

Globality, Unequal Development, and Ethics of Duty

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INTRODUCTION

UNEQUAL DEVELOPMENT AND ETHICS OF DUTY IN AN AGE OF GLOBALITY

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The conception of development turned to an international application with Harry Truman's 1949 inaugural Four Points Speech presented in the shadow of war, when freedom, human rights, and democratic values seemed to be threatened by the Cold War. At the same time, a need for recovery of the world economy required investment in the economic growth of the world's underdeveloped countries because this growth could strengthen international cooperation and disseminate democratic values as the means to a peaceful international life. In the fourth point, Truman acknowledged the need to make the benefits of scientific advancements and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas (David Ekbladh, 2010, p. 77). The term underdevelopment was coined to reflect the condition of life of countries that were economically backward, and hence were susceptible to turbulence and by which a radical/communist standpoint against the Western World. This plan of action which was associated with Cold War policies, rapidly turned into a moral discourse occasioned at helping poor societies in their economic growth. The morality to help that quickly turned into a predominant discourse in international development theory and practice, and is still mostly appealing in the relationship of the global north and global south, has amounted to an account of moral responsibility that, since its inception, has justified interventionist policies in the developing countries. Implicit in this account of moral duty is the managerialist nature of aid programs that originates from a belief in the

intellectual superiority of the west in dealing with and managing economic stagnation in the underdeveloped countries.

By leading underdeveloped societies in their processes of economic growth, the western-led development programs were seen as not only beneficial for those societies, but also helpful in establishing peaceful international life. The reason for this claim is simply that the Post-Second World War environment illustrated the low condition of life in underdeveloped areas, which could be a fertile terrain for radical uprising against the west. “More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery...Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas” (p. 77). In fact, given the escalating ideological and political rivalry between the West and the Communist bloc, it appeared as though aid programs directed towards vulnerable countries must complete the containment project. Though Truman did not frankly draw on the threat of communism, this concern is evident in his emphasis on assisting the *free peoples* of the world in their attempts for development. In order to assist the *free peoples* there “must be a worldwide effort for the achievement of peace, plenty, and freedom” (p. 77). To put it another way, responsibility to help the underdeveloped countries in their economic growth was the central element in the reconstruction of a peaceful and prosperous international life.

Being critical, one could draw a link between Truman’s fourth point for economic growth of the underdeveloped countries and the turbulent circumstances of the Post-Second World War. At first sight, this proposal for economic growth was a deeply moral obligation toward the prosperity of underdeveloped peoples. This claim can be seen in Truman’s speech: “I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life” (p. 77). Nevertheless, the proposal reflects a belief in the dependency of the underdeveloped on the developed countries, on the one hand, and the emergence of a hegemonic morality to help, on the other. Indeed, the proposal signalled the division of the world into the advanced countries having been able to prosper in their own right, and the failed societies deeply behind the process of modernization, and consequently are living in conditions approaching misery. Indeed, a certain belief in the intellectual superiority of the developed societies over the underdeveloped countries was instilled in the life-world mind-set. In this construction, humanity (the west) feels a responsibility to share the knowledge and the skill to relieve the suffering of the people of failed societies. Meanwhile, people of economically backward countries, who

directly observe the advancement of the developed societies, believe that moving beyond miseries is conditioned to the direction and assistance of the benevolent advanced societies of the west. This dependency created a hegemonic discourse that gets the accomplishment of intellectual superiority from helping those who are in need.

The US asserted its hegemony by means of a generous proposal that claimed to be beyond the ideological divide between capitalism and Communism.... *The proposed solution was genuinely hegemonic, because it appeared to be not only the best but the only possible one.* (Gilbert Rist, 2008, p. 76).

Understanding economic backwardness as underdevelopment, and the *moral impossibility* of being indifferent about it, created a moral outlook that reduced the meaning of a good development to the level of the materialist satisfaction portrayed from the western perspective. In a like manner, this justified the interventionism of the developed in the internal affairs of underdeveloped countries on the ground that the moral duty to eliminate the causes of misery of poor people is undeniable. The only incumbent responsibility regarding economic backwardness was conceived in terms of voluntary help rather than an obligation to do justice to the structural causes of backwardness. To illustrate, *morality to help* rendered the necessity of the rectification of what was taken from the former colonies to be ignored. Certainly, the elements of ideological rivalry between the realm of freedom (the West) and its authoritarian antagonist (Communism), gave further compelling acknowledgment of the responsibility to help. Given the fact that the conceptions of economic progress, prosperity, and happiness take their strengths from the normatively powerful demand for freedom, the presented moral outlook to help became a highly convincing view for both advanced and underdeveloped countries.

Eventually, a ruined Europe could also restore its economic and political life through the assistance of the Marshall Plan, and became the main partner with the United States in the initiation of aid programs, technological assistance, and foreign investment in the developing countries. Once again Europe, in a neat harmony with the United States, would have assurance that the former colonies remain in the sphere of influence of the west as opposed to the influence of communism. This assurance required Europe's affirmative answer to Truman's call for partnership in dealing with the underdeveloped countries, helping them to be able to direct their course of life from the inherited colonial

backwardness toward economic growth. Growth would not only be conducive to political stability in the restless Post-Second World War atmosphere, and could create a safe environment of collaboration between the underdeveloped countries with the western liberal democracies, it could also have the potential to share the *white burden*. Undoubtedly, in a time of political anxiety fuelled by the fear of the influence of communism in the vulnerable political condition of the newly independent countries, the importance of development was a further help in fuelling the legitimacy of the moral outlook at the centre of political plans.

Morality to help could also get strengths from the post Second World War international normative order. In a move toward a *humane internationalism*, the United Nations Charter has already appealed to the reaffirmation of faith “to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples” (the UN Charter, preamble). This affirmation by the members of the international community signified an urgent need to address effectively the existing unequal development, which itself was to a great degree caused by the previous international system. However, the new aspiration to heal underdevelopment disregarded the root causes of the problem, and consequently, it did not offer justice for it. For this reason, the moral outlook required dealing with underdevelopment through a concentration on the domestic causes. This *ahistorical* view established a belief in the moral responsibility of the advanced societies to assist underdevelopment countries with their economic progress. In other words, this favoured that idea that a more benign internationalism was required for caring of the disadvantaged. However, this moral care was presented in terms of sympathy with others without an empathy that required justice. However, because of this need, and in order to meet the requirements of the morality to help in the new era of normative internationalism, moral sentiments must be transferred to the international life and advanced societies and ought to be catalysts in achieving the goals of the morality i.e., prosperity for all.

To put the emergence of morality to help in a different way, and delving deeper into the complexity of the Post-Second World War context, it must be noted that such morality was occasioned by some factors deriving from the requirements and urgency of that context. To simply address those factors the following must be modified. The first factor was the calculation of benefits that helping the underdeveloped countries could bring to the donor countries. The profound interdependence in the structure of the world was the second factor. This interdependency required a well-established cooperative scheme to promote mutual understanding on how

to address international issues, and as fruits of which how to strengthen and secure international justice. The third factor, which emerges from the previous one, was an appeal to a *humane* face of internationalism favouring the betterment of the condition of life in underdeveloped countries. And, the fourth was conceived as a programmatic plan of action, sketching an indivisible union between the social and economic progress for all in the world and a peaceful life. “If truth be told, the post Second World War normative thoughts affirmed a re-articulated version of the ‘invisible hand’ that licensed morality to help the underdeveloped nations as a way of guaranteeing international common good” (Mahmoud Masaeli, 2016).

While the alluring account of responsibility to help extended a high level of legitimacy and acknowledgment in the Second Post-World War era, it was called under severe criticisms due to the fact that this account of morality aims at helping economic progress of the underdeveloped countries, hence depicts a distorted meaning of development. Development is a multidimensional conception that must involve “the conditions for the realization of human personality” (Seers, 1972). It would thus be simplistic to ignore the socio-political circumstances that generated underdevelopment and/or reduced the meaning of a single indicator in addressing the condition of life of the underdeveloped societies. Nor is it consistent to disregard the historical conditions, notably colonial causes of underdevelopment. “Development is inevitably a normative concept, almost a synonym for improvement” (1972). Thus, it would not be a solid idea to suppose a binary opposition between development and underdevelopment, and favour economic growth as the sole panacea for underdevelopment. This reductionism, even in the most optimistic sense, does not give justice to both the causes of underdevelopment and the reality of the condition of life in non-advanced societies. Economic progress measured by GDP is a significant measure of development potential, but alone, “is it an inappropriate indicator of development [?]” (1972) More importantly, economic progress could have a subsidiary value for human wellbeing because, as Amartya Sen puts it, development depends on people’s capability to act, and to be, in the way they desire (Amartya Sen, 1999).

Failure of the development programs in addressing the condition of underdevelopment, and critical doubts cast on the rightfulness of the *morality to help* as an appropriate evaluative outlook for development, accounted for the emergence of new ethical accounts in international development. Indeed, the 1960’s were rife with a passion for modernization of social institutions for economic growth of the

underdeveloped countries (Walt Rostow, 1960), ethical voices for a human economy and a positive view of development, resonated around the world. It was not convincing to confer absolute credit to Rostow's argument that it is only through a shift away from a hypothetical status called "traditional societies" toward modernization, production, and mass consumption, that primitive societies could smoothly turn into a developed state. Demonstrating the critical significance of a good conception of development, through which a humanist view of economics could emerge, had already been illustrated by the harbingers of ethics in development. In *The Discovery of the Common Good*, Louis-Joseph Lebret had already implored that "development is the task of forging new values and new civilizations in settings" (Louis-Joseph Lebret, 1947). These values are in accordance with humanitarian perspectives. To repeat, values determine the rightfulness of development. Development, then "must be grounded in human's values" (1947). For this reason, development not only involves economic growth, more importantly it requires equity, distribution of wealth, and the achievement of dignity. It must be noted that although it was far before the emergence of the radical post-development accounts of the 1980s-90s, the ethical voices favouring development as a normative concept, criticized the Euro-centric view of economic progress as a useful view of development conducive to the wellbeing of the underdeveloped world.

Mahatma Gandhi pioneered this emphasis on values and humanist perspectives, among others. Inspired by Hinduism's belief in the sacredness of the life that requires social practices, Gandhi favoured a humanistic and egalitarian social order. Extending its roots in *dhama* (duty for others), *karama* (moral and just action), and *sadachara* (good actions toward others), Hinduism promotes the perspective that the duty to assist others' endeavours to end suffering is a sacred obligation that hangs on the whole chain of existence that springs from the divinity. Accordingly, there is a need to love everyone and respect their cultural and identity differences. Gandhi presents this view of human wellbeing:

I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country, in whose making they have an effective voice; an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people; an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony (Mahatma Gandhi, 2009).

From Gandhi's humanist perspective, development of the nation depends on the effective participation of people in their own desired egalitarian life, deep equality (that involves women's roles), meeting basic needs for the attainment of a higher goal (independent India), and the sacredness of

life that urges non-violent economy to build the nation. In *India of my Dreams*, Gandhi popularized the *Daridranarayana* axiom to illustrate a deeper meaning of development: “It means God of the poor, God appearing in the hearts of the poor” (2009). Although this view on assisting the poor carries a materialistic connotation, it is essentially a spiritual belief and practice that, as stated in the aforementioned quote, accounts for the perfect harmony in all aspects of the community.

However, it is from the 1960s-70s that profound challenges against both the morality to help and economic growth as development entered into the lexicon and practice of development. Initially, ‘modernization’ as a given template in reconstructing of the structure of the underdeveloped countries, and following the pattern of the wealthier and advanced societies, became the target of a new wave of criticism. In *Economic Development: Problem, Principle, and Policies*, Benjamin Higgins attempted to prove that economic growth, assisted by the external forces, as the single indicator of development, is harmful in many cases. That is to say, a general rise in production does not mean good development. Nor should industrialization and modernization be considered the sole indicators of good development. Rather, genuine development is one which depicts human ascent. Indeed, human ascent is the precondition of human development (Benjamin Higgins, 1968). Goulet, who is the source of inspiration for many contemporary ethicists of development, ascribed human development as the main feature of the term. People themselves must accomplish this, thus it is a matter of their capability. In *The Cruel Choice*, Goulet eloquently argues for this humanistic, essentiality good development. For him, a good view of development must encompass not only people’s sustenance, but, more importantly, their *self-esteem* and *freedom* (Denis Goulet, 1973). The two latter specifications of development give it its meaning. This means that helping others in their development is a reciprocal matter. Both parties must determine how the aid program is to be determined. Both must be comfortable in determining the cooperative scheme and its benefits (1973). Thus development needs to be redefined, demystified, and thrust into the area of ethical debates.

In *Pyramids of Sacrifice*, Peter Berger further expands on a good view of development. For him, the mainstream theory of development sacrifices the layers of oppressed masses rather than benefiting them. The advocates of mainstream development theory as a capitalist aspiration, Berger suggests, are ideologues, dogmatists, and “free-market fundamentalists (Peter Berger, 1974). What is required for the development of this group of countries, he argued, is an incorporation of ethics in social changes.

This needs two moral criteria. The first is to have a “calculus of pain” to avoid human suffering. The second, which has a deeper implication, a “calculus of meaning”, reflects a need to respect the values of people in the developing countries (1974). The people of the underdeveloped countries must have the right to live a meaningful life. Respect for this right must be the central tenet of the development.

Amartya Sen, placed this view of development at the highest level of sophistication. Known as the capability approach, his argument is that good development is “the freedom that a person actually has to do this or be that – things that he or she may value doing or being” (Sen, 2009). The earliest roots of this approach goes back to his challenges regarding insufficiency of both utilitarian and Rawlsian moral accounts to define what equality is. In the *Equality of What?* (1979), Sen encourages thinking about the capability approach by re-thinking the meaning of equality. “It is arguable that what is missing in all this framework is some notion of “basic capabilities”: a person being able to do certain basic things” (Amartya Sen, 1979). Capability encompasses different areas of equality such as freedom, income, and people’s welfare. Why should development be restricted to commodity (economic growth) or welfare (utilitarian consequentialism), or even to (Rawlsian) primary goods? Sen proposes that any reflection on development must be grounded on the capability, which is the translation of the actualized freedom of people to function in their own desirable way. In the opening page of *Development as Freedom*” (2000), Sen illustrates the importance of the actualized freedom. “Development can be seen; it is argued here, as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy” (Amartya Sen, 2000). He further argues that to speak of freedom as enlarging people’s actualized freedom means that freedom is the *primary end*, and the *principal means* of development (2000). The former, reflective of substantive freedom, enriches human life. That being said, the assessment of development must be informed with this meaning of freedom. The latter meaning of freedom, the instrumental connotation, is effective in contributing to economic progress (2000). The good development essentially involves enlarging people’s freedom. Without this freedom no evaluative and effective betterment of the condition of life could be attained.

In an earlier ethical reflection on the importance of development as freedom, Mahbub ul Haq, argues that the ultimate goal of development must be enlarging people’s choices (Mahbub ul Haq, 1995). Being able to choose i.e., enjoying actualized freedom, gives development a humanist characteristic; human development. This argument deepens the meaning of

development. Development is not the sole enlarging of commodities (economic growth). Nor is it related to freedom as the ability to choose “different detergents, television channels or car mobiles. Rather, it refers to the choices that reflect expanding human capabilities and functioning (Human Development Report, 1999). Indeed, it is a process of enlarging people’s real choice (1995). Proper functioning, to *be* and to *do* as desired, derives from people’s capability. This gives a right view into how to assess an individual’s wellbeing (Amartya Sen, 1999). The capability approach added another novelty to the ethical view of development; capability to achieve the desirable life will eventually result in person’s wellbeing. This wellbeing is the main tenet of development.

Subsequently, the prevailing view of development provoked further, newer debates on the meaning of ‘development’. The issues of underdevelopment, or developing status of nations, turned into the arguments about what *worthwhile* development is. This is an important question aimed at addressing an ethical *ought* to for the decreasing inequality of development. A growing number of voices contended that the sole economic growth does not reflect a worthwhile objective of public policy. Rather, many other values had to be satisfied, including human wellbeing, equity and empowerment, human rights, cultural liberty, environmental sustainability, and integrity in relation to corruption. The thinkers who enjoyed Denis Goulet and Amartya Sen’s heritage have further elaborated ethical reflections on these issues. David Crocker, Nigel Dower, Des Gasper, Jay Drydyk, and Mahmoud Masaeli, among others, have highlighted thoroughly what *worthwhile* development is. Members of International Development Ethics and Alternative Perspectives and Global Concerns have provided similar reflections on the theme of ethics of global development.

The condition of globality has provoked further complexities pertaining to development issues. Some countries have benefited opportunities existent in the condition of globality better than other countries. This has helped the emerging economies, such as Brazil, India, and China in achieving high rates of economic growth. Yet, the emerging economies failed in addressing the social, political, and cultural dimensions of good development. Indeed, although this *Rise of the South* could significantly advance levels of economic wellbeing its people, it could not effectively deal with the widening social class gaps. Human Development Report 2013 best explains this absence of social justice. “There is a ‘south’ in the North and a ‘north’ in the South (2013). The report goes on to argue that in the condition of accelerating globalization, elites either in the North or in

the South, are picking up the fruits of the condition of globality and “benefit the most from the enormous wealth generation over the past decade” (2013). Beyond the emerging economies, development has stagnated in other countries – and indeed entire regions. The condition of globality reflects the losers as well. The World Bank exemplifies this ascending inequality. According to the report by the Bank, the most recent statistics, in 2012, 12.7 percent of the world’s population lived at or below \$1.90 a day. That is down from 37 percent in 1990 and 44 percent in 1981. These statistics show in spite of remarkable improvement in living standards, other values of worthwhile development have not been met, and combinations of stagnant wellbeing, inequality, disempowerment, human rights’ lapses, cultural repression, environmental unsustainability, and corruption have characterized the worst of cases.

However, the condition of globality signifies a new social condition destined to give the way to an emerging global consciousness as well. Indeed, globalization intensifies worldwide social relations that link distant localities to global currents. That is, because of the interconnecting characteristics of the condition of globality local happenings impact by the events occurring many miles away and vice versa (Manfred Steger, 2013). This interconnecting nature of globalization gradually constitutes a conscious global socialist that constitutes conditions for a global public reason, a global ethics, urging a deeper contemplation in addressing the existing uneven development. Ronald Robertson, whose name informs the contemporary account of globality, suggests that the sense of the awareness of the world as a whole, i.e., global consciousness, is intrinsic to globalization (Ronald Robertson, 2003). The importance of the single place world lies in the possible encounter between the local and global as a wider perspective of life beyond the economic aspects of globalization. That is the reason why it can be argued that the condition of globality could potentially be conducive to an emerging consciously responsible *we*, which is trying to accomplish a duty for development of the disadvantaged.

Having deteriorated the status of inequality in the world (both in the South and the North), the age of globalization has raised global consciousness, one the one hand, and has illustrated further moral questions vis-à-vis the mainstream view of development. Who is directing the condition of globality in favour of its winners? How could the raising of global consciousness redirect conditions of globality in favour of the losers and disadvantaged? Is there any duty to contribute to the struggle to end inequality and poverty? Is this duty for the alleviation of poverty or it is

for helping the disempowered? Is ethical duty defined through moral reasoning? Do we promote global hospitality or global apartheid? Who are we accepting in or inviting as our guests, and what results are we to expect to stem from the ethics of duty? To whom is this duty addressed? Is this a duty to help or a duty for justice? Are ethics of duty uniform, or are there diverse lines of reasoning and justifications for it? Can spiritual ethics address the issues of poverty and inequality? Who must undertake this duty? How is the duty undertaken and fulfilled? Whom do we keep out or make to feel unwelcome?

The present book aims at analysing and addressing these questions. The aim is to attain a cross-section ethical view into uneven development. Indeed, the book reflects a conversation and dialogue on the ethics of duty in an age of globality and inequality. The main objectives of the book are as follow:

- Presenting alternative perspectives in the ethics of development: Dialogical ethics, ethics of hospitality, ethics of sympathy and compassion, and spiritualist ethics of care
- Introducing ethical dimensions related to unequal development inherited from the colonialist structure of the world
- Providing an informative approach into both the challenges and the opportunities that have been created as a result of the condition of *globality* for the development of developing countries
- Highlighting the global obstacles for fighting against poverty
- Introducing the contribution of right-based approaches to the ethics of development
- Posing the fundamental questions regarding the moral obligation to help or the duty for justice
- Analysing justice as a political virtue in the context of global development

This book follows three main themes. The first part analyzes the alternative perspectives in the ethics of global development, in general, and the implications of such alternative perspectives for the development of the global south, in particular. The second part explains and examines the global agenda against poverty with a deeper view into the condition of globality and its implications for the developing world. The third part discusses poverty reduction programs by drawing on lessons learnt from specific cases. The themes analyzed and addressed in this volume include the changes in the ethics of global development in addressing unequal

development by drawing on both the global obstacles and global opportunities.

The novelty of the book derives from its multidisciplinary approach. Although the authors come from the fields of ethics, international development, and global studies, they present the newly emerging alternative ethical accounts by looking at a variety of issues and themes affected by the condition of globality to promote the ethics of duty for both poverty reduction and justice. They also analyse the meaning of ethical considerations and solutions for unequal development and poverty. They consider how the new changes in the structure of the world affect the ethical issues of development. In addition, the content of the book goes over a broad cross-section of ethics in addressing the issues of development in a global context.

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CHAPTER ONE

ETHICS DUTY-FREE. ATTENTION AS A PROPER BASIS FOR ETHICAL EXPERIENCE

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Executive Summary

It is important to denote that law and rules must surpass unconditional duty in order to create an inner structure. Following Schopenhauer and Simone Weil on an alternative framework for moral reflection, Dr. Rico Sneller analyzes virtue ethics through a historical critique of Kant's work. Schopenhauer explains the phenomenon of moral experience and that individuals are sometimes willing to work together without any duty, let alone an unconditional one. Schopenhauer's ethics is, henceforth, characterized as an ethics beyond duty. In a similar vein, Simone Weil is defending an ethics of pure compassion and attention, love of neighbor, love of world order, and love of religious practices. These two partly overlapping accounts, the author argues, could function as a paradigm for a contemporary contribution of spiritual thinking to global moral reflection.

Keywords: Ethics, modern virtue ethics, unconditional duty, conditional duty, ethics of compassions, friendship, philosophy of attention, will, love of neighbor

Introduction

Do ethics entail duty? Does it perhaps even entail unconditional duty? One could argue that law and legal systems entail duty. However, this would never be an unconditional duty for any trespassing is at risk of being punished. This risk introduces conditionality. Obedience to the law,

therefore, is likely to be merely consequent upon the imminent punishing of any offence against it. But, does an ethic entail duty? Henry Sidgwick already argues that the notion of duty is decisively modern, not Greek:

Their speculations [sc. of the Greek, RS] can scarcely be understood by us unless with a certain effort we throw the quasi-jural notions of modern ethics aside, and ask (as they did) not “What is Duty and what is its ground?” but “Which of the objects that men think good is truly Good or the Highest Good?” or, in the more specialized form of the question which the moral intuition introduces, “What is the relation of the kind of Good we call Virtue, the qualities of conduct and character which men commend and admire, to other good things?”. (Sidgwick, 1907, p. 106)

In this article, I argue that inasmuch as duties presuppose conditions under which they solely make sense, no ethics can be conceived which relies upon an unconditional duty. Ethics and duty as such are mutually exclusive. It should be presumed, then, that what is called ‘ethics’ precedes convention, politics, or law. For one thing, it is obvious that no legal system (‘law’, ‘politics’) can dispense with obligations. Ethics, however, the abysmal foundation of the law, will never be able to fully account for such obligations. This is due to at least two reasons: first, those obligations do not match with moral experience, and second, they presuppose a problematic theory of the subject. As an alternative, I will consider the viability of a ‘duty-free’ ethics, drawing on discernments made by the French philosopher Simone Weil (1909-1943).

In (what we are used to calling today) ‘ethics’, a distinction is frequently made between ethics of duty, on the one hand, and virtue ethics on the other. While virtue ethics refers to Aristotelian ethics and its contemporary defenders (Slote, MacIntyre, Taylor, Foot, etc.), duty ethics are applied to both deontological and consequentialist accounts of morality. Indeed, Kant praises duty (*Pflicht*) as the highest human perspective available. In addition, even John Stuart Mill argues that we are commanded to do what leads to the greatest possible balance of good over evil (Mill, 1984, p. 47). What Kant calls ‘moral consciousness’ is the faculty supposedly awed by the awareness of the moral law. Nevertheless, Mill, and any other consequentialist in his vein, seems to have a harder job showing that we ought to do what will be most beneficial for a majority’s happiness. Self-interest, enhanced by the majority’s happiness, could be the ultimate justification, but then one would be faced with the still more impossible task of showing that self-interest can justify moral effort – let alone duty (Frankena, 1973, pp. 17-22).

As opposed to duty ethics, virtue ethics backs moral assertions by linking a virtuous life to human flourishing. Thereby, it seems to be more lenient and less stringent than duty ethics, this flourishing is merely endorsed. If contemporary virtue ethicists' use terms like 'duty' or 'obligation' at all, their claims are by far more modest (Hursthouse, 1995, pp. 57-75). However, it could be argued that modern virtue ethics, along with deontology and utilitarianism, presupposes a notion of subjectivity that only partially, if at all, combines with moral experience. Many 19th and 20th century thinkers even believe that any subject theory whatsoever will be detrimental to ethical experience (Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié*, 1994, pg. 87; *Force de loi*, 1983, p. 53). Even Sartre, accused by 'postmodernists' of still clinging to an 'obsolete' Cartesian theory of the subject, however purified of empirical remnants, nonetheless rejects virtues as obstacles to free moral choice (Sartre, 1983, pp. 484-578).

Modern virtue ethics are beyond mitigation, yet remain prescriptively. It may be problematic for its enhancement of 'subjectivity', such as it is made particularly susceptible to the surreptitious re-introduction of duty as morality's pinnacle. 'Duty' is proportionate to 'subjectivity', I would argue, for the more humans are conceived as subjects of their actions, the more they are likely to fall under some obligation, in whatever form, and whatever its imagined origin (Bradley, 1967).

To be clear, I am not arguing that 'oughts' are to be abandoned altogether. On the contrary, no social life could prosper without them. My only claim is that they cannot underpin an ethics. The experience of any 'ought', I argue, presupposes (or is preceded by) the experience of attention.

Unconditional Duty

To start substantiating my claim about unconditional duty, I will first consider a poignant critique of Kant. Kant is known as the renowned father of the idea of an unconditional duty as the basis for ethics. Schopenhauer, who admired Kant's first critique, relentlessly criticized his second. Here, I am drawing on Schopenhauer's essay 'On the Basis of Morality' written in 1840 (Schopenhauer, 2014). Kant's distinction between a priori (immanent) and a posteriori (empirical) knowledge, Schopenhauer contended, only applies to theoretical reason. But Kant mistakenly applied the same distinction, Schopenhauer continues, to practical reason. For did Kant not assert that reason supplies the agent with pure and a priori knowledge of a moral law?

Schopenhauer's critique of this assumption is threefold. The first objection is that, according to Schopenhauer, there is no evidence of any moral law being a 'fact of reason' (*Faktum der Vernunft*). We need to choose: either a moral law rests upon experience (in which case it would be neither universal nor unconditional) or it would be purely a priori, in which case it could not be proven, for it would have to come immediately to our minds without any external cause, which it does not (1986).

Schopenhauer's second demur is related to the main thesis, which has already been laid out above. There is no evidence of any moral law issuing imperative commands. The existence of such a law, Schopenhauer adds, is a Jewish-Christian prejudice, based upon the Ten Commandments. The only 'law' pertaining to human action relates to motivation. Accordingly, it can only be a causal law, or a natural law, but never a moral one. Are not human actions amenable to sufficient motives, to the extent, that is, that they are natural phenomena? Since both 'ought' (*Sollen*) and 'duty' (*Pflicht*) involve conditions under which they apply, a purely, absolutely binding, unconditional moral law would require proof. What Schopenhauer himself is looking for with regard to morality is something exempt from obligation, while still unconditional. Laws or imperatives, he insists, cannot be unconditional; they are always empirical and hypothetical. Hence, we can conclude that unconditionality excludes law, duty or ought. Any *Soll* (ought) always implies a condition under which it applies, such as a threat or a punishment.

In his third rejoinder, Schopenhauer even inverts his argument into an accusation. Kant's categorical imperative, he states, is in fact a hidden hypothetical one, which, therefore, cannot be a priori. For does it not secretly assume that the agent may himself be disadvantaged if it is not correctly followed? For suppose that some agents think themselves resilient enough to countervail any other agent's deleterious act, they can then safely want injustice and lovelessness to be general principles. If I do not also presuppose my own wellbeing to be brought about by my universalized maxim, all kind of moral vices could be enhanced by a so called 'categorical' imperative. The latter, then, can only secretly rest upon egoism. Schopenhauer resorts to quoting Wordsworth's poem 'Robert Roy's Grave':

...upon the simple plan,
That they should take, who have the power,
And they should keep, who can.

In addition to this, Schopenhauer concludes, Kantian moral philosophy definitely turns out to be eudemonistic in its idea of a highest good, despite Kant's explicit intention to purify ethics from eudemonism. Schopenhauer shares this intention, to the point of criticizing Kant for not having been loyal to it.

Conditional Duties

The critique of unconditional duty as delusive cannot but affect the idea of conditional duty as the essence of ethics, since this idea displaces the question of moral foundations to the unstable grounds of human convention. Convention may easily lead to mutual obligations, as is all too obvious, given that convention itself is never exempt from arbitrariness, if not from power relations. Further, virtue ethics is equally defenseless against such a form of critique, to the extent, that is, that its assessment of virtue roots in the very social circumstances it intends to improve. Contemporary virtue ethicists like MacIntyre or Taylor, while following Aristotle's lead as a moralist, all disapprove of the Aristotelian catalogue of virtues for being implicitly racist or un-egalitarian, replacing it with one that can better accommodate contemporary urgencies (MacIntyre, 1985, Ch. 12).

Any ethics which reduces the moral infrastructure to conditional obligations is bound to relapse into sociology, and to face the resurgence of the eternal question, "Why should I be moral?" (Foot, 2001) Answering the latter by resorting to self-interest would be a self-defeating strategy; for it either tacitly re-introduces common interest (cf. Pope's "private vices, public benefits"), or, if it identifies self-interest with the mere speakers, it ludicrously reinvigorates arbitrariness (Frankena, 1973, pp. 17-22).

Neglecting the question of conditional duties own 'condition' can have severe consequences, such as has been shown by the notorious German legal philosopher Carl Schmitt (1888-1985). Schmitt readdressed the question of sovereignty, a question that had been historically overlooked for centuries in legal and moral theory. Pioneering sovereignty in a highly secular moral context opens the gate to the worst forms of abuse, as we have seen in Hitler's Third Reich (Duncker & Humblot, 1994, pp. 227-232).

Ethics Beyond Duty: Compassion?

Schopenhauer's own alternative to an ethics of duty, while remaining highly debatable in-itself, is most interesting. Schopenhauer makes a case for an ethics of compassion, i.e. one that relies on complete disinterestedness. Such disinterestedness was already what Kant (and his contemporary followers Richard Price or W.D. Ross) aimed at identifying and corroborating in morality, but failed to uphold.

Schopenhauer's claim concerning pure compassion meets the sole moral criterion of being disinterested and selfless. The slightest degree of interest agents might take in their action deprives the action of its moral value. It is obvious that this argument is partly circular and definitional, since a less restrictive view of ethics would just allow self-interest to play its natural part in moral life. MacIntyre, for example, elaborately argues that it is most often purely artificial to distinguish between self and other, the larger part of our actions being rather more common than unique and individual undertakings (MacIntyre, 1967, pp. 462-466). Schopenhauer, MacIntyre would insist, unnecessarily complicates things by arguing for far too onerous ('moral') demands upon human agency. However, one need not comply with Schopenhauer in all respects to at least acknowledge the profound metaphysical basis of his take on ethics, a basis which one would vainly seek in the majority of virtue ethicists. This metaphysical basis will become clearer on a closer inspection of Schopenhauer's notion of compassion.

Compassion (*Mitleid*), Schopenhauer sets out to show, is the only – non imperative – foundation of morality. It is not a law ('thou shalt be compassionate'), it is primarily an affection or a feeling which can be prepared for. It is the "big mystery of ethics" (*grosse Mysterium der Ethik*), its "original phenomenon" (*Urphänomen*) and its "boundary stone" (*Grenzstein*). It mysteriously arises as a phenomenon in human life and action, as the "last foundation of morality in human nature itself". In fact, compassion is not ethical, but metaphysical. Let us remember that for Schopenhauer, the world is nothing but my imagination; in itself, it is pure, blind will. Will, however, is not a cause upon which this world was consequent as though being its effect. Rather, this will expresses itself as the world of our imagination. Self-expression, then, is tantamount to self-concealment, for in pluralizing itself in many competing wills, will itself remains secrete.

The moral relevance of subtle metaphysics can be easily demonstrated. For this plurality of wills distributed over numerous single agents, Schopenhauer holds, is mere imagination. Each single agent is deluded when striving for individual happiness. In fact, there is only one will that, in complete indifference, will's itself to be perpetuated eternally under whichever particular form. This will is accessible not through reasoning, but through (pre-reflective) intuition. The moral upshot of this decisively metaphysical view is that any moral action will be the outcome of complete selflessness. What is requisite is not so much strenuous effort or energy, let alone acting out of duty, but release and abandonment. Schopenhauer terms this the "better knowledge". The principle of individuation continues to cover the world of appearances under a fictitious outlook, but the enlightened agent is capable of neglecting the selfish drives and the identifications these give rise to in daily life.

Thus, ethics based on compassion is an ethics that holds aloof from the imposition of duties, whilst insisting on spontaneous sympathy with my fellows. It should be noted that for Schopenhauer, animals are categorically included here, since there is nothing which principally distinguishes human from animal life.

Ethics Beyond Duty: Attention

There is one question that Schopenhauer leaves unanswered or remains open for further discussion. Schopenhauer's ethics of compassion rests upon a metaphysical framework which, attractive though it may seem, is not compelling. It should doubtlessly be held to Schopenhauer's credit that he has rediscovered 'inwardness', against mainstream rationalist reductions. One need not throw away the baby out with the bathwater and reduce inwardness, on Schopenhauer's sole authority, to mere will; nor need one immediately take for granted the viability of pure selflessness. Let us therefore have a look at another thinker, whose approach has the advantage of being less restrictive or reductive, whilst maintaining a sense of moral urgency. I am hinting here at Simone Weil's philosophy of attention.

Neither for Schopenhauer or Weil are ethics epitomized by moral duty. Further, whilst Schopenhauer firmly believes in the utter emptiness of selfhood, Weil addresses the possibility of renunciation. To renounce selfhood in action is not identical to equating it with pure illusion, she asserts. Renunciation does not come down to acting upon a disillusioned

“better knowledge”, but upon a form of agency that simply does not heed the self anymore, focusing exclusively on the other. This distinction may be subtle, yet not trifling, since it maintains a form of ‘subjectivity’ that conforms to spectatorship.

Attention is a key term in Weil’s writings. As the Latin root already indicates, it is closely related in French to *attendre*, *tendre* or *attente*: ‘to wait’, ‘to reach out for’, ‘waiting’. When combined, the terms refer to ‘wake’, ‘vigilance’, ‘watchfulness’, ‘attentiveness’, ‘observance’, ‘alertness’ (*attention!*), ‘awareness’, etc. Weil’s emphasis on *attente* and attention can be seen as one of the numerous attempts to overcome the narrowness of classical (Lockean, Humean) empiricism. We can add that it also possibly corrects Schopenhauer’s account of inwardness as pure will. Full experience, Weil would argue, requires patience, attentiveness, and focus, rather than a precipitate cession of self.

In her essay ‘Formes de l’Amour implicite de Dieu’, Weil distinguishes four forms of what she calls “implicit love of God”: 1) love of the neighbor, 2) love of the world order and its beauty, 3) love of religious practices, and 4) friendship. I will briefly describe them here, for several reasons. First, I believe that they entail an ethics that goes beyond duty in a more concrete way. Next, they all somehow exemplify the aforementioned theme of ‘attention’, a theme that corrects Schopenhauer’s reduction of inner life to will (however much this reduction corroborates a duty-free ethics). Finally, since they focus on actual, pertinent social, economic, and ecological issues, these examples of an implicit love of God are all equally pressing today. In addition, they all have a strong impact on moral life, since they address a truly global justice beyond mere parochial conceptions of morality.

It should be noted that Weil does not in the least allude here to dogmatic creeds. She rather believes that in and through these forms, a love of God is implicit (implicit, not explicit). Yet, as interpreted by Weil, they have in common a dimension of self-renunciation imitating divine self-withdrawal. In his capacity to renounce, man is an image of God. Weil indirectly draws on a 16th Century Kabbalistic tradition which conceives of divine creation as an act of renunciation and withdrawal (*tsimtsum*). Instead of forging and producing things, creation, on this Kabbalistic account, should be seen as an act of divine abstention: God refrains from commanding where he could have commanded; he contracts and empties himself to provide space for something other than him. In line with this

tradition, Weil reconceives ethics as an ethics of renunciatory attention, or attentive renunciation.

Love of the neighbour

Weil writes: “To wish for the existence of this free consent in another, deprived of it by affliction is to transport oneself into him; it is to consent to affliction oneself, that is to say to the destruction of oneself. It is to deny oneself. In denying oneself, one becomes capable under God of establishing [*d'affirmer*] someone else by a creative affirmation. One gives oneself in ransom for the other. It is a redemptive act” (1966, p. 134).

Weil argues that human love of the neighbor equals true attention for one’s neighbor: “In this moment of attention faith is present as much as love.” (p. 138). It is as though any attention paid inevitably brings about love, but also true love can only exist in the virtue of paying attention. Love and attention are mutually implicated. For one thing, I can love my neighbor, despite his or her misery, once I truly pay attention; my being attentive allows me to experience love, or to open myself for love. On the other hand, I can love God whose love for the neighbor is felt through my own paying attention to that neighbor; it is as if God himself loves the miserable (neighbor) through us:

In true love it is not we who love the afflicted in God; it is God in us who loves them. When we are in affliction, it is God in us who loves those who wish us well. Compassion and gratitude come down from God, and when they are exchanged in a glance, God is present at the point where the eyes of those who give and those who receive meet. The sufferer and the other love each other, starting from God, through God, but not for the love of God; they love each other for the love of the one for the other. This is an impossibility. That is why it comes about only through the agency of God. (p. 138)

Is Simone Weil only politically naïve when she proceeds to identify love of the neighbor with justice? This depends of course on one’s own political and anthropological views. For Weil, love of the neighbor must be equated with justice; for only then, she explains, will compassion and gratitude, and respect for the sufferer’s dignity become possible (p. 125). As opposed to possibility and necessity, commonly confused with justice, (supernatural) justice is not arbitrary but inescapable (p. 128).

Weil interprets it in her own way; she does not ignore the renowned Aristotelian tradition associating justice with equilibrium or balance. She