

Poverty: a Historical Context

During prehistoric times, at the start of human history, everyone was more or less equal; that is to say, hungry. The hunter-gatherer lifestyle had a few advantages, it took relatively little labor to gather enough food, enough calories to live, and thus you had a lot of free time to do what you pleased, but it was not a lifestyle that was secure. The threat of death was imminent; you could die if there was a sudden change in climate, or if there was an animal flue that kills off your livestock. The ability to plan for and build in a response to those kinds of changes in prehistoric times was impossible.

In the period of the early civilizations, everything is poor except for the one or two palaces the kings or chiefs lived. Virtually everybody in the world was poor, if you define poverty as meaning the lack of reliable access to basic needs, whether its food or water or health technology. These things eluded 90% of the world's population, and the average life expectancy 35 years. Virtually every community, even the most advanced, were subject to repeated famine.

Plutus is an ancient Greek comedy written by the playwright Aristophanes, first produced in 408 BC. A political satire on contemporary Athens, it features the personified god of wealth Plutus, who turns out to be a blind beggar. Because Plutus is blind, the wealth of the world is not distributed to the virtuous, but it is distributed at random; that is why you have rich and poor. It is believed that if Plutus's vision is restored, the wealth would go to those who deserve it. The play introduces the goddess Poverty who argues that it is better to have rich and poor by claiming that without poverty there would be no slaves (as every slave would buy his freedom) and no fine goods or luxury foods (as nobody would work if everyone were rich). In the play Plutus's vision is restored the world is thrown into economic and social upheaval, with claims of unfairness by the once rich. This is more or less the first time there is any sort of debate or discussion about poverty in the historical records.

The play *Plutus* illustrates the dominant worldview that poverty was the way things worked. Essentially poverty is what makes the rich rich, poverty is located at the center of operation, as the engine of the system. Poverty is seen as something natural, something inevitable.

During the middle ages, from about the 5th to 15th centuries, most of the world's population existed in some sort of kingdom or empire, with the vast majority living in poverty. In areas such as Cairo there were large numbers of people who slept outdoors, in tents or in ditches. All of the world's major religions responded to this poverty, with the offer of charity. Nobody thought you could abolish poverty, poverty was a fact of life, but charity was seen as a good deed. The wealthier members of the church would give alms to the poor; this is a way of in a sense

making up for their own sins and bad deeds. “A single act of charity closes 70 gates of evil” Koranic verse. “The wise one rejoicing in charity thereby becomes happy in the world beyond” Confucius. Religions offered great afterlife rewards to the faithful poor. For most of the governments of the world, the poor were not their problem.

A vagrant or a vagabond is a person, often in poverty, who wanders from place to place without a home or regular employment or income. The first major vagrancy law was passed in 1349 to increase the workforce following the Black Death by making "idleness" (unemployment) an offense. By the 1500s the statutes were mainly used as a means of controlling criminals. In the 16th and 17th century in England, a vagrant was a person who could work, but preferred not to (or could not find employment, so took to the road in order to do so), or one who begs for a living. Vagrancy was illegal, punishable by branding, whipping, conscription into the military, or at times penal transportation to penal colonies.

One notable exception of an early government helping to relieve poverty was the last imperial dynasty in China, the Qing Dynasty, which lasted from 1644 to 1911. Kangxi, the emperor of the Qing Dynasty (reigned, 1662–1722), significantly expanded upon a system of state granaries, tax relief, and civilian stocks which every citizen was entitled to a portion of. These state sponsored granaries permitted a means for the empire to forestall or curtail the impact of food crises, potentially saving millions of lives in times of famine. Most other governments offered no such safety net for the poor.

Poverty has two earlier historic phases. During the first and longest period, most people lived off the land. In the second phase, big cities took shape, and these produced unprecedented inequalities and the problem of relative poverty as rich and poor people lived side by side. The industrial revolution was a mass transition from farming agricultural life to new manufacturing processes in factories; it featured mass urbanization as people moved from rural areas in to cities to work.

In the first decades of the revolution, the working conditions were very bad, and there wasn't much increase in standards of living of those in the industrial labor force. These were what the English poet William Blake called the “satanic mills”, the workers worked in dangerous and unhealthy conditions, for very long hours, there was mass child labor; this was pretty horrible scene.

In England and Wales there were places called workhouses, colloquially known as spikes, where those unable to support themselves were offered accommodation and employment. Life in a workhouse was harsh, to deter the able-bodied poor and to ensure that only the truly destitute would apply; they basically amounted to slave camps. This is where Oliver Twist asks “Please sir, may I have more?” in the food line, in Charles Dickens famous novel.

The industrial revolution featured a new kind of insecurity for most of the work force; many people had to move across the country for a specialized job in a city, often to operate some new form of technology that had been invented. But this was a period of rapid innovation, and often the machine you were using would cease to be the best and would become obsolete, in which case you were out of a job. In addition to having no job security, the workers of the early industrial revolution barely made enough money to survive, and they certainly did not have enough money to save for the future. This meant that whenever you were sick or injured, or became too old to work, you were essentially destitute.

While the state run workhouse or poorhouses started out punitive, intending to punish those able bodied people into working, it soon became apparent that this was not what was happening. More and more elderly and women and children began staying in them, even if it was against workhouse policy. In some areas these workhouses offered free medical care and education to the young, these were things not available to the general population. The elderly, infirm, and sick would increasingly use the workhouses as refuges from absolute poverty of the street. The poor were becoming an issue the state would soon have to deal with.

During the middle 19th century, around the time of authors and social critics like Charles Dickens, there was a great public outcry over the condition of the poor, and this forced the governments of the world to respond. What began to change was a real rise in incomes, even for the poorest working class. With this increased overall affluence governments began building sewers and installing water pipes; there was new levels of sanitation and an increase in both working and living conditions for many. While the early conditions of the industrial revolution were pretty terrible, the end result has set the world on a course of huge reductions of extreme poverty. In the year 1800, about 90% of the world's population was living in extreme poverty, 200 years later the number is about 15%. This is human progress, but can we do more?

By the end of the 19th century there was already a sustained movement out of poverty for those parts of the world that were industrializing, but in those parts of the world that were pre-industrial, there was a still massive amount of extreme poverty.

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Karl Marx believed poverty was the result of capitalist system organized for profit main motive to maximize profit ,

World wars come and go greate depression
Suburbs motorcars friends vaccum tvs
Science and technology agriculturela productivy
Same things now in india china latin America
Fewer people are startvign still a massive underclass erving the rich

The rest of the world, inequality

Europe the center of accumulation of wealth and power and the ret of the world
progressilvy being submitted o its rule
The slave trade devisetaed Africa
Lintense poverty lack fo infrastructure massive disease burden
The whole of the ureopea impeail project tha tin econimc terms create th poor the
origin of the nito of the third world
“poverty is the worst form of violence”
1876 indian famine, people were starving still exporting grain huge mount so food
shipped out of india that could have fed
birth of united nations
issues such as end of colonialism relative wealth of nations discussed within un
“more than half the people in the worldare living in conditons approaching misery
there poverty is a handicap and threat most to them and to more porspoer areas for

the first time in history humanity possesses the knowledge and skills to relieve the suffering of these people”
rich country poor country
50 60w international efforts provided seeds medicine green revolution took hundreds of millions out of risk of starvation turned india from a country without enough food to a country that exports
great leap forward , mao concerned with poverty of nation as whole
the idea was we don't need foreign aid we don't need capital investment, china has lots of people if all the people were put to work on these large scale projects we could be as productive
in order to make economic productivity in steel he said everybody has own steel furnace in back yard, strict order to produce a certain amount of steel
melt down pots and pans non usable most of it
nothing to eat
great leap forward famine
cataclysmic event
30 million death over three years
Ghana aid period in
Enormous amounts of aid
Help build factories
Lend millions of dollars pay back at huge rate of interest
The belief was if we just give more resources undertake right projects build big dams trickle down economic would work economy would grow benefits would go to everybody
Africa and much of the developing world accumulated debts money that should have been grants when these countries couldn't repay put through squeeze by IMF and world bank
Debt prevented Ghana from growing for next 20 years
Slums while skyscrapers

Refugees sprint across highways packed with new cars
The most important way of getting out of poverty is making sure everyone can earn their way out of poverty one way or another

Brazil had widening inequality
First began investing heavily in education, provide incentives to ensure parents send children to school
China over the last 30 years has shown it is possible to make major dents in poverty
Several hundred million people have moved out of poverty in china

Geographic /social mobility is welcome even by very poor an opportunity to better their circumstance

An important number of people have been lifted out of poverty in china, you need to also take into account that they have had to migrate from traditional communities in

order to work in inhuman condition in factories in china working in suchs ocnditons is not somehtin anyone in there right mind would call getting richer

Glboaliation itself idnt a bad things , tis a matter of control the sytem we have now is deisigned by the rich for the rich

Capital an flow everywhere it can move about freel and be intested all over but labor cant do that a poor indisna ahirdresswho wants ot worki n Germany or ameerca will not be able to cometo dayw we have a begun a enw chapet int eh history of oevet because all the powevety today is toataly aboidale , the pooerer half of humanitu earns less than 3% of the global household income , that in iteald shows that povety could be eliminated beacsue the world could be redisigne dto in sucha way that the pooer have would receive roe say 55 that would already significantly impreove the situation and atleast get rid of extreme poverty

The enrei caputl outflow from poor coutnires tis estieamted at about one trillion us dolalrs , that is 8-10 times the enire official foreng aid thee ountires recieve A reforem of this system ould do ore to eradicate poverty tga all the foregn aid these countire receive. Thngs have to be changed at the level of internation agreements negotied in watigont and genevea. But the people who want and need those chages most, have no way of going to these cities and influcing the levers of power

We don't know which ay its going to go will the world beome more divided will limat echagne ridsing world population rising tnetiosn rising inewalitu acutally create dgrowing underaclass in the rich coutnres that begins to mirror the undrclasl in the porr coutnires

There was an idea called tirckle down economiscs if you could get the econoy to gor eveyron would benefit "a rising tide lifts all boats"

That's nosnses its not true

Remarkebl eincreas in inequilty not stagnation

Very marked declines at people in the bottom

The rich et richer the poor get poorer

When that become a widsperad percept ion that oculd gahacesever conseuences go economic and political stablitiy

In the United States the period between the Civil War and WW I saw tremendous industrial and commercial expansion. Americans have long had faith in the idea of progress, and many people viewed this economic growth as evidence of the superiority of the American system.

But while increased production did improve the general standard of living, industrialization concentrated wealth and power in the hands of a few captains of industry. For the thousands of Americans who worked in the new factories and mines, however, this economic revolution meant long hours, low wages, and dangerous working conditions as economic growth increasingly touched every aspect of American society. It created both new opportunities and new social problems.

poverty fact of life poverty consequences of lunder
1743 famine grain relief

merged with a variety of other issues: universal suffrage, child labour, female labour, safety conditions in factories and mines, sanitary conditions in the towns, the newspaper tax, the corn laws, the currency, national debt, temperance, taxation, education, emigration, machinery, private property, even the private family.

What gave the question of poverty its urgency was not, as Engels thought, the fear of social revolution, of hordes of 'dangerous classes' storming the citadels of property and power, but a profound sense of moral and social disarray. However poverty was viewed – as an inexorable fact of physical and human nature, as an unfortunate by-product of a particular law or institution, or as the fatal flaw of the entire system – it was seen as primarily, fundamentally, a moral problem. It was a moral problem for the poor and for society – for the poor as responsible moral agents, and for society as a legitimate moral order.

Dickens

The world is richer than ever but seems to be more poor people

Poverty isn't solved by growth