If we live on the same resources, we have the duty to protect the resources. We will not achieve equal distribution of resources only when we admit those outside the boat to the boat but we can hand out

life savers to them. In th utilitarian view, the decision that we make should be able to give justice to all people in access of resources.

Conclusion

Given option to be rich or poor, we would all choose to be rich. No one can choose to be poor. All of us are entitled to share of the wealth in the world and state of inequality is brought about by unjustifiable resource redistribution system. In utilitarianism view, the social justice system should help us to achieve equity in the distribution of resource. Resource distribution system must be aimed at achieving equity in the distribution system and should be good for all people in the society.

References

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