

Wesleyan Social and Political Ethics in the Age of Globalization: A comparative study
from an African Perspective

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Modern Africa is, in many respects, similar to John Wesley's 18th century England where, according to Richard P. Heitzenrater, "poverty is the common condition of the population" (Heitzenrater 2002, 21), and a large percentage of his Methodist followers were considered among the acutely precarious group (ibid, 27). While some of the causes of poverty were entailed by the finitude of the human condition, such as illness, age, and misfortune, others were structural and not circumstantially inevitable. Majority of the poor during the nascent stage of Methodism were victims of underemployment and unemployment, precisely the conditions that the transition from agricultural to industrial economy had been promised and were expected to mitigate, if not completely prevent. of a rapidly changing economy and of a failing parochial system of poor relief" (ibid. 28). While the evolution of contemporary African economy may not neatly track the antecedent trajectories of 18th -19th century England, the expectation that a new beginning, what the former South African President called the dawn of Africa's renaissance, lies in the embrace of a new economic regime, is also an all too familiar paradigm in Africa. Globalization is the new magic, and its logic and dynamics were expected to unlock the door of Africa's prosperity, moving its people from the margin of the margins to the center of a reconfigured world economy (Mbeki 1999).

If Africa's present conditions are indeed similar to those of the people among whom Wesley began his evangelical ministry, what then can we learn from his approach

to poverty and the conditions of the poor? Rather than discussing the specifics and scope of Wesley's anti-poverty programs, which are already well documented in the literature (Heitzentrater 2002; Wheeler 2010; Withrow 2007; Maddox 2005), I will focus on Wesley's normative conceptualization of poverty and his theological articulations of the motivating rationale for seeing it as a burden of conscience. Although Wesley was neither the first to define poverty nor the only person to see it as an alienating human condition that we ought not condone or tolerate, his rejection of the prevailing consensus about its underlying causes—as resulting from laziness or profligacy (see Wheeler)—is consistent with the animating impulse of the modern idea of socio-economic rights, the fulfillment of which the international community considers to be critical for the alleviation of poverty. For Wesley, “the poor were those who lacked the necessities of life,” understanding necessities “in terms of sufficient food, decent apparel, and proper housing” (Heitzentrater 2002: 27, 29). Because this lack resulted from ill-conceived “government policy, economic management, and societal choices, seen especially in three areas: distilling, taxes, and luxury” (ibid. 33), removing it has to be motivated by more than a sense of charity but by an acknowledgment of the metaphysical equality of all God's creatures and a moral commitment to social justice, anchored in what Wheeler aptly calls “renewing grace” (Wheeler 2010: 2, 8).

My argument in this paper is that Wesley's theologically informed social ethics can be translated into the modern language of rights, especially social-economic and development rights, and that commitment to this category of rights may be what is required to arrest the scandal of asphyxiating poverty that contemporary globalization is imposing on Africa and much of the Third World countries. Of course, in appropriating

Wesley and the Methodist tradition he inspired, we must guard against the tempting danger of misplaced concreteness, which is the tendency to disregard the temporal and contextual gap between our generation and Wesley's. As Maddox aptly warns, "we can reconnect to Wesley and later Methodist traditions without it becoming a type of 'Wesley Fundamentalism'" (Maddox 2005, 49; see also Withrow 2007, 35). This implies that Wesley's socio-ethical critique of economic imperialism can also benefit, or in fact, be combined with modern theory of rights, to mount effective opposition to all that threatens and degrades human life and dignity in the name of global capitalism. As I will show in this paper, the ratification of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (UN 1966) signaled the intent of the international community to provide legal foundation and support to matters of local and global social justice. Likewise, the right to development, first recognized by the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1977, and enshrined by the General Assembly in the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development, aims to bridge the deep-rooted and growing inequalities among nations. Contrary to the suggestion that each nation must bear its own yoke, a position that can be defended on the basis of another principle of international relations, namely, the doctrine of national sovereignty, the right to development was inspired by the conviction that the international community bears some responsibility for assisting states whose resources are inadequate to ensure the human rights of their own citizens, or for providing direct assistance to those individuals in dire need.

Focusing on the institutional dimensions of globalization, that is, on a tangled jumble of social, economic, and political institutions in which we are all, as citizens of the world, embedded, and that have created and are maintaining an unjust state of affairs,

and with Africa's experience as a case study, I argue that globalization has not only failed to produce the anticipated benefits heralded by its advocates, but has in fact unleashed massive deprivation and staggering inequality on the continent. The paper is divided into four parts. In addition to the introduction, part 2 begins with a review of the putative virtues of globalization and then discusses its institutional and policy practices that are responsible for the poverty and precariousness of Africa and other least developed countries. In part 3, I defend the normative vision of socio-economic and development rights, which I argue represent a pre-emptive attempt by the international community to prevent and respond to the kinds of deprivations that globalization is unleashing. The theoretical and practical import of this part is to show that the institutional and policy practices of globalization could indeed be beneficial if shaped or transformed by the ethical visions of socio-economic and development rights. The international human rights instruments separate socio-economic rights from development rights on the basis of their objects, that is, those against whom the rights are claimed. The former are commonly claimed against one's own society, typically the government of that society, while the latter are intended to be claimed against the international community. I argue in this article that this traditional division of labor is unwarranted in the context of the present realities of globalization. Globalization has blurred the distinction between fellow-citizens and strangers, and therefore both socio-economic rights and development rights can and should be claimed against the global community. I draw upon Wesleyan perspective and African communitarian moral tradition, among others, in part 4 to articulate a motivational rationale for taking global inequality and poverty seriously.

Further clarification of my interpretation of globalization as a social institution or set of social institutions, rather than simply a process (an amorphous one at that), is in order. A social institution does not refer simply to organized collective agents, e.g., the World Bank or International Monetary Fund (IMF), but fundamentally to a social system's practices or "rules of the game," which govern interactions among individual and collective agents as well as their access to material resources. Such institutions, according to one scholar, "define and regulate property, the division of labor, sexual and kinship relations, as well as political and economic competition, for example; and they also govern how collective projects are adopted and executed, how conflicts are settled, and how social institutions themselves are created, revised, interpreted, and enforced" (Pogge 1999, 337). Globalization denotes the totality of all these elements—the rules of the emerging global game—and the significance of understanding it as such is to demonstrate the malleability of social institutions. Since these institutions and the rules governing them are products of human action, they are not unchangeable or beyond human control. They can be sustained, transformed, or abolished, depending on the kind of impact they have on human life.

The Promise and Perils of Globalization

Globalization is a complex constellation of structures and is as old as the origins of civilization, predating the 18th century colonization as a particular form of social and labor relations. A proper assessment of its logic, and especially of its consequences on Africa, must take into account its historical trajectories and understand its current manifestation in terms of its continuities and discontinuities with the past (Sen 2001, 6).

Mittelman identifies three epochs in the evolution of globalization. The first is "*incipient globalization*," which occurred before the sixteenth century when the globe first began to shrink through inter-group and cross-societal interactions. The main characteristics of this form of globalization were conquest, trade, and migration; and although power imbalance existed during this period, its deleterious effects were mitigated by countervailing values of fellow-feeling and communal support. The emergence of a new type of economy and social relations marked globalization's second phase, defined as *bridging globalization*, which coincided with the rise of capitalism in Western Europe. This phase was remarkable for its understanding of human relations solely in terms of economic principles, and for its defense of social practices and institutional structures that were shaped by "the combination of competitive markets oriented to profit maximization, wage labor, and the private ownership of the major means of production" (Mittelman 2000, 18). The era set in motion what was to become the distinctive stigma of the twentieth century, namely, the objectification of the human subjects and the commodification of social relations. It was during this period that Africa and much of the Third World became territorial satellites of European powers, and their economies have been held hostage to these powers ever since, with the United States and Japan becoming additional members of the global economic hegemons. This second phase terminated in the early 1970s and a new and final phase was ushered in almost immediately, comprising what Mittelman identifies as "*accelerated globalization*," whose main driving force is "hypercompetition," a process "accompanied by a restructuring of production, including its spatial reorganization, which, is, in turn, facilitated both by technological advances and state policies" (Mittelman 2000, 19).

In all its three phases, the logic of globalization has remained essentially the same, which is to mould the world in the image of market forces. Its contemporary shape is consistent with its earlier animating vision. Today's globalization is the historical outcome of a global capitalist project of an integrated world market, that is several centuries old, even if this market is one in which the few powerful rich fleece the majority poor, in a world characterized by wide differences in development, wealth, resources, and power. What to make of this integrated, global capitalist project is hotly contested by scholars and observers alike. There are optimists, caustically referred to by a group of scholars as hyperglobalists, who welcome globalization for its ability to subject people everywhere to the disciplines of the global marketplace. The consequence is "denationalization" of economies and the related development of "transnational networks" of production, finance and so on (Held et al 1999, 1). From this perspective, globalization is a transformatory capitalist project that is dissolving international borders and rendering the nation-state and traditional concepts of sovereignty irrelevant and obsolete.

Key elements of globalization that have triggered this seismic change include migration and international capital flows, measured as foreign ownership of assets relative to world income, which have facilitated cheaper and faster transportation and revolutionary changes in telecommunications. As a specific feature of contemporary globalization, financial liberalization "seeks to remove all national and cultural barriers to the free movement of international capital, and to secure for it privileged treatment within the economic domain of every country" (Tandon 1998, 2). It is also contended that the annual growth of the world economy and a corresponding improvement in real living

standards are related to these global processes (Mandle and Ferleger 2000, 8-13). Large developing countries, such as China and India, and low-income ones, such as Uganda, Vietnam, and Mexico are cited as examples of globalization's success, demonstrating the causal relationship between openness to international trade and investment and the narrowing of the gap between rich and poor countries and between the rich and poor within countries (Dollar and Kraay 2002, 125-28). Even Cuba and communist China are doing more business with capitalist economies and carrying out internal reforms along market lines, although they refuse to admit to such ideological somersaults. The path out of poverty, following this line of reasoning, is not to recoil from, but to engage, globalization: "The predicament of the poor across the world cannot be reversed by withholding from them the great advantages of contemporary technology, the well-established efficiency of international trade and exchange, and the social as well as economic merits of living in open, rather than closed, societies" (Sen 2001, 6).

Thus, the antiglobalists are dismissed as being utterly unrealistic and offering a vision of life not shared by the poor whose interests they are purportedly fighting to protect. One scholar lashed out at "some feminists" who he said complain about the young girls that are being exploited by multinationals, but forget that these girls may in fact treasure "the ability to work away from home," and that the multinationals operating in developing countries "pay their workers more than 10 percent above the going wage" (Bhagwati 2002, 5-6). In short, rather than being an enemy of social progress, pro-globalization theorists see it as both economically and socially benign, increasing overall wealth and positively impacting poverty, literacy, gender equality, cultural autonomy, and diversity (Ohmae 1995).

Concrete empirical data serve to buttress this sanguine view of globalization. The global economy has grown impressively since the end of World War II. It currently stands at US\$30 trillion, thanks to the intensification of international trade and investment (UNDP 1998, 183). Even while humankind has doubled during the past 39 years, from three billion to six billion people (UNDP 1998, 177), the real world product (i.e., the inflation-adjusted sum of all gross domestic products or GDPs) has quadrupled in the same period, so that real per capita world product is now roughly twice what it was in 1960 (UNDP 1998, 140-43). Genuine affluence is no longer reserved to a tiny minority. Hundreds of millions are enjoying a high standard of living with lots of free time during and after their working years, allowing ample opportunities to enjoy travel, education, cars, household appliances, computers, and so on. Incomes in the top quintile (20 percent) of world population now afford about 50 times as much purchasing power on average as those in the bottom quintile do — and they are even 220 times higher if the conversion is done in terms of market exchange rates (Ravallion 2003).

While the picture of human life suggested by these data may be true, the truth is at best partial and at worst distorted. The irony of globalization, as an index of social and economic processes, is that it both enables and encourages us to have an intimate awareness of events and conditions of life beyond our immediate contexts. Relying only on the data from the United States, Europe, and a pocket of other countries to proselytize globalization as a desirable organizing framework for social relations masks the realities of life in the bulk of the world, which consists most of the developing and least developed countries. The approach also ignores a fundamental truth insisted upon by Amartya Sen, perhaps the best authority on the virtues and vices of the market economy,

that the use of this device—market economy—“can generate many different results, depending on how physical resources are distributed, how human resources are developed, what rules prevail and so on, and [that] in all these spheres, the state and the society have roles, within a country and in the world” (Sen 2001, 6). Differently put, globalization is far from a linear, uniform or homogenizing process; it is neither uniform in its reach or impact, nor addresses the inequities in the international political economy.

Thus, an important issue to address in the context of globalization is *inequality*, “between as well as within nations,” assessing not only “disparities in affluence, but also gross asymmetries in political, social and economic power” (Sen 2001, 6). An assessment of globalization that ignores how it affects the flourishing of persons is both short-sighted and squint-eyed. Human persons are flourishing when their lives are good, or worthwhile, in the broadest sense, when they have access to “the goods they need to develop and realize a conception of a personally and ethically worthwhile life” (Pogge 1999, 335). How the gains of globalization are distributed is just as important as the process by which, and the probability that they could be, created. Globalization’s score sheet on the issue of distributive fairness is abysmally grim. If data are to be believed, one cannot but regard the notion of a benevolent global market as a myth, a neoliberal economic ruse that hides the morally ambiguous and paradoxical character of the emerging global society.

Existing alongside the phenomenal affluence that globalization is believed to have created are the desperate conditions of the world’s poorest quarter or quintile: 1.3 billion persons, that is, 22 percent of the world’s population, who live below the international poverty line, which means that their daily income has less purchasing power than one Dollar had in the US in 1985, less purchasing power than \$1.53 has in the US today. As

a consequence of such severe poverty, 841 million persons (14 percent) are today malnourished, 880 million (15 percent) are without access to health services, one billion (17 percent) are without adequate shelter, 1.3 billion (22 percent) are without access to safe drinking water, two billion (33 percent) are without electricity, and 2.6 billion (43 percent) are without access to sanitation (UNDP 1998, 49). As a further consequence of such severe poverty, a quarter of all children between 5 and 14, 250 million in all, are compelled to work, often under cruel conditions in mines, quarries, and factories, in agriculture, construction, textile and carpet production, or as domestic servants, prostitutes, or soldiers. At least 120 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 work full time. The number is 250 million, or more than twice as many, if we include those for whom work is a secondary activity (ILO 2002). About one third of all deaths, some 50,000 daily, are due to poverty-related causes such as measles, pneumonia, and diarrhea, which could easily be prevented through adequate nutrition and safe drinking water or be cured through cheap rehydration packs and antibiotics (UNICEF 1998). If conditions here in the US resembled those in the developing countries, we would have about 14 million working children under 15 and 3500 poverty-related deaths per day.

Contrary to the jubilant declaration in certain international financial circles that the embrace of market-based development and great advances in the global circulation of goods, capital, and ideas are creating wealth and bringing new opportunities (World Bank 1995, 1), globalization has actually exposed billions of people to monumental risks. It has created an unjust condition of radical inequality and penury that is extreme, persistent, pervasive, and yet, avoidable (Pogge 1998, 502-03). Africa is most overburdened by this condition because of the manner in which it is integrated into the global economy. By the

terms of its integration, Africa is conditioned to never-ending impoverishment. For instance, Africa's external debt burden since the 1980s has grown more onerous and increasingly unmanageable.

According to the *1998 African Economic Report*, the burden of the debt overhang remains one of the most critical hindrances to the economic recovery of the continent. It argues that debt strongly and negatively affects economic growth, threatens the sustainability of reforms and prevents the development of a capable and functioning state due to the fiscal crisis that it engenders (ECA 1998, 8-9). In 1996 alone, for example, the \$12 billion spent by sub-Saharan Africa governments on debt servicing was equivalent to more than 5 percent of the region's GDP for the same year. Expressed differently, this amount of resources represented more than the sub-region's combined expenditure on primary health and basic education for that year. These relatively huge transfers from the world's poorest region are slowly but inexorably consigning African citizens to a future of deepening poverty and helplessness. In fact, the African continent is the only developing region in the world whose human welfare indicators are worsening and the proportion of people living below poverty line is increasing (UNDP 1994, 165). Life expectancy is below sixty years in twenty-eight countries. Life expectancy is below fifty years in eighteen countries. Life expectancy in Sierra Leone is just thirty-seven years; about half of the adult populations of at least thirteen countries are illiterate. Half or more of women are illiterate in at least eighteen countries. Children under five die at rates in excess of 100 per 1,000 in at least twenty-eight countries. In Sierra Leone, the rate is 335 per 1,000 (World Bank 1999). In the words of the *1995 World Development*

Report, “the plight of the African continent remains the most serious challenge for the emerging world order” (World Bank 1995, 122).

The logic of the new global order makes it less likely that African governments will be able to reverse the misfortunes of their citizens. Apart from the fact that Africa has been more of an observer and victim than a participant in the drawing up of the new global trading regime on which globalization partly rests—the World Trade Organization (WTO), a lot of the rules of the game discriminate against the resource-rich, but poor countries of Africa. Rather than enhancing human capabilities in Africa, the entrenchment of market forces through structural adjustment programs and neo-liberal reforms have actually degraded them because, unlike in Asia, South East Asia, and Latin America where foreign aid and foreign direct investments surged between 1980 and 2000, Africa’s “share of world trade dropped by two-thirds during that time” (Rosenberg 2002, 50). Emphasis on trade liberalization, economic deregulation, and the retrenchment of the state simply lay open the resources and economies of African countries for the picking by the powerful multinationals and financial speculators. Shell, Texaco, and Mobil Oil companies are more powerful in Nigeria today than the government of the country, military or civilian. They not only influence and determine the nature of economic policy but also political developments and contestations. In fact, developed nations no longer hide behind diplomatic language and culture to express their political interests in their relations with developing states. Their control over information, foreign aid, loans, investment, and military hardware is now easily mobilized to support political and economic agendas for poverty-stricken and debt-ridden states (Mkandawire & Olukoshi 1995; Olukoshi 1999). Africa’s position in the global division of labor as an

exporter of primary commodities and resources also means that the continent is short-changed in the global drive toward financial liberalization. The prices of coffee, cocoa, and tin—the staple exports of many African countries—are no match for those of BMW and IBM computers. Africans simply do not have the bargaining power to decide how much they get for what they produce. Pogge aptly captured this reality of relational asymmetry embedded in globalization:

Thanks to our vastly superior military and economic strength, we citizens of the developed countries enjoy a position of overwhelming political dominance in this system, and, through this system, we also dramatically affect the circumstances of the global poor--via investments, loans, military aid, trade, sex tourism, culture exports, and much else. Their very survival often depends decisively (for example, through the price of their foodstuffs or their opportunities to find work) upon our demand behavior, which may determine such things as whether local landowners will grow cash crops (coffee, cotton, flowers) for export or food for local consumption (Pogge 1998, 504).

Thus, the rules of globalization constitute a core injustice not only because they produce disparate results between poor and rich countries, but also because the rules have been from the beginning unequally applied. To some (and they are few) the rules are never applied because they made the rules, while the rest of the world community must strictly comply if they expect to be listened to, although compliance is far from being a guarantee that their interests would be protected. The so-called global village is a world whose basic ground rules are being centrally managed to the fullest extent that grossly unequal power allows. Yes, nations have never been equal, historically speaking, but the distinctive character of modern globalization is that it has made international inequality much worse. Globalization has done relatively more for the rich and powerful nations because it was designed, by the rich and powerful, to do precisely this (Hurrell and Woods 1995, 460). They controlled the meta-rules, the rules that determined the rules

governing globalization, even if, as Tina Rosenberg rightly notes, these privileged countries achieved their development through their defiance of globalization's precepts:

No nation has ever developed over the long term under the rules being imposed today on third-world countries by the institutions controlling globalization. The United States, Germany, France and Japan all became wealthy and powerful nations behind the barriers of protectionism. East Asia built its export industry by protecting its markets and banks from foreign competition and requiring investors to buy local products and build local know-how. These are all practices discouraged or made illegal by the rules of trade today (Rosenberg 2001, 30).

Although Africa, like other similarly situated regions, may not be able to escape globalization (it is debatable whether it ever could), it would have no chance of playing more than “a courtesan role” if the present institutional and policy rules of globalization are not changed. In the context of the global political economy, a region or nation is said to be a courtesan if it “is beholden to more powerful interests”; “submissive in its policies, if not in rhetorical flourishes, because choice is constrained; and engaged in illicit relationships.” Such a nation or region also suffers from “loss of control in the geoeconomy,” is run by heavy bureaucracies, and is “surely collusive in the sense that political power is a route—sometimes the only one—to wealth” (Mittelman 2000, 25-26). Sadly, there are more courtesans than active players in the present regime of globalization, and only more equitable rules can enable ordinary citizens of wealthy countries as well as the poor of the world to have a stake in the system. Activists and theorists on both sides of the debate recognize the need to make globalization more humane, but there is a wide range of opinions on the nature and scope of the rules necessary to accomplish this purpose. Missing from many of the suggestions being proffered is a moral vision, religious or otherwise, that is capable of guiding whatever policy and institutional choices that are made in the direction of human good. Such a vision must have at its core the advancement and protection of human welfare interests, principally, “those associated

with the material needs of human beings, such as the concern for survival and for physical and psychic health and security” (Little and Twiss 1973, 38).

An example of such a vision is offered by M. Douglas Meeks in his theological account of globalization, reflecting not only on the processes it denotes but also on the normative function of this phenomenon as a rhetorical device. Meeks links the language of globalization with that of *oikonomia*, grounded in the Trinitarian principles of individuality and community, and expressed “in the love that binds by making every individual free and frees through the power of self-giving” (Meeks 1995, 113-14). *Oikonomia* constitutes the globalized world as a public household and places the burden of survival or livelihood of each member squarely on the shoulder of all members of the household. The overriding question shaping the identity of this household is whether everyone in it can get what it takes to live. Unless and until “radically different people and peoples” are willing “to live for each other’s lives and for the life of nature” (Meeks 1995, 114), the world, that is, our globalized world, may not have any future.

The universal principles of human rights share this theological vision of *oikonomia*, in that they too function as a meaningful rhetoric for discussing society’s response to basic human needs. Notwithstanding the differences in the cultural, political and economic traditions existing in the world, few people challenge the conceptual intelligibility of human rights or their instrumental power to protect the rock-bottom of human existence. The emphasis on the universal *human* as the subject of rights helps to sensitize us to the global context our existence, to its limitations and its possibilities, and to the burden of responsibility that we bear for its enrichment or degradation. Among the many rights that the international community has considered appropriate for humans to

claim, socio-economic and development rights are the most effective for addressing the crises and challenges that globalization creates.

Seeking Refuge Under Socio-Economic and Development Rights

The Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) proclaims the adoption of this instrument by the international community as “a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations,” and articles 22-27 of the same instrument declares an array of rights designed to protect people against social, economic, and cultural deprivations and oppression. It was not until 1966, almost two decades after the adoption of the UDHR, that social and economic rights were codified as legally binding obligations under the umbrella of ICESCR. The Cold War, US ideological predilections, and the perceived scope and complexity of social and economic rights were partly responsible for the delay in the legal ratification of these rights. While support for social and economic rights has continued to rise, as evidenced in the number of states that have become parties to ICESCR (142 as of March 2000), they still remain the poor relation of their civil and political counterparts (UN 1999). Similarly, the right to development, which is provided for, successively, in articles 55 and 56 of the UN Charter, article 28 of UDHR, and the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development, is observed more in breach than in observance and implementation. Rather than being a standard of achievement common to all peoples and nations, both sets of rights have remained the exclusive preserve of the countries of the North, while attention to them in the poorer countries is largely at the level of lip-service.

One might wonder why these sets of rights—socio-economic and development—were codified under two legal instruments. To answer this question, we would have to consider the normative assumptions behind the two rights. The intended beneficiaries of social and economic rights, the first to be developed, were human persons who, presumably, hold the rights against their national governments rather than against the international community. Underlying this interpretation is a contractual understanding of political life, in which the government, functioning as a public steward, mobilizes the resources of the nation to protect the necessities of life and to provide for the foundations of an adequate quality of life. The necessities of life, at a minimum, are those against which globalization now coercively militates—rights to adequate nutrition, housing, health, and education, all of which “provide foundations upon which human development can occur and human freedom flourish.” They also require conceptualizations “in terms of an entitlement both to be equal as humans and to be equal as members of society” (Scott and Macklem 1992, 9-10). Social and economic rights were thus conceived against the backdrop of a well-functioning and self-sufficient state, capable of securing for its citizens those basic material conditions for human agency that modern experience has shown to be both necessary and effective.

Few states can claim this status today, notwithstanding the fact that majority of the states outside the G-8 club have historically asserted, in both their rights rhetoric and constitutional traditions, the lexical priority of social and economic rights over civil and political rights. The primacy accorded these rights in the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, otherwise known as the Banjul Charter, is one example. With qualified exceptions in Asia, the irony of social and economic rights is that those who are regularly

denied of them are citizens of the countries that have historically defended them against other categories of rights. The reasons are not simply that their governments are inept and corrupt, which they clearly are, but more fundamentally because these countries are poor. The inability of many countries to guarantee social and material security to their citizens is one of the reasons some scholars object to the normative status of social and economic rights to begin with, contending that they are not strictly rights but aspirational ideals lacking any peremptory force. As one scholar argues, “the incorporation of economic and social rights in the human rights canon is simply spitting in the wind, when hundreds of millions suffer from malnutrition and vulnerability to disease and starvation. Worse still, it is an insult to them to insist on their ‘human right’ when there is no realistic prospect of these being upheld” (Beetham 1995, 41). It is a simple moral truth that *ought* implies *can*, and a state that is chronically comatose can hardly be expected to give life to others.

The realization that many states were (and still are) unable to protect the welfare interests of their citizens led to the creation of the right to development, otherwise called a third generation right. Proponents of this right were initially interested in using it to justify assistance to poor countries, with a view to facilitating and enhancing their physical and economic growth. Many now consider that focus to be hidebound and call for a conception of development that is person-centered, in which the real freedoms that people enjoy are “both the *primary end* and the *principal means* of development” (Sen 1999, 36). Political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, and protective security are key components of sustainable development (Sen 1999, 38-40).

Although states are commonly understood as the subjects of this right, in that a state accorded it can assert a claim (moral and perhaps legal) to an equitable share in the

economic and social wellbeing of the world; in point of fact, it is the people who are the ultimate beneficiaries of this right. The reason is obvious: the right to development is a necessary precondition for the satisfaction of social and economic rights. “Without a tolerable degree of development,” Abi-Saab maintains, a “society will not be materially in a position to grant and guarantee these rights to its members, i.e., of providing the positive services and securing the minimum economic standards which are required by these rights” (Abi-Saab 1980, 163). So conceived, the right to development challenges the conventional division of labor between the society of which one is a member and the international community, as well as the distinction between obligation to fellow-citizens and to strangers. It seems both specious and disingenuous to expect massively impoverished countries to meaningfully provide for the economic rights of their citizens. It is also wicked to consider the welfare interests of poor people as less deserving of our attention because they are not fellow-citizens.

These reasons explain why Africa and the rest of the Third World see themselves as the intended beneficiaries of the right to development because they possess the characteristics used by the international community to classify certain societies as developing or less developed countries. According to a former World Bank’s official, these are societies whose citizens are severely deprived and “struggling to survive in a set of squalid and degraded circumstances almost beyond the power of our sophisticated imaginations and privileged circumstances to conceive” (Singer 1993, 219). More importantly, representatives of these societies argue that the developed nations, as members of the international community, bear the responsibility for fulfilling the

obligation of this right. In the opinion of one African jurist, these nations are the powerful agents of global events, and

Since they bring about these events in their interests alone, it is proper, considering that they benefit from the advantages, that they share the disadvantages. They decide on peace and war, the international monetary system, the conditions governing business relations; they impose ideologies, and so on. What could be more natural than that they should assume responsibility for the consequences of events and circumstances that are their own doing? What other justification could there be for the right of veto held by only five States out of the whole family of the United Nations?...The responsibility for the harm inflicted should be shouldered by those who caused it; it is a matter of elementary justice (M'Baye 1978, 9).

M'Baye's view is consistent with the position of the All African Conference of Churches, which accused the West of unjust trade and debt repayment policies that "create fertile ground for the exploitation of labor, the plundering of Africa's material resources and broadening the gap between rich and poor, urban and rural communities" (AACC 2001, 29). The Conference also criticized the process that allow African dictators to obtain loans from banks in the West, which are invariably siphoned out of the countries in whose behalf they are borrowed, and then squandered on luxuries or to acquire mansions in Western cities. Africa cannot realistically develop, the Council warns, unless Western nations are willing to, at the maximum, cancel Africa's huge and asphyxiating debt, or in the minimum, allow "dictator wealth and loot in international banks" to be used in repaying debts (AACC 2001, 29). Additionally, they must be willing to offer better financial assistance, price indexing, and better trade agreement terms for stabilization of commodity and raw material prices.

Like social and economic rights, some scholars have also challenged the legitimacy of the right to development. One argues that the manner in which the right is typically asserted eviscerates it of any practical meaning. Development right is "both conceptually and practically misguided, at best a legally and morally confused notion that

is likely to be positively detrimental to the realization of human rights” (Donnelly 1984, 261). Because the nation-state is often understood to be the subject of this right, it seems absurd to claim that a state possesses intrinsic dignity on the basis of which it can make a justifiable claim to development against other states. Ordinarily, development is conceived of as both a process—that is, “a right to participate in a process of growth, to strive after self-actualization in conditions of dignity”—and an end—that is, “a right to *be* developed.” A right to development in the first sense is redundant because that is also the chief object of civil/political rights, and rarely attainable in the second because that “is an overarching moral goal” to which no one is ordinarily entitled simply by virtue of being a human being: “There is no more a right to be developed than there is a right to be just or to be holy” (Donnelly 1984, 273). The central problem, then, in the African conception of rights is its failure to distinguish aspirational statements or goals from human rights, in the strict sense of titles and claims.

A related criticism against the right to economic development is fueled by the perception that its proponents are self-interestedly exploiting the causal links between Africa’s colonial experience and its present problems. While no one disputes the role that imperialism, transnational corporations, unequal exchange, and foreign domination and exploitation have played and continue to play in the generation, consolidation, and reproduction of the African predicament, these facts should not be exploited to justify and rationalize the deficiencies and shortcomings of the ruling elites, nor to obscure “indigenous class accumulation of national wealth, and indigenous use of coercive state power to ensure that wealth stays in the hands of those who control the government”

(Howard 1989, 217). The upshot of these two objections is that if the notion of the right to development is meaningless, we bear no transnational duties toward such rights.

One may, however, affirm the legitimacy of both socio-economic and development rights but still deny any transnational duty or obligation toward them. This is in fact the greatest obstacle facing the enforcement of these rights in Africa or elsewhere. If the basis for burdening rich countries and their citizens with the fulfillment of human rights obligation abroad cannot be articulated, then all the talk about redressing global inequality and poverty eradication via the instrumentality of enforcing economic development rights would remain just that—mere talk! In other words, why should the government and citizens of rich countries care about the plight of non-citizens? Even if it is true that the condition of material indigence from which poor Africans and others suffer is not inevitable because it can be corrected by the well off, for they have the means to do so, why should the latter care? These questions call for articulating what Richard Miller calls a motivational rationale for transnational obligation toward socio-economic and development rights.

The Question of Motivation

- Wesley's view of
 - The indignity of suffering that poverty imposes
 - The injustice of poverty
 - The equality of all human beings
 - The moral imperative of holiness

If we understand a motivational rationale as “a reason for action, a rational incentive for assuming risks to oneself in pursuit of a cause or principle” (Miller 2000, 7), then the starting point from a Wesleyan perspective for taking the moral obligation to the poor seriously is the idea of Christian discipleship. As Sondra Wheeler brilliantly explains, “the distinctiveness of Wesleyan theology is in its insistence on the life of faith as only begun in conversion. Conversion is simply the punctuation that marks the start of discipleship, a process in which ‘God’s love shed abroad in our hearts’ effectively transform both our consciousness and our actions. So then, for Wesley the life of Christian discipleship simply is the life impelled by active and universal love. There is no other saving faith than that which awakens the heart in joy and gratitude to God, prompting it to respond to love in love for God and for the neighbor in all her concreteness” (p. 2). To be sure, Christians have no monopoly on moral knowledge or the ability apprehend the claims of the poor on our conscience, but Wesley is less confident than his contemporaries are in the ability of natural reason or even benevolence alone as a motivating rationale for undertaking acts of disinterested love. This is because a moral life understood outside of the economy of God’s grace is nothing but an empty and soulless existence. So conceived, he describes conscience, which some see as “a ‘moral sense’ shared by all persons” (Lovin 2009, 649), as “that faculty of the soul which, by the assistance of the grace of God, sees at one and the same time, (1) our own tempers and lives, the real nature and quality of our thoughts, words and action; (2) the rule whereby we are to be directed, and (3) the agreement or disagreement therewith” (Wesley 1986, 485).

Even when a Christian's self-understanding, especially "in relation to God's goodness, God's ordering of creation, and God's commandments" (Lovin 2009, 647) predisposes him/her to take the needs of the neighbor seriously, the predisposition may still not result in concrete actions on behalf of the neighbor unless there is a way to link the interests of both. Wheeler gestures in this direction when she observes Wesley's tendency "to view the connection between things. His lifelong work with the poor was rooted in an understanding of Christian vocation founded in turn upon a theology of creation and redemption; every person was the object of God's mercy and God's desire for reconciliation and reunion with his fallen creations" (Wheeler 2010, 7). In other words, an acknowledgment of the metaphysical equality of all human beings in terms of their common inclination to sin and participation in God's grace enables a Christian to see him/herself in the shoes of the needy neighbor.

Some contemporary moral philosophers have argued, however, that although the moral agent and the recipient(s) of his/her beneficent actions may be connected in some important respects, the moral merit of such actions does not necessarily lie in its disinterestedness. In his discussion of humanitarian military intervention, for example, Michael Walzer proposes indirect self-defense as a motivating rationale for transnational duty. Essentially, he is arguing that a state should put its own soldiers at risk even when its national interests are not immediately at stake because states should, for their own sake, have an interest in global stability and global humanity. Over the long run, actions taken in the interest of global atrocities will result in indirect self-defense or self-protection. In this case, self-protection is the motivation for intervention (Walzer 1995). This argument is similar to the one made by many anti-globalization activists who see

pervasive and avoidable poverty as a threat to international peace and security, and believe that economic assistance from rich countries toward poorer ones is an act of enlightened self-interest that also benefit rich countries (Tandon 2000).

Miller finds the motivation of self-protection or enlightened self-interest inadequate because it is not likely to affect the presumptions and conduct of those “nations that have the capacity to act, but are not at risk of foreseeable danger” (Miller 2000, 17-18). The approach would thus result in asymmetrical division of labor, leaving vulnerable countries to bear the risks that less vulnerable and more-capable countries should also share. The indirect self-protection paradigm also seems to locate responsibility for intervention in those countries that are geographically closer, and Miller believes that leaves too many places too vulnerable (Miller 2000, 18). While the approach derives from considerations of efficiency, an extreme form of it may even assign greater moral weight to pure self-regarding acts than other-regarding acts that indirectly benefit the self. Christopher Wellman articulates this position in the context of economic intervention when he suggests that it is important to prevent economic inequality from becoming too great *within* a nation, rather than *between* societies. This is because the adverse consequences of economic inequality are more intimately felt within a society than between societies. Poverty within a society may lead to oppressive relationships and undermine belief in political equality that is important for the sustenance of citizens’ affection for their nation. Thus, we have special duties toward compatriots because they stand in some special relationship to us (Wellman 2000). In this modified version, the paradigm ceases to be one of indirect self-protection but of principled communitarianism, the idea that obligation to “communities of shared value”

(Walzer 1983) has a lexical priority over duties owed to fellow members of more limited communities.

Wellman's position is not inconsistent with the view that the economic rights or interests of strangers are just as important as those of fellow compatriots. The argument is simply that duties toward the latter have a higher priority over, and may be incompatible with, obligations to the former. Fulfillment of moral duty begins, and very nearly ends, 'at home.' Burdensome duties end 'at home' only because the special character of one's relationships with and responsibilities toward fellow members of the same community effectively exhaust the resources and capacities that anyone can reasonably be expected to devote to the performance of duty. This in no way implies that other communities and individuals who find their identities within them are of less than equal importance or worth. It reflects the de facto division of labor that is unavoidable if relationships within a community are to be deeper than relationships across communities (Rorty 1996, 5-15).

A possible response to the above position is the "solidarity in the global village" rationale, inspired by John Wesley's famous assertion that "I look on all the world as my parish" (Wesley...), which emphasizes global interdependence by recognizing how we, as nations and people, are inextricably linked to one another. Within this paradigm, distinctions between internal and international affairs are blurred and the imperative of "cosmopolitan solidarity" is heightened (Miller 2000, 19). Cosmopolitanism, according to Martha Nussbaum, is rooted in the assumption that "each of us dwells...in two communities--the local community of our birth, and the community of human argument and aspiration that 'is truly great and truly common, in which we look neither to this corner nor to that, but measure the boundaries of our nation by the sun. It is this

community that is, fundamentally, the source of our moral obligations" (Nussbaum 1996, 7). Unlike the indirect self-protection paradigm and its principled communitarian alternate, which posit an opposition between local and global welfare interests, cosmopolitans do not regard solidarity with immediate neighbors and sympathy for strangers as mutually exclusive.

African traditional religion also espouses this cosmopolitan moral outlook, in part because the rigid dichotomy between the sacred and the secular that is the hallmark of Western moral thinking. In traditional Africa, human beings understand themselves to be part of a cosmic community that includes the spirit world (of which nature is a part), other humans beyond one's own kith and kin, and the future generation. This conception of humanity creates the imperative to subsume the pursuit of private interests to the welfare of the community and provides a protection against the material details of existential nightmare that contemporary Africa so vividly illustrates. *Ubuntu* is among a number of indigenous African concepts that have been proposed to capture this relational ideal. As explained by Desmond Tutu, "*Ubuntu* is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, '*Yu, u nobuntu*'; 'Hey, he or she has *ubuntu*'. This means they are generous, hospitable, friendly, caring, and compassionate. They share what they have. It also means humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in theirs. We belong in a bundle of life" (Tutu 1999: 34-35).

As attractive as this paradigm is, it fails to distinguish between positive and negative formulations of responsibility. The former tells us what we should do because we have the means to do it: we should relieve some of the suffering of the poor because it

would not result in significant losses to our own wellbeing. The latter, on the contrary, tells us what we should do because it constitutes a correction of our prior unjust conduct: we should redress global poverty because we were responsible for, and are benefiting from, its unjust and coercive imposition. The former derives from the model of charity, whereas the latter is a Torts principle requiring compensation for victims of intentionally inflicted harm. The moral significance between the two lies in the fact that some may accept the charity model and still “feel entitled to focus on leading their own lives without bothering with worthy causes, especially when the demands these causes makes on them are significant” (Pogge 1998, 502).

The real possibility that the rich and the powerful are capable of displaying this kind of callous indifference toward the suffering of the poor led Augustine, not unlike other early Church Fathers, to distinguish between the necessary goods and the superfluous ones. The former is what are “necessary...to sustain life in order to enjoy God” (quoted in Gonzalez 1990, 216), such as food, clothing, and shelter, while the latter connotes what is not needed for this purpose which, if kept, would amount to misuse since it is necessary to the poor. However, Augustine goes beyond his contemporaries in the interpretation of the moral meaning of giving away superfluous wealth. While they all agree that the proper use of all that one does not need is to share it with the poor, some see such sharing as an expression of charity, and others see it as a means of accumulating religious merits,¹ but for Augustine it is an act of restitution because “not to give to the needy what is superfluous is akin to fraud” (quoted in Gonzalez 1990, 216). He explains

¹ Cyprian lists some of the rewards of almsgiving: It “is a means to atone for sins committed after baptism”; it “increases the power and efficacy of prayer and fasting”; “those who give alms will not suffer physical want”; it is an expression of obedience to Christ’s commandment; it is a form of moral patrimony and inheritance to one’s children; it distinguishes Christians from non-Christians; and it is an “imitation of the bountifulness of God, who shares with all” (see Gonzalez 1990, 125-26).

further: “From those things that God gave you, take that which you need, but the rest, which to you are superfluous, are necessary to others. The superfluous goods of the rich are necessary to the poor, and when you possess the superfluous you possess what is not yours” (quoted in Gonzalez 1990, 216). Wesley would later use the graduated terms of superfluities, conveniences, necessities, and extremities to make a similar point when expounding the Golden Rule (Matt. 7: 12):

We would that all men should love and esteem us, and behave towards us according to justice, mercy, and truth. And we may reasonably desire that they should do us all the good they can do without injuring themselves; yea, that in outward things (according to the known rule) their superfluities should give way to our conveniences, their conveniences to our necessities, and their necessities to our extremities. Now then, let us walk by the same rule: let us do unto all as we would they should do to us. Let us love and honour all men. Let justice, mercy, and truth govern all our minds and actions. Let our superfluities give way to our neighbor’s conveniences (and who then will have any superfluities left?); our conveniences, to our neighbor’s necessities; our necessities to his extremities” (qtd in Heitzentrater 2002, 28).

The solidarity in the global village paradigm is accurate in so far as it affirms our interdependence, but it does not emphasize strongly enough the inherent contradictions within this village, in which the unequal power relations among its members allow the few at the top to design unfair rules of participation and engage in daily behavior that deprive the majority at the bottom of their economic wellbeing. The paradigm therefore makes a mockery of the “village” metaphor in describing our present global predicament. Because the rules of participation in this village allow those benefiting from it to behave as if they have no idea of what is happening on the other side, or as if what is happening does not matter, the resulting injustice becomes difficult or impossible to acknowledge. Unless the paradigm sees global poverty as a consequence of a coercively imposed injustice and not of “extrasocial factors (such as genetic handicaps or natural disasters) that, as such, affect different human beings differentially” (Pogge 1998, 504), the victims

of globalization will have little chance of ever escaping the draconian economic prescriptions of the powerful and rich nations.

Finally, Wesley emphasizes the multiple indignities arising from the condition of poverty as a motivating rationale for seeking to ameliorate the suffering and pain of its victims. Contrary to those who view the evil of poverty as merely consisting in the ridicule to which it subjects its victims, Wesley responds trenchantly thus:

Has poverty nothing worse in it than this, that it ‘makes men liable to be laughed at’?...Is it not worse for one after an hard day’s labour to come back to a poor, cold, dirty, uncomfortable lodging, and to find there not even the food which is needful to repair his wasted strength?... is it not worse to seek bread day by day, and find none? Perhaps to find the comfort also of five or six children, crying for what he has not to give. Were it that he is restrained by an unseen hand, would he not soon ‘curse God and die’? O want of bread! Want of bread! Who can tell what this means unless he hath felt it himself’ (qtd in Heitzentrater 2002, 33).

What Wesley thus bequeaths to us is a language by which to understand poverty as not just a social problem but also a moral catastrophe, and it is the desire to prevent or mitigate the effects of such catastrophes that . He shares the modern sentiments that denying access to the means by which to prevent this catastrophe is to violate priority human interests, the content of which is encapsulated in Article 25.1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), that “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, housing and medical care and necessary social services and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstance beyond his control.”² This conception of economic securities

²The presumably unenforceable soft law of UDHR has been strengthened by Article 11.1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), providing that “The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.” This is a move toward a form of hard (enforceable) law because the provisions ICESCR generate legal responsibilities on the part of the participant parties.

adopts the perspective of the poor, rather than that of their benefactors, repositioning them as active rights-bearers, rather than passive unfortunates. Recognizing their rights means that they are no longer solely beholden to the unpredictable benevolence of the rich, who may not feel that their obligation to provide relief to the poor is triggered until and unless there is ascertainable surplus wealth. Rather, a human rights ethic of poverty envisions an institutional approach to the problem of poverty, requiring in Article 28 of UDHR that “Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.” The import of this provision, according to Thomas Pogge, is that “the moral quality, or justice, of any institutional order [local, national, and international] depends primarily on the extent to which it affords all its participants secure access to the objects of their human rights; any institutional order is to be assessed and reformed principally by reference to its relative impact on the realization of the human rights of those on whom it is imposed” (Pogge 2005, 721). To the extent that the Wesleyan tradition can partly be credited for furnishing or enhancing this understanding of poverty and its remedy, there is much to celebrate in the tradition even while pushing for its continuing renewal.

The desire to protect people against these kinds of indignities lies at the heart of the international doctrine of human rights. This vision is contained in article 28 of the UDHR, which declares that: “Everyone is entitled to a social and institutional order in

which rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.” This provision offers us a more adequate incentive for dealing with the challenges of globalization. This is the rule of the game that globalization needs in order to save and preserve itself. As a *human rights motivational rationale*, this rule makes a claim not just on individuals to engage in acts of charity whenever it is convenient to do so, but on our global institutional structure or order, requiring that it be assessed and reformed principally by reference to its relative impact on rights fulfillment. As Pogge explains elsewhere, “[O]ur responsibilities entailed by human rights are engaged by our participation in any coercively imposed institutional order in which some persons avoidably lack secure access to the objects of their human rights, and these (negative) responsibilities are extended, then, through the emergence of a global institutional order in whose coercive imposition we collaborate” (Pogge 2000, 55).

Globalization will likely remain a permanent feature of our present and future existence, and there may be good reasons to celebrate it. In its present shape, however, it functions more as a tool of avoidable deprivations than of economic empowerment, and without genuine reform in its ground rules, the number of its detractors will continue to swell. If allowed to be tamed by human rights requirements, it could produce the kind of global prosperity that its proponents have proclaimed. Until then, the struggle must continue!

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