Trends. Mother Teresa and the War on Poverty

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As with approaches to violence (A Moral Dilemma for the Political Psychologist: Decreasing Criminal Violence as Symptom Substitution or Getting at the Real Problem below), there are two main approaches to combating poverty. One is trying to eradicate the factors leading to poverty, the other improving somehow the lives of the poor.

Mother Teresa staked out an uncompromising position. She often stated that she was not interested in the causes of poverty and—if they became incontrovertibly known—in advocating for their eradication. Instead she stated that she viewed poverty as beautiful and dedicated her life to ministering to the poor. The same position has been taken by her successor as leader of the Missionaries of Charity, Sister Nirmala, who has stated that she will continue to help the poor "without wanting to know the causes of poverty." She has stated "We want the poor to see poverty in the right way—to accept it and believe that the Lord will provide."