Collaborative Ethics

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Abstract

It is proposed that collaborative ethics, founded on the presumption that the normative relation between people is that of collaborators in definite shared projects, should form the basis of a general ethics, rather than being a subfield of ethics. That is, instead of duties being determined according to what one should do unto one another, rather, what we do should be decided by us.

The proposal is founded on an immanent critique of Habermas's Communicative Ethics and its further development by Critical Theorists. It further takes on Hegel's critique of Kantian introspection as the basis for practical philosophy, relying instead on cultural and historical wisdom and procedures. Historical research on the paradigms of collaboration within projects and between projects is accordingly used to determine the duties and virtues of human beings active in really existing social formations.

In a final qualification, it is found that the well-known universalist ethics of human rights must co-exist with Collaborative Ethics in order to be complete, a proposition which leads to generative contradictions.

Introduction

I shall first present a synopsis of efforts to develop a secular general ethics through Kant and Critical Theory. I will then examine the contradiction which remains unresolved in this Kantian approach and its individualist foundations.

(i) Religion and Ethics

The Christian religion has inscribed in its principles the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Luke 6:31). In the Muslim *Hadith* (Sayings of the Prophet) we have: "None of you truly believes until he desires for his brother what he desires for himself." This ancient principle transcends all religious boundaries. Versions of the Golden Rule can be found in Bahá'í, Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, the Native American and African traditions, Shinto, Sikhism, Taoism and Zaroastrianism at least. The Golden Rule is a gift we have inherited from antiquity, a moral principle shared across all cultures which gives us a basic rule for collaborating with each other.

As part of the Enlightenment project, seeking to place the moral teachings of religion on a rational basis, Kant claimed to prove that as rational beings, we must always treat another person as an *end* and never as mere means (Kant, 1780). From this, he was able to reformulate the Golden Rule as the Principle of Universalisability (hereafter the Categorical Imperative): "Act according to a maxim which can be adopted at the same time as a universal law" (Kant, 1785).

However, even though the Categorical Imperative, whether in Kant's secular formulation or in that of a religious tradition, is indigenous to all cultures, it overlooks the fact that others may not want to have done unto them the same as you want to have done unto you. It fails to take account of the fact that others

may have radically different needs and desires. "You wouldn't do that in your own house!" is often not an effective rejoinder to poor behaviour.

Even leaving aside cultural differences and the lack of a shared sacred text, the Categorical Imperative takes no account of the asymmetrical obligations in paternalistic, hierarchical and class social formations. The boss does not expect the employee to do unto him as they do unto the employee. It also violates the basic principle of the market in which *everyone* instrumentalises everyone else. And Kant's commitment to taking others as ends in themselves and not means effectively rules out the possibility of seeking shared ends. There is no "we" in this ethic.

A revival of interest in moral philosophy and secular ethics over the past half-century has led to a number of attempts to rectify the problems in Kant's formulation which takes account of the ethical problems which have arisen as the result of the ethnic diversity of modern states and the rise of the Women's Liberation Movement. Foremost amongst the approaches directly drawing on Kant's rationalisation of the Categorical Imperative are Habermas and later Critical Theorists including Agnes Heller and Seyla Benhabib. Also relevant to the approach which I propose here are John Rawls, MacIntyre and Sen.

(ii) John Rawls' Political Liberalism

Both Rawls and Habermas approach the lack of a universally respected revealed religion by looking to principles of justice being derived or validated through reasonable and rational dialogue between citizens, whether real or hypothetical. Rawls sees the discourse in which consensus is reached on just social arrangements (1) requiring participants to lay aside any "comprehensive world views" they may hold and (2) basing themselves on mutually accepted *facts*, evidently including taken-for-granted social arrangements, but excluding the specific constitutional provisions which are the subject of decision. However, these facts are the product or manifestation of prior social arrangements. Rawls failed to see that only a comprehensive world view can encompass the counterfactual and the consequential, whether or not in a way which is convincing to those not sharing the comprehensive world view in question.

A typical example would be an organisation with all-male leadership which resists affirmative action to increase female participation, claiming that they only appoint on merit. Obviously they do not. Once the paternalistic features of their organisation have been removed they discover that appointment on merit produces 50-50 gender representation. Only a feminist critique could have justified affirmative action, and in the meantime, until systems had been feminised, a lot of men would continue to believe that they had been unjustly passed over in favour of a woman. *Structural injustice cannot be rectified by consensus*. Only a project which succeeds by illiberal means in realising its ideal, changing social arrangements and creating new facts, can create the basis for reaching a new consensus.

Rawls' reasoning from a supposedly "original position" is flawed because the original position is original only in being prior to the constitution and set of laws being legislated and an individual being inserted into a social position. The original position is not original but belated, because it leaves in place comprehensive world views which reflect taken-for-granted social arrangements

and consequential "facts" which were supposedly still to be instituted. Only real human beings raised in some definite social situation can engage in the kind of thought experiment which Rawls requires.

However, confronted with the obvious fact that according to his system the entire Civil Rights Movement would have been ruled out (and the same would apply to the Women's Liberation Movement), Rawls introduced an amendment to allow that leaders of a project aiming to change social arrangements would "not go against the ideal of public reason ... if the political forces they led were among the necessary historical conditions to establish political justice" (1993, p. 251). This is a principle of *dynamic justice*, and Rawls is correct insofar as social justice movements change facts crucial to the achievement of the social arrangements they advocate for. But this proviso undermines his whole conception of political liberalism. A certain claim is just, supposedly, if a project exists which is capable of realising the social arrangements in which unforced consensus could subsequently be freely arrived at. So despite Rawls' aim to rule out "comprehensive doctrines," justice can only be determined by making an assessment not of doctrines as such, but of the collaborative projects which realise doctrines.

Whereas Rawls tried and failed to resolve the problem of a multiplicity of world views by limiting the domain of discourse, Habermas looked to a procedural solution.

(iii) Habermas's Communicative Ethics

Habermas also responded to the problem of the radical failure of mutual understanding characterising modernity, but rather than attempting to directly prescribe the *kind of discourse* which could justify ethical principles, he opted for a *procedural prescription* in the form of discourse ethics. Empathy has to be transcended with an actual enquiry into the other person's needs.

Taking Kant as his setting off point, he put it this way:

> [Kant] tacitly assumes that in making moral judgments each individual can project himself into the situation of everyone else through his own imagination. But when the participants can no longer rely on a transcendental pre-understanding grounded in more or less homogeneous conditions of life and interests, the moral point of view can only be realised under conditions of communication that ensure that everyone tests the acceptability of a norm, implemented in a general practice, also from the perspective of his own understanding of himself and of the world ... [I]n this way the categorical imperative receives a discourse-theoretical interpretation in which its place is taken by the discourse principle (D), according to which only those norms can claim validity that could meet with the agreement of all those concerned in their capacity as participants in a practical discourse.

> *Habermas, 1998, pp. 33-4*

Habermas set out the conditions which would allow such a practical discourse to proceed without coercion or exclusion, including, as did Rawls, ruling out dogmatism, performative contradictions, and so forth, so that discourse could expected to produce a rational and reasonable consensus.

Continuing to parallel Kant, he derived from the discourse principle the principle of universalisation (U):

> A [moral norm] is valid just in the case that the foreseeable consequences and side-effects of its general observance for the interests and value-orientations of each individual could be jointly accepted by all concerned without coercion.

<p align="right">Habermas, 1998, p. 42</p>

Although this is framed in terms of justifying moral norms, Habermas went on to make it clear that the principle of universalisation was to apply to real practical discourse, including the making of decisions about real projects, and that it was required not only that each individual affected be *consulted*, but that their reasonable agreement had to be gained.

Thus Habermas made collective decision making the criterion for ethical action.

He granted however, that in the light of the multiplicity of conflicting interests in modernity a "fair bargaining process" would often take the place of actual agreement on the rightness of the relevant action. Continuing along these lines, he formulated the conditions for laws to be regarded as legitimate if they are reasonable products of a sufficiently inclusive deliberative process.

Like Kant, Habermas continued to develop his ethics on the basis of individuals who are taken to be, and take each other to be, ends in themselves, autonomous moral agents, who do things *to* each other but never *with* each other. Despite the move to give procedural form to moral obligations, Habermas's communicative ethics remains, as a number of writers have said, insufficiently concrete. We are left with an indefinite number of atomistic individuals engaged in egalitarian and inclusive practical discourse over some decision with which they claim to be concerned and all are to be treated alike as ends in themselves.

Both Habermas and Rawls fail in their project because they do not take collaboration as the norm for interactions between individuals. Individuals being the author of unmediated actions they take *against* another individual is far from being the typical ethical relation in social life: in the jungle perhaps, but not in a modern social formation.

Habermas's situating subjects in a practical discourse takes for granted the conception of social life as a whole being validly represented in such a discourse. that is, that a practical discourse is a "germ cell" of modern society. Ethics does need to be situated in a relationship which can function as the methodological germ cell of the whole social formation, and one individual acting upon another fails as such a germ cell and shared participation in a practical discourse fails to characterise the real relation between individuals who actions matter to one another.

(iv) Seyla Benhabib

Seyla Benhabib in particular has pointed out that Habermas's formulation is far too abstract, and in its abstractness it fails to find relevance in real world ethical problems.

> The fiction of a general deliberative assembly in which the united people expressed their will belongs to the early history of democratic theory; today our guiding model has to be that of a medium of loosely associated, multiple foci of opinion formation and dissemination which affect one another in free and spontaneous processes of communication.

Benhabib, 1996

Benhabib insists that so long as the other is considered abstractly, lacking any determinateness in relation to the subject, the perpetuation of the above fiction has the effect of promoting a destructive kind of liberalism which is blind to the diversity of projects in which people are engaged, and the conflicts between these various projects. Benhabib (2006) illustrated this point with a consideration of the range of quite different definitions of the "citizens" of a nation-state, according to whether kinship, residence, ethnicity, language, work or political participation is at issue. In her opinion, ethical problems arising in the European Union can only be resolved by disentangling these distinct projects, rather than trying to see Europe, for example, as made up of groups of individuals each sharing a unitary nationality.

(v) Amartya Sen

Coming from a study of the measurement and causes inequality, Sen engaged in a life-long internal critique of Utilitarianism. In successive refinements of measures of social welfare and inequality he successively demolished wealth, income, capability, functioning and voice (Sen, 1999) as measures of what it is in a social formation which ought to be more equally distributed. He finally arrived at the concept of "critical voice." It is not enough that some group has an adequate level of functioning and a voice in the making of decisions about social arrangements affecting their welfare: they need a *critical voice* (Sen & Drèze, 2002). This led to his proposal that the foremost measure which was needed to rectify inequality in India was the education of women. It is very significant that critical voice as the substance of justice – not just as a means – arose from a critique of utilitarianism, the ethic underlying modern economic theory.

Sen (2002a) also made an extensive study of majority decision making, drawing largely on the mathematics of complexity theorist Kenneth Arrow. It must be granted that each individual will have a whole array of preferences in respect to some decision domain which cannot be reduced to a Yes/No answer to one arbitrary question, but it can be encompassed by a series of such Yes/No decisions. So even if it is accepted as a principle of justice that a choice between two options ought to be made by majority decision, an elaborate meeting procedure is presupposed in order to reliably and consistently negate the fact that the outcome is determined by the selection of the question to be posed. Sen affirmed that majority voting is in the same position in regard to the question

posed as consensus decision making is in regard to the status quo ante, which always acts as a default in the event of a failure of consensus. The only guarantee of a just group decision is a body of individuals educated and motivated to find and collaboratively create a just arrangement, with an effective tradition of collective decision making, an understanding of which is shared among all the participants.

(vi) Agnes Heller

Agnes Heller (1986) also found Habermas's approach insufficiently concrete, and among other things she has made an extended study of the Golden Rule, which she reformulated as follows:

> What I do unto you and what I *expect* you to do unto me should be decided by you and me.

I find this formulation unsatisfactory because it still restricts the domain of action to individuals acting *on* one another whereas the far more important domain of activity is what *we do together*, as collaborators, and it is our relationship as collaborators which determines how we consult one another, make decisions and share the blame or credit for the outcome of our collaboration. This Heller never investigated. Undoubtedly individual experiences will always have a privileged position in questions of ethics, but I would contend that individual action can only be approached as a determination of the "we" perspective which must form our starting point, in theory as it does in reality. Taking collaborative projects to be the essential, concrete practical relation between people, I reformulate the Golden Rule in this way:

> *What we do*, is decided by *us*.

That is, by default, I take another person to be a collaborator in a project which is implicated in the moral problem raised between us, and that includes those who are participants by virtue of being or claiming to be affected. Conflict is an essential moment of collaboration. The aim is to seek consensus on what we do, that is, by taking us to be joint participants in a project. If no such shared project is conceivable, then the supposed moral problem is void.

The original Golden Rule specified only what I do unto another, and takes no account of the fact that the impact of my actions on the other may be the resultant of action which we are taking or ought to take together as collaborators. The Golden Rule modified by the introduction of the we-perspective makes no prescription about what I ought to do in the absence of a we-perspective. However, the we-perspective is to be interpreted generously, including the imputed or prior consent of agents who may be incompetent, highly mediated collaborations or collaborations which are more conflicts than cooperations.

Further, the concept of collaboration should frame our practical relations even with strangers, not just our immediate collaborators. Universal ethical claims, such as the denunciation of economic inequality, can only be made coherent if they are implicitly addressed to either the state. some social movement, or some agent which can, concretely, mediate between me and those

suffering. Such broad claims are coherent only to the extent that a mediating project, and thereby the parties addressed by the claim, are made explicit. You can legitimately ask: what is that to do with me?

Further, a range of different collaborative relations are normative in different circumstances. What kind of collaborators are we? Whose project is this? These questions have to be answered *concretely*. It is necessary to identify a viable we-perspective. This raises the issue of the various paradigms of decision making which apply to collaborative projects. I will come to these questions presently.

The writer who has come closest to formulating an ethics on this basis is Alasdair MacIntyre.

(vii) Alasdair MacIntyre

In 1981, Alasdair MacIntyre published *After Virtue*, which, despite the fact that MacIntyre had recently converted to Catholicism, became a reference point for the secular critique of liberalism. MacIntyre was interested in whether the ethical life of Aristotle's ancient *polis*, where "activities are hierarchically ordered by the *for sake of* relationship" (p. 107), could be recovered in conditions of modernity. MacIntyre looked to the ethical norms operative in "practices" which he understands much as I understand collaborative projects or activities: "Every activity, every enquiry, every practice aims at some good" (1981, p. 139). MacIntyre distinguished between "internal goods" "realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity" (1981, p. 175) and "external goods" such as prizes, monetary rewards and wages which are used to sustain the practice, and are associated with the transformation of a form of practice into an institution (i.e., effective motives). In this connection, MacIntyre refers to the "corrupting power of institutions" (1981, p. 181), so we see the potential for "fossilised projects," that is, institutions – from organisations such as schools or hospitals to entire political communities, "concerned with the whole of life, not with this or that good, but with man's good as such" (1981, p. 146) – to be both the site for the development of an ethical life or for the corruption of human relationships.

MacIntyre advocates an *ethics of virtue*, rather than the ethics of rights and duties advocated by liberals such as Rawls and Habermas.

Thick and thin ethos

One qualification to MacIntyre's ethical project which is important to the task at hand is Heller's (1987, 1988) contrast between the sense of equality with a "loose ethos" which prevails in the marketplace of public intercourse and the "dense ethos" uniting participants in shared commitment to a project. Heller observes that the obligation to treat others as equals is not universal. While we are obliged to treat equals equally, within the practices of an institution "equals should be treated equally and unequals unequally" – the boss gets paid more, managers give orders to subordinates, parents bear the burdens of care for their children, etc. Utopian dreams notwithstanding, there is no real project within which equality is truly the norm. Consequently, Heller points out that the

ongoing displacement of the formerly dense ethos of institutional life by the loose ethos of modernity which underlies MacIntyre's concerns is *not simply* a regressive development. The sexual abuse of children that has been taking place, probably forever, in all kinds of hierarchical institutions is a symptom of the dangers of hierarchical institutions insulated from the liberal ethos of outside society. The recent rash of exposés is probably due to the penetration of the dense ethos of these institutions by the loose ethos of modernity. The long-held antipathy to hierarchy in particular and institutionalisation in general which has characterised social change movements demands a response to this problem.

So much for the project of formulating a secular general ethics to date, all of which have argued for norms they derive from reason, without regard to the ethical duties and procedures which have culturally historically evolved in really existing forms of collaboration with real histories.

The Outcome of this narrative

In this way Critical Theory has determined that the conception of a person as an individual member of a nation state is insufficiently concrete to determine what are the duties of such a person in relation to others or their rights. Such concreteness can only be attained by determining the person as a participant in one or another specific form of practice with others, that is to say, some definite collaborative practice.

Thus, it cannot be posited without proof that the duties and rights of participants in a practical discourse aimed at consensus with all those affected, as presumed in Communicative Ethics, are those applicable to all participants in any project whatsoever. We know for a fact that this is not the case.

On the other hand, while concreteness can be demanded, if Ethics is not to capitulate entirely to the given, and lose all capacity to criticise the status quo, then practices must be conceived with sufficient generality that the ethical duties and virtues of participants can be determined conceptually, while allowing the entire field of practices and projects to be brought under the scope of ethical consideration.

Hegel's Critique of Kant's Moral Philosophy

This claim parallels Hegel's critique of Kant's moral philosophy. Hegel set out his ethical theory as an immanent critique of constitutional monarchy in The Philosophy of Right, and explained why Kant's appeal to universal reason failed to determine a person's duty in the following terms:

> ... if the definition of duty is taken to be the absence of contradiction, formal correspondence with itself – which is nothing but abstract indeterminacy stabilised – then no transition is possible to the specification of particular duties nor, if some such particular content for acting comes under consideration, is there any criterion in that principle for deciding whether it is or is not a duty. On the contrary, by this means any wrong or immoral line of conduct may be justified. (Hegel, 1821, §135n)
>
> The proposition: 'Act as if the maxim of thine action could be laid down as a universal principle', would be admirable if we already had determinate principles of conduct. That is to say, to demand of a principle that it shall be

able to serve in addition as a determinant of universal legislation is to presuppose that it already possesses a content. Given the content, then of course the application of the principle would be a simple matter. In Kant's case, however, the principle itself is still not available and his criterion of non-contradiction is productive of nothing, since where there is nothing, there can be no contradiction either. (Hegel, 1821, §135ad)

Consequently, Hegel holds that:

the form of the right of objectivity which corresponds to the latter is this, that since action is an alteration which is to take place in an actual world and so will have recognition in it, it must in general accord with what has validity there. Whoever wills to act in this world of actuality has *eo ipso* submitted himself to its laws and recognised the right of objectivity. (Hegel, 1821, §132n)

In modern society, "this world of actuality" is the associations to which are person has voluntarily committed themself, on the one hand, and the rights and duties of citizenship in a nation state, on the other. What is right is therefore both right and true in the knowledge of the subject and right in the form of collaboration to which a person is committed. These are determined by collective decision making. Right is further determined by their knowledge of their rights and duties in the state, despite membership of the state not being a voluntary association. I will address the question of civil disobedience later.

What is necessary therefore, in order to determine ethical principles sufficiently concrete to constitute a practical philosophy, is to determine the ethical principles which are found to be implicit in really existing collaborative projects. In 2016 I published (Blunden, 2016) an investigation into how collective decisions are made and have been made historically back to earliest times. That is, the study was not conceived initially as an investigation of ethics of collaboration, but rather of the practices of collective decision making. However, what came out of that study was that four different paradigms of collective decision making were characterised by a deontological ethics based on definite rules for participants in a project to make collective decisions and/or a virtue ethics. Although these four paradigms had emerged historically, all are found in present times and often subsuming one another within the same project. A further discovery of this research was the need to distinguish between individuals participating in a collaborative project making mutually binding decision about their shared project, on the one hand, and delegates from different independent projects making pro tem agreements with each other, on the other. Distinct ethical regimes applied in each case.

While it was found that collective decision making was the essential determining practice for the ethics governing collaboration within any given collaborative project, even where there were no such explicit decisions being made, it was found that the subject position from which one project went to the aid of another project defined the ethics of relations between different, mutually independent projects. I in turn identified four paradigmatic intersubjective relations between mutually independent projects.

It turned out that these two ethical relations – as collaborators or allies – together exhausted possible relations between persons on the understanding that 'collaboration' is understood in its negative as well as positive mode, i.e., as

both cooperative and conflictual, and that refusal of collaboration is itself a specific collaborative stance. These eight paradigms have sufficient generality that *all* practical relations between persons can be captured conceptually, and they therefore provide a rational basis for determining the rights and duties of all persons in relation to one another.

This conception takes the relationship between any two individuals whatsoever to be as collaborators in common project. Even if the two individuals live on opposite sides of the world they share the same climate and natural environment and share a duty to maintain it, and further are members of states which have foreign policies and engage in collaboration and every citizen has some capacity to determine the actions of their government according to their social position. Even two people who pass each other in the street momentarily share the same pavement are must collaborate to ensure safe passage.

"Collaborate" includes both cooperation and conflict. So long as subjects act in relation to each other according to what is right in general, and for example, do not seek to coerce or deceive one another, then even conflict over the normative concept of the object is a form of collaboration.

The question is always only: what projects mediate the relation between these two subjects?

Paradigms of Collaboration

(i) Collective decision making and the ethics of collaboration

When people collaborate, their duties in relation to one another and what is good and right is determined by the concept of the object of the project in which they are collaborating. This object-concept also provides an array of subject-positions within the project and procedures by means of which people take up such roles, including the means of further determining the object-concept. In general, participants' collaborative activity proceeds unreflectively according to these norms. People simply act as they believe a good person in their social position should act.

However, when a contradiction arises – a conflict between norms or an indeterminate situation, for example – then certain means for the further determination of the object concept are adopted. It is this means of collective decision making which determines in crucial ways the moral character of the project and fosters specific virtues in the participants, over and above the virtues entailed in the actual content of the project activity and the relevant social positions.

(ii) Paradigms of Collective Decision Making within a project

I made an extended study of this process in *The Origins of Collective Decision Making* (Blunden, 2016a). The results of this study were that three paradigms of decision making have emerged historically and each has their place in present-day projects: (a) Counsel, (b) Majority and (c) Consensus. Distinct from collective decision making is (d) Laissez faire, in which participants do not make mutually binding decisions, and cases where the

participants represent distinct projects, in which case the paradigm could be (e) Negotiation, (f) Colonisation, (g) Solidarity or (h) Collaboration as such.

(a) **Counsel** originated in traditional society and continued to be the dominant form of decision making in feudal society. Under Counsel, one person – the Chief, the Abbot, the paterfamilias – has the moral responsibility to make decisions but is obliged to listen to the views of everyone else before deciding, after which their decision is binding upon all. Even today, one person may have this role in a one-parent family, as the owner of a small business or in the event of some project on which their personal fate alone depends. The ethic of Counsel is a *virtue* ethics based chiefly on the personality of the leader.

Literature abounds, in Africa for example, about the virtues demanded of a chief in conducting *Lekgotla* or in business studies discourses where we find lists of the virtues of leaders and typologies of leadership style.

(b) **Majority** originated with the birth of voluntary association in the mediaeval guilds, and was further developed by trading companies and the trade unions and from these bases among the ordinary people, implanted itself in parliamentary bodies, displacing Counsel. Over a period of a thousand years, ordinary people fought for the principle of universal suffrage and majority rule which by the middle of the 20th century became the norm for all forms of public political collective decision making.

Deliberation under Majority takes a very specific form regulated by one of several rule books, in the US by *Roberts' Rules of Order*, in the UK by *The ABC of Chairmanship*, written by the trade unionist, Walter Citrine, but the underlying ethic is the same throughout.

The ethic of Majority is an ethic of equality, solidarity and tolerance, reflected in one person one vote and the tolerance which minorities and majorities show for each other in their co-existence. It is a *deontological* ethics, i.e., an ethics based on adherence to and proficiency in specific rules and procedures.

(c) **Consensus** originated among the Quakers in the 1650s in response to severe repression resulting from undisciplined activity by their own members which drew the wrath of the state down on them. Consensus became the decision making paradigm of choice for the Peace Movement in the US in 1960, and then the Women's Movement and eventually penetrated all social movements, although invented anew at this time. Quaker Consensus remains a distinct ethic in that it eschews disputation.

Consensus respects dissenting views but does not tolerate them and endeavours to overcome dissent by deliberation or failing consensus, the status quo ante. Generally, if consensus cannot be achieved, then Laissez faire is preferred. In order to avoid such crises, some organisations use qualified consensus, such as 75%, before a decision can be binding. The dominant virtues of Consensus are inclusion and patience. In addition, like Majority, Consensus has a deontological ethic.

(d) *Laissez faire* is the result of a *failure* of Consensus. *Laissez faire* has made a comeback as Consensus-based norms have intersected with ideological fragmentation since the millennium and a virtue has been made of it in

celebration of diversity and pluralism. Many anarchistic projects now make little effort to achieve consensus and participants simply go their own way under the banner of "horizontality" (Maeckelbergh, 2009). *Laissez faire* represents the *absence* of collective decision making, the absence of collectivity, and the consequent loss of personal and social development. The ethic of *laissez faire* is individual authenticity.

(iii) Paradigms of Alliances between projects

(e) **Colonisation** (or philanthropy) is the first relationship under which one project supports another: the first project simply takes over the second project in order to save its participants. This was instanced when, for example, France colonised Algeria and used the land and labour of the local people to further the national aims of France. Algeria was made a Department of France in 1848 but this incorporation brought little benefit to the people of Algeria. Nonetheless, for better or worse, Algerians were drawn into the Francophone cultural world and Algerian culture and national consciousness were suppressed.

This is the same relation as when a charity like the Salvation Army rescues a destitute person off the streets, houses and feeds them and then inducts them to the religious life of the Army, or when large firms take over struggling competitors, and powerful trade unions can come to the rescue of groups of workers whether or not they want to be rescued.

The problem with colonising a project is that their body may be rescued but their soul is lost. In recruiting them to your project you destroy their spirit. So colonisation is the last resort when a project is defunct and the people need to be rescued.

(f) **Negotiation** (or bargaining or exchange) is the normative relation between independent subjects in bourgeois society. Businesses live by buying and selling from each other, bargaining in good faith and dealing with each other fairly. Workers and their trade unions bargain with the employers for the price and conditions of their labour-power. This kind of wheeling and dealing is equally common in international politics, everyday life and politics, but is out of place in a family or hierarchical institution. It is marked by mutual recognition, respect for the other project and autonomy. Projects make a deal for mutual benefit and then go their own way, or make limited agreements for co-existence which do not interfere with their mission. Social bonds may develop as a side effect of these external relations between projects, however.

Negotiation should not be confused with Consensus. In Consensus, the parties are committed to a common project throughout. In Negotiation, the parties are happy to walk away if no benefit is on offer, and any agreement made is only pro tem.

(g) **Solidarity** is practised when one project goes to the aid of another but instead of colonising the other, offers to work *under the direction of the other*. It asks "How can I help?" Both parties retain their independence but each develops from the engagement, while the weaker party endeavours to regain control of its own activity while the supporting party has the capacity to limit its commitment according to exigencies.

Solidarity is the ethic of the workers' movement, having entered the English language from the French at the Chartist Convention in London in April 1848 and written into the Rules of the International Workingmen's Association in 1864. Solidarity is the ethic which guides activity theorists in their interventions and will be further discussed below.

Paradigms may subsume one another in concrete interactions. For example, in wage labour Colonisation is subsumed under Negotiation because once the workers have sold their labour-power they work under the direction of the employer; after an important decision is made by Majority, collaborators usually work by Consensus to implement the decision; Collaboration as such may be subsumed under Solidarity when supporters participate in the other project's activity.

(h) **Collaboration as such** refers to that situation where independent projects voluntarily give up their independence and merge their membership, assets and activity. When this is achieved, the object-concept of each of the projects must be merged, each modifying and including the other.

Summary

Ethical communities are not constructed by theologians and moral philosophers or even by police and judges. Ethical communities have been constructed by people collaborating in projects, essentially by forms of collective decision making together with the collective implementing of those decisions. Theologians and moral philosophers then subsequently rationalised what they see before their eyes.

As I have tried to show, the various rights, duties and virtues which are manifested in social life have their bases in the demands of specific modes of collaboration: Counsel, Majority, Consensus and Laissez faire, and forms of collaboration between distinct projects – Negotiation, Solidarity, Colonisation and Collaboration-as-such. Each of these modes of collaboration arises in specific social conditions.

The virtues and duties we have mentioned above – honesty, good faith, care and responsibility, solidarity, trust, wisdom, attention, equality, tolerance, inclusion and respect – all originate in specific forms of collaboration.

Collaborative Ethics begins from the proposition that you must adhere to the ethics indigenous to the project in which you are participating, or cease participating. I have already described the demands of these various relations above.

As I demonstrated above, each mode of collaboration fosters certain virtues (Negotiation fosters honesty and good faith, for example, even while presuming self-interest), and each mode of collaboration specifies certain procedures which are obligatory for participants (Majority fosters solidarity and tolerance and demands adherence to meeting procedure, for example). All projects demand ethical dispositions from participants (Counsel demands humility and deference to the Chief among the participants, phronesis and the virtues of leadership in the Chief, for example). Each mode of collaboration is thus a combination of a virtue ethics, a procedural ethics, but specific to the given mode of collaboration.

Any attempt to specify an ethics which takes no account of the collaborative relationship in which subject and other are engaged must be abstract and empty.

In any actual project there will be mores which constitute a kind of idioculture, specific to the object-concept of the project. Awareness of and respect for this idioculture is obligatory for participants. For example, participation in a political party may forbid disclosure of internal information. General rules cannot encompass the infinite variety of such obligations.

In short, the Ethics of Collaboration is the imperative to learn how to collaborate in the concrete circumstances in which you find yourself.

Charity begins at home

Centuries before the maxim "charity begins at home" was coined, the Prophet Isaiah (58:7) had already said much the same thing. How do we ethically justify that we make great sacrifices for those who are socially close to us but feel no obligation to treat a beggar in Yemen with the same largesse? If we ask what project mediates each relationship, we find that those close to us are by definition those with whom we have a collaborative personal relationship, such as the project of raising a family, for example. But the only project mediating my relation to an Yemeni beggar is the foreign policy and aid program of the Australian government. As a voter and citizen in Australia, I bear moral responsibility for that policy and my obligation to that beggar flows from my participation in formulating Australian foreign policy (albeit marginal). My duty to the Yemeni beggar is answered by my duty to promote a more generous foreign aid program, and other measures which moderate global inequality, as a citizen of the Australian national project, *in addition to* the universal duties flowing from liberalism, expressed by Kant as the duty to treat others as ends in themselves. Neither ethic prevents me from jumping on a plane and flying over and giving the beggar something to eat, but I cannot say that I have an obligation to do that. Indeed, my children would rightly complain that I was neglecting my fatherly duty in doing so (if I had children).

A necessary dualism

Human freedom can only be attained through mediated self-determination, *i.e.*, participation in projects and adherence to the ethic indigenous to that project. The interaction between any two individuals is never unmediated, so the question is always to discern which project mediates the specific relation, and thereby the ethical principles which are relevant to the relation. On the other hand, any stranger is a *person*, and as such is the bearer of inalienable rights, and this is the case irrespective of any concrete relation I have to the other. Whatever relation I have to another person I am constrained by the command that I recognise the other as a person and respect their rights as such. This is the meaning of *human rights*, as opposed to rights indigenous to some specific context.

This situation is reflected where universal suffrage (based on large, arbitrary geographical electorates) coexists with a complex web of civil society organisations and businesses in which concrete person-to-person obligations predominate.

The above review of efforts to devise an ethics appropriate to life in modern, secular nation states, confirms my claim that a secular modern ethics has to be based on the presumption of a relationship of *collaboration* between any two people in some project, rather than on the presumption of atomistic individuals as is presumed in systems of universal suffrage. A duality is necessary, because even while systems of collaboration are the necessary condition for emancipation, they are, unfortunately, also the most common context for oppression, exploitation and marginalisation. Collaborative ethics as such has to be qualified by liberalism. The coexistence of these two contradictory ethics is necessary.

This leads us to a two-step approach to resolving ethical problems. First we must identify the relevant project and the position of the subjects within that project, which specifies the relation between two persons. Failing this, the subjects must be regarded as independent projects with the relation defined as appropriate to a relation between projects. The second step is then to identify the ethical norms indigenous to the given project(s) on the basis of a typology of projects and relations between projects along the lines outlined earlier. For each paradigm there are specific ethical norms. Further, every project has its own ethics, according to its object-concept; however, not in every case can such norms be endorsed as rational and reasonable. The object concept of the project must first be verified as rational before its norms of collaboration can be validated. A wide variety of projects in the world define the ethical relations between participants uniquely. The validity of a project may be judged in terms of the ethics of relations between projects, i.e., from the standpoint of *other* projects. On this basis a social movement might intervene in an institution, for example.

Civil disobedience and dynamic justice

Even in Hegel's state-centric Ethics, acting in deliberate breach of the law is permitted, indeed obligatory, in certain circumstances: the right of distress, failure of publicity of the law by the state, in the event of contradiction between rights, or in rebellion against a foreign power, slavery or despotism.

Since then, states have permitted "conscientious objection" to various otherwise universal obligations to the state extended to religious orders as part of "historic compromises" supplementing the separation of Church and State; the right of conscientious objection on the basis of religious belief does not extend to individual belief, only membership of a religious order recognised by the state with respect to conscience.

What place is there then for conscientious objection in a modern state? On what basis does a Black person demand service at a lunch counter, a women demand entry to a male-dominated profession or a pacifist obstruct war-making by their own state? Hegel allowed for a right of heroes, having Napoleon in mind; but he said that heroes found new states, and there is no place for heroes where the state exists. So a would-be civil disobeyer cannot appeal to the right of heroes. Nonetheless, in modernity, the right to civil disobedience is widely recognised. Usually, this recognition is pragmatic, in that more injustice would result from punishing protest than in tolerating it. But clearly there are limits.

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The concept of dynamic justice sanctions the idea that laws inevitably fall into conflict with their times and their breach can be justified in retrospect. However, it seems to me that Hegel was right in rejecting a right of subjective conscience. In order to justify an act of civil disobedience, it is necessary to have appeal to a principle of justice validated by a social movement under certain qualifications. For example, trade unionism is a centuries old tradition which has validated the right to break employment contracts provided that the action conforms to procedures internal to the trade union. The Peace Movement has established a limited right to obstruct the war effort without recourse to religious faith. But in general, the right of civil disobedience depends on extended relations of collaboration.

More work is required on this question.

Conclusions

Every ethical theory is implicitly a theory of society, and conversely, every social theory is implicitly a theory of ethics. In this case, collaborative ethics is based on an ontology in which human society is taken to be aggregates of actions in pursuit of projects. One's ethical duties and responsibilities in all cases flow from the norms of the relevant project. That is Collaborative Ethics.

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