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An individual's duty to the poor: a moral justification for patriotic bias

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ABSTRACT

The disparity in wealth – within domestic society as well as across countries – requires an individual to morally justify the priority ranking of his or her duties of justice. This is on the basis that an individual's resources are finite and to the extent that justice in respect of one group of poor people is prioritised, it is done so at the expense of another. I attempt to resolve the moral dilemma by arguing – with reference to Kantian moral principles, particularly as interpreted by Richard Miller – that an individual's patriotic bias is justified. In support of this view, I argue that considerations of justice require that the local rich respond to the demands of reciprocity within their own society. Coercion of the poor for the sake of perpetuating a "well ordered" civil state, in which the rich are able to amass greater wealth, requires an individual to prioritise duties of justice to compatriots.