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A Sympathy-Driven Diplomatic Ethics

ABSTRACT

The paper deals with the development of an applied ethics for the diplomatic service — a section of applied ethics that is clearly called for in order to non-repressively regulate this part of the public administration, yet one that so far has hardly been addressed in depth. The paper explores some of the specificities of diplomacy as a cooperative game-based profession and builds on the legacy of Max Scheler's philosophical views on the role of sympathy in human relations to lay groundwork for a diplomatic ethics based on sympathy. In doing so, the author revises some of Scheler's starting positions — for Scheler believed that sympathy cannot be a basis for ethics — through first exploring the reasons for Scheler's pessimism about an ethics of sympathy, and then by developing empirically informed groundwork for precisely such an ethics in the diplomatic field. The paper's argument rests on the assumption that, if there is to be an effective ethics for diplomacy as a discipline, it must be simple and based on a dynamic principle that will motivate all participants to cooperate, regardless of their cultural or geo-strategic differences and interests. In other words, such ethics must be capable of taking account of the differing interests, while at the same time providing sufficient common ground in values to ensure cooperation. The author argues that a an applied ethics that is grounded in the functional mechanism of "sympathy" of "fellow-feeling", allows for a regulatory system of behaviour that would satisfy both mentioned conditions: simplicity and sufficient motivational potential to generate cooperative initiatives.

Key words: sympathy, ethics, diplomacy, Max Scheler, commonalities.

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Sympathy as a founding value for ethics

While sympathy is almost universally recognized as a desirable character trait or social habit, because it expedites and makes more satisfying all the social relationships and "transactions", its ability to serve as a founding value for specific ethics is not clear. The functional value of sympathy is primarily cognitive; especially the context of others' feelings, perceptions or impressions can hardly be cognitively accessible to us except through the exercise of sympathy. Max Scheler depicted sympathy as a primal mechanism that species use to relate to each other: he quotes the example of a wasp that lays its eggs inside a caterpillar by stinging the caterpillar in a specific nerve so that the insect is paralysed while the eggs are laid. The wasp has no previous "information" on the caterpillar's anatomy; its ability to deliver poison to the exact right spot is a native capacity, information inherited from past generations. The wasp has not learned where to sting; it just does so.[2]

While bizarre, the "knowledge" the wasp exhibits in stinging the caterpillar is a type of inter-species "sympathy" as a carrier of cognitive potential: the wasp "feels" or, in the extended sense, "knows", how it is for the caterpillar to be stung in a particular way to a particular part of its anatomy; it has a primal relationship with the caterpillar in a way much more innate and profound than the lion has with its prey: the lion learns from its parents that to kill a zebra a particular strategy is required, culminating in an attack on the throat or the spine, while the wasp does not undergo any such learning. The wasp simply "senses" everything it needs to do in order to fertilise the caterpillar: all that it does is led by a biologistically conceived inter-species instinct or "sympathy". Sympathy, in this context, is nothing like "empathy": it is possible to exercise sympathy with a living organism that is entirely instrumental to exploiting or even destroying that organism. Thus, on a base level, sympathy as a primal conduit of cognitive content is morally and emotionally neutral. This context of "sympathy" provides for the broadest application of theory across a range of evolutionary and biologistic arguments aimed to explain both animal and human relations.

Similar though less distasteful examples exist throughout human interactions. It appears that people from very different cultures can sense what pleases and what displeases, even terrorizes, others, and can perform both acts of great humanism and those of great malice, based on pure intuition of the effects certain actions will have on others. Sympathy as an ability to put oneself

[2] Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, translated by Peter Heath, edited by W. Stark, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London and Henley, 1979, p. 29. All references to *The Nature of Sympathy* in this paper are to this edition.

in another's position, to anticipate the reactions to our actions by another, or to share in the common experience of pleasure or pain appears to be rooted in our collective psyche. According to Scheller, sympathy manifests itself, among other ways, as empathy, which is also often devoid of any prior information that could explain its cognitive potential: babies will often cry if other babies cry, even though they are neither hungry nor afraid. The moment other babies stop crying, they also will stop crying. Empathy is a part of our collective identity as human beings, and arguably the same applies to mammals more generally. This intuitionist account of sympathy, and of empathy as one of its manifestations, while widely debated, is not our primary concern. What matters to us is whether sympathy in the narrower sense of sharing positive emotional dispositions to one another can found an ethics, and in particular an applied, professional ethics for diplomacy.

In order to discuss the normative potential of sympathy for diplomatic ethics, certain pre-requisite steps will be taken first. Initially, this includes a brief discussion of the conceptual aspects of "intentionality" for ethics, only to open the argumentative space that allows us to see sympathy as a particular quality of mental states that is directly related to the ways in which *intentionality* is exhibited in human interactions. Thirdly, the argument will move to the reasons for sympathy to play the role of a lead "functional" value in a diplomatic ethics. Finally, some consequences of such an ethics in the concrete sense will be discussed.

Understanding intentionality as a pre-requisite for appreciating the normative potential of sympathy

Cultures permeated with sympathy tend to be more pleasant to live in, but the same holds for any other cultures where positive mutual dispositions of people are more strongly pronounced than elsewhere. Sympathy is a mental and emotional disposition with strong cohesive potential for communities, but the controversy over its capacity to found an ethics rests on the question of whether sympathy can provide an adequate criterion for deciding what is right and what is wrong. In the strictly deductive, logical sense, sympathy can't discriminate between the morally right and the morally wrong, simply because it is a relational concept: one can sympathise with just about anything, both right and wrong. In other words, the fact that one sympathises with something does not make that thing right or wrong, and, while sympathy is "nice" and contributes to the quality of life of all members of communities that tend to be permeated with relations of sympathy, it seems incapable of founding an ethics of its own.

However, while sympathy cannot substitute a general sense of the right and wrong, and in this sense cannot guide what could be called a "foundational

ethics" (an ethics laying out the rights and the wrongs of a particular system of moral beliefs), it can play a key regulatory role within an applied ethics for the professions (at least for some professions), within a pre-existing foundational ethics that is presumably shared by most in a political community. In other words, while sympathy may not be able to generate the sense of right and wrong in a community, once this sense exists (and, presumably, it usually exists in most communities), sympathy can indeed play a key functional role as a value in producing professional ethics whose aim is to adapt the norms to the circumstances of specific professions and maintain the dynamic (motivational) potential in the members of those professions to uphold the right and the wrong. To better understand the way in which sympathy can achieve this applied task it is helpful to briefly relate the idea of "intentionality" to the present discussion of sympathy.

Intentionality and sympathy

In the simplest sense, intentionality is the quality of mental content, speech and action in the broad sense whereby they are "about something". People relate to each other, they speak about something, and their overall behaviour tends to have a referential point that, in most general terms, anchors the purposiveness of human life. If human action is not "about" something, it tends to appear as meaningless, misguided, or psychotic. The way intentionality functions colours everyday interactions; the quality of the intentionality spells the quality of life in most social situations. While the analytic discussion of intentionality is not our primary aim here, suffice it to say that intentionality has been discussed at length by Scheler in *The Nature of Sympathy*, with the seminal work in the 20th century by John Searle.[3] For our purposes the simiple delineation of the concept of intentionality in the broad sense that is given above is sufficient. Scheler was of a firm belief that intentionality is exclusive to human beings, which we may not agree with: if intentionality is merely the quality of mental states that they tend to be "about something", then there appears to be no reason to deny intentionality to the snake that hungrily hypnotises the rabbit into submission. However, this again is not essential for our argument, for even if, contrary to Scheler's belief, intentionality is not exclusive to humans, only in humans it becomes subject to *moral judgements*, because of the freedom by humans to considerably (if not completely) control their intentional impulses, the intentional content of their mental states, and the behaviour that results from such states. The snake's intentionality in projecting appetitive force to the rabbit or the squirrel does not fall under a moral meter,

[3] John Searle, *Intentionality*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983.

for it does not really have a choice: it is inconceivable that it should be able to "restrain itself" on account of the rabbit's rights or for the rabbit's benefit. On the other hand, a man's unrestrained appetitive desire for career advancement or political power very much falls under a moral meter, because the man has the ability to act otherwise; he has the freedom to choose various values, strategies and life-plans. Assuming that the pre-requisites of freedom are fulfilled (e.g. the individual is sane and not under external coercion), human intersubjectivity is fully subject to moral judgement.

It should be seen as uncontroversial that intentional content, coupled with human freedom, is subject to moral judgements, and that the way this judgement will unfold will depend on the sort of values selected for a particular type of morality. Sympathy may be a powerful emotional foundation for social interactions. At the same time, Scheler has shown quite convincingly that the various forms of "sympathy" serve key cognitive purposes, some of which, in the various species, are not conscious. This can be illustrated by numerous examples, but what is really interesting here is to examine sympathy's *normative* potential in the ethical field. Are there reasons to *morally* prefer certain types of normative languages (including that of sympathy) to others in regulating behaviour within certain professions? I shall first focus here on a linguistic and psychological analysis of what normative languages, or normative grammars (the two terms used interchangeably here) imply for a social and political system, and then develop implications for diplomacy as a politically informed profession.[4]

If it is true to say that various propositions or beliefs, which, according to Searle, have a word-to-world direction of fit (essentially conforming to the so-called "correspondence theory of truth", which implies that a proposition is true if and only if it corresponds with the real state of affairs in the world "out there"), are validated by certain truth-conditions, what, then, of intentional content, such as desires or orders? They do not express propositional content, and thus cannot have truth-conditions attached to them. My desire to own a Volvo truck is neither true, nor false — it is either realized in the world, or not. Intentional content thus has conditions of satisfaction, rather than truth-

[4] "Social system" includes a set of norms, institutions and habits that constitute a particular culture in the development of mutual relations in a society. "Political system" is a set of institutions and customs that govern the distribution and exercise of political power. While in some cases it is justified to speak of, for instance, "democratic social and political system", the two are not necessarily consistent, as there are institutional democracies with extremely exclusionary or authoritarian social systems and cultures, and there are quite cooperative and open social systems framed by particularly brutal and authoritarian political systems of the time. Social systems tend to be more longitudinally stable in their normative content than political systems.

conditions, and they depend on a number of circumstances some of which at least are beyond the control of the person whose intentional content it is.

When social relations are at stake, intentional content precedes them all. In the historically broad sense, the hopes, plans, intentions and dreams of those who have helped shape revolutions, modernizations or plunges into dictatorship over time have played a unique role in the actual unfolding of such developments. The directions of intentionality, or prevailing intentionality, of a particular time in a particular society are thus crucial for the nature of events in that society, and the sort of culture fostered by popular education and by the unique role played by political and social elites in framing mindsets in the society is based on the conditioning and building of particular types of intentional content.

Assuming that intentional content (such as intentions or hopes) consists of various representations that are not necessarily realized, it is decidedly a psychological phenomenon. Intentions and hopes depend on representations, beliefs, knowledge and impressions to generate networks of mental states. Such networks allow mental states to become causally operative, or to manifest themselves through cogent and/or organised external action.

In order to decide or intend to drive a Volvo truck, I must first *know* that there are such things as trucks, that Volvo is a factory that makes particular trucks, and some at least very general facts about trucks, in order to like them and to desire to own or drive one. If I was a medieval knight, I would hardly be able to desire to drive a Volvo truck, because the rest of my mental representational network would not give rise to such intentional content. In other worlds, my beliefs and representations would not allow for the creation of a network of mental states that would be able to result in my desire to drive a Volvo truck (or, for that matter, any truck). In addition, I must have certain capacities, such as the ability to sit, move my feet and hands, see signals and obstacles, and perform a myriad of other small things involved in acts such as purchasing, registering, driving and maintaining a truck. Only against the background of such abilities, which I must be conscious of, alongside with the whole context of intentional content, can I form the desire to drive a truck, and more specifically, to drive a Volvo truck.[5]

On a social level, if my intentional mental content includes benevolence and sympathy towards the other members of my political community, this too depends on a complex set of representations, beliefs, and abilities, most of which are socially acquired or learned. This is where we arrive at the critical

[5] Searle simply refers to the contextual representations and intentional content described here as "The Network", and to the background abilities as "The Background" — Searle, pp. 20–5.

terrain that must be crossed to arrive at social solidarity. The idea that one learns to desire certain things, especially in the moral realm, was after Plato and Aristotle first articulated in modern philosophy by the Scottish Enlightenment, by Hutcheson, Shaftesbury, Silver and others. Adam Seligman has recently recounted this in the following way:

> "We know from Alan Silver that (...) (the) private realm of friendship was posited as an ideal. We also know (...) that society was held together by 'natural sympathy', 'moral affections', innate sociability, and so on. (...) In fact, moral sentiment by which 'men are united by instinct, that they act in society from affections of kindness and friendship' was, for the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, an axiomatic property of human mind (...)."[6]

The desire to drive a truck or ride a horse can only be formed if one is familiar with some of the features of either that one could like. One also needs to be aware that one would actually be able to perform the action one desires, should one be given an opportunity to do so. This is clear enough. However, it is far less clear that for a political subject to desire to sympathise with other members of one's community, certain preconditions need to be fulfilled that are not unlike those for the desire to ride a horse. One needs at least to be familiar with what it would be like to sympathise with others, and one must be aware that one is actually able to do so. In addition, one would need to be aware of certain good effects of sympathy that could translate into a desire to sympathise with others. In order for these preconditions to be fulfilled, an appropriate culture needs to pre-exist in the society. Solidarity, and, by extension, sympathy, are cultural traits in a society.

The pedagogical role of the system can be compared to the role of language and to the learning of languages. If a language one speaks is very easy and sufficiently pervasive to get by without having to learn other languages, then an individual is likely to have low motivation to learn other languages. To have an attitude towards other languages, one must be able to appreciate their qualities. For an English speaker to like French, one needs to have heard French often enough to appreciate, for example, its melodic character, to grow to like its pronunciation, and to wander as to whether there are situations and contexts of meaning where French is able to structurally "catch" the meanings in more elegant or more precise ways than English. This is still not enough for someone to form a desire to learn French. To do so, one would need to both like the language, have a personal motive to invest time and energy in learning it, and believe that one is able to accomplish the task. If I have spoken Serbian all my

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6 Adam B. Seligman, *The Problem of Trust*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1997, pp. 60–61.

life, it is by no means clear to me that I can, for example, learn Polish. For me to form a desire to learn Polish or French, I need to be fairly confident that, should I decide to do so, and should there be an adequate opportunity (school, time to be spent in one or both of the respective countries), I would have sufficient capacities to accomplish the task.

What are the social pre-requisites for these cognitive and volitional conditions to be met for me to learn a foreign language? First, learning foreign languages should be a desirable endeavour in the community, unlike learning the skill of picking locks, for example. Secondly, some people in the community should be able to speak other languages in a way that enthuses others to learn to do the same, similarly to athletes' performing to the peak being able to motivate thousands of others to try to pursue sports to the limit of their abilities.

The role of learning volition (learning to wish things) is well known in communities with prodigious corporate cultures: the military, sports clubs and the professions where solidarity is a key functional ingredient for collective success. For a team to work harmoniously all of its members must have learned not just to run, row or shoot at the right time, but also to share certain basic common values so that their own training and work do not "fall out of sync" with the others. The same is true for political communities, and for certain professions; thus for an applied ethics to work as a non-repressive regulatory mechanism in any community conditions of solidarity must be met at a high level and the substantive grounds of solidarity must be in harmony with the general foundation ethics of the community. As long as a group functions on the same foundational ethical principles as the rest of the community, solidarity and sympathy are powerful dynamic regulatory values that allow the group to both maximise its potential, and to preserve its internal relations. While solidarity in crime, though possible, militates against the foundation ethics in a community, solidarity in excellence promotes foundational values and strengthens the profession. Thus an ethics of sympathy, though not a foundational ethics, appears *prima facie* desirable for most professions.

Sympathy and trust

Similarly to discussing sympathy, when one discusses trust one easily falls into the trap of focusing only on its functional value: trusting relations in a society, the same as sympathetic ones, substantially reduce the everyday transaction costs. Doing business without written contracts, lawyers and courts is generally desirable, because it promotes a more optimistic atmosphere, reduces financial costs and loss of time, and maximises the efficiency of transactions. However, this is not all that is needed. Eric Uslaner makes a useful

distinction between at least two fundamental types of trust that are relevant for our discussion in the present context. He distinguishes between the so-called "strategic trust", which is trust in an instrumental and strictly rational sense: I strategically trust someone when I know enough about that person to believe that she can be trusted. I may trust my dentist to put fillings in my teeth, because I have known him for a long time and know that he knows his job, but I may not strategically trust him to fix my roof, because I know nothing about his ability as a builder.

The second type of trust that Uslaner writes about is "moralistic trust". Moral trust is a generalised trust of all other members of the community: people who are trusting in the moral sense tend to adopt a more optimistic worldview, and their positive expectations of others are not easily shaken by individual disappointments. A person who is trusting of others in the moral sense may be cheated just like anybody else, but her moral trust, which is a matter of deeply entrenched values, is unlikely to change because her trust in others has been betrayed on particular occasions.[7]

Just like a sympathetic one, a society where people are more morally trusting is a pleasant one to live in. Uslaner writes about fruit sellers on the border between Maryland and Colorado who leave their fruit stalls unmanned, filled with fruit for the drivers to purchase, and a box to put the money in. Apparently theft is a rare occurence. Uslaner himself does not go as far as requiring any type of substantive moral test for values in a trusting community: he concludes that trusting communities tend to be morally sound simply by pointing out the empirical fact that trusting relations and the stability of institutions that depend on public trust are possible only where most people are "morally upright". This principle is particularly clearly visible in the conditions for stability of legal systems: a democratic and equitable legal system, which is based on public trust as much as on the state's ability to exert repression, is sustainable only in a society where "most people are law-abiding citizens, and not rascals".[8] Where most people are "rascals" the courts are bound to collapse very quickly, because no morally upright community will support them in dealing with rascals, and the rascals will win. As positive moral values tend to be closely related to legitimate and equitably satisfied human needs, trust, which is also dependent on a predictable satisfaction of needs, naturally arises only where the majority harbours morally sound values, namely where the majority is both law-abiding and subscribes to at least basic moral standards.

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[7] Eric M. Uslaner, *The Moral Foundations of Trust*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, pp. 14–50.

[8] Uslaner, p. 46.

It is theoretically possible that a morally delinquent community is permeated with trust, but this can hardly be a moralistic trust, because of the universal character of moralistic trust. A criminal, disloyal or cruel community may, by a stretch of imagination, be trusting within the core of its members, but it cannot be trusting of everyone, because its values diverge from those of the wider world (that, after all, is why it is delinquent). This mere logical possibility can be disregarded in a practical ethics.

It is also possible for otherwise morally upright communities to develop essentially destructive public moralities while maintaining a high level of mutual trust, in situations where they react to a period of collective trauma. For example, some post-communist societies of central Europe in the 1990s, after the fall of Communism in Europe, developed a strong anti-communism as an essentially destructive ideology (or anti-ideology), which mobilised a broad consensus. This "anti-ideology" resulted from the trauma of a period of Soviet-imposed communist rule, and its negative disposition exacerbated some of the delinquent tendencies, including, for example, an anti-Romany (anti-Gipsy) sentiment, and a degree of xenophobia.[9] Fundamentally, however, the phenomenon does not satisfy the criterion of moralistic trust: those central Europeans who do not like or trust "Russians", "Soviets", "Gypsies", of "communists" *by definition* do not exercise moralistic trust, because such trust is both universal and *a priori*. Their mutual trust is strictly strategic: it spans only members of their community and those whom they believe share their views.. Thus it does indeed seem safe to assume that a morally trusting community tends to be substantively "morally upright".

Assuming that moralistically trusting communities are morally sound, sympathy can then play the main dynamic role in a social ethics. In other words, sympathy can be a driving force of ethics, but only against the background of an already morally healthy community: it cannot generate an ethics that is capable of rectifying a basically unjust community, or, in other words, an ethics that would be able to address unjust foundation values of the community.

Sympathy in diplomacy

Diplomacy can be described as a quasi-cooperative game-based profession, because its aim is to use models of cooperation to address political interactions that may or may not be cooperative. In other words, diplomacy pursues both cooperative and antagonistic strategies through means designed for cooperative

[9] Zoltan Dujisin, "Towards a collective memory of socialism?", *South-East Europe Review*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2010, pp. 475–488.

outcomes; that is why the manner of diplomacy is cooperative even in negotiations during wartime. As a quasi-cooperative game profession, it instils a particular professional ethos that requires special skills and training, yet that depends more on a corporate "spirit" and culture than on concrete and formalised qualifications of its actors.

Core values shared by the diplomatic service are thus likely to be similar across different countries and political systems: they will draw on the cooperative culture of the game diplomacy is a part of, thus ideological differences are undesirable as causally operative factors in a diplomatic ethics. In fact, there are methodological grounds to argue that party membership should be forbidden in the diplomatic service as it is in the judiciary. In order to act fully as diplomats, public servants need to recognise others primarily through the prism of their mutual profession, and ideological or policy affiliations are likely to obstruct this collegiate view and compromise the quasi-cooperative game that is the heart of diplomacy.

Respect for persons

One specifically philosophical argument in support of this view rests on the popular notion of "respect for persons", which appears to be shared as a principle across a range of different moralities, yet it lacks a sufficiently strong substantive grounding. Namely, if we assume that we must "respect other persons", we assume that there is substantive moral ground for such respect: either persons themselves constitute the moral basis for respect (they are moral values in themselves), or they exemplify a moral law or a moral principle that conveys moral value on them. The former view is characteristic of the Christian concept of morality, where persons as such as the "likes" of God and therefore carry an intrinsic moral value, thus justifying a demand for respect for persons *regardless* of who these persons are. In the context of professional ethics, this view has limited value because it is insufficiently operational: within a profession, respect, while being a priori, is confirmed and amplified on the basis of the actions one performs. In other words, while members of a certain profession are expected to a priori respect each other, this is in fact a matter of courtesy and, in a sense, a "formal" respect; the "real" respect is earned by the actions the others perform. A diplomat who is openly incompetent or disloyal to the service will not command collegiate respect once her actions are evaluated, regardless of the initial, formal respect that is *prima facie* due to her as a member of the profession. Thus diplomats, or any professionals, are not sources of value for themselves in the sense of Christian ethics; while the Christian ethics of intrinsic values of persons has foundational value as a

generic ethics, it is not appropriate, in this specific aspect, to the regulation of professions as an applied ethics.

The above discussion leaves us with the latter option for explaining the need for respect for persons, namely the assumption that they exemplify a moral law. Kant formulated the principle in the following way: "All reverence for a person is properly only reverence for the law (or honesty, etc.) of which the person provides an example".[10] The problem with this assumption is that it does not guarantee the universality of respect for persons in any context, and thus also in the context of professional ethics. Or, as Leslie Green points it out, "(p)eople differ greatly in the extent to which they exemplify, or are capable of exemplifying, the moral law, so it is going to be tricky to show how we end up with an invariant duty to respect all of them".[11]

There are a number of attempts in contemporary philosophy to found a universal respect for persons, including that by Joseph Raz, who argues that respect is connected with an obligation to respect values: the "personhood" of others is a value in itself, or is intimately connected with the various values that these persons pursue, and thus the general obligation to respect values extends to an a priory duty to respect persons, to the extent that their expectations of respect are reasonable.[12] This and similar accounts are what I shall label "structural": they attempt to link respect for persons to a static value or set of values that command respect, and thus separate the concrete motivation to respect a particular person from a universal duty to respect them all. Our aim here is not to discuss duty. We may agree that there is a general duty to reasonably respect every person due to the value of their "personhood" as such; this, after all, is the essence of Christian ethics. However, once we venture in the area of applied ethics, where the grounds for respect need to be couched in group-membership or the special actions, or values, that apply to a particular group, or profession, the static view of universal duty ceases to be as helpful.

The question for professional ethics is what makes members of a certain profession respect and form an attachment to one another, where the relevant type of respect or attachment are different from that respect that they a priory owe everyone else. Clearly the bonds within a profession are stronger and structurally different from the universal bonds that apply, or ought to apply, to "all people": many things that ought to apply to all people in fact apply to none, including respect, especially in societies or circumstances that are culturally,

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[10] Immanuel Kant, *The Moral Law: Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated by H.J. Paton, Barnes & Noble, New York, 1967, sec. 492n.

[11] Leslie Green, "Two Worries about Respect for Persons", *Ethics*, vol. 120, January 2010, p. 213.

[12] Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1986.

politically or historically challenging or degrading. Still, members of a profession share an additional layer of common identity, in addition to being members of the same society, and this reinforced common identity gives rise to stronger attachments between them. Their desire, or motivation, to respect one another is less universal and less structurally determined; it is more specific in scope and more dynamic in character: professions share corporate interests, destinies and a selection of values that are particularly cherished by the guild. In addition, when professions such as diplomacy, which are based on quasi-cooperative games, are concerned, then respect between members of the profession is not just a consequence of the shared value substance; it is also a methodological precept for success. Quasi-cooperative games can only succeed in a context where there is mutual respect between all players, and where trust is much higher than in the antagonistic contexts, including, often, the "real world" situations of the countries that the diplomatic services represent in their quasi-cooperative games. This is the functional meaning of the often quoted "personal chemistry" between negotiators, or "long-standing friendships" between diplomats representing opposed political and strategic interests and positions. The crux is not in the "friendship" or "chemistry", but in the special culture of dynamic mutual respect as members of the profession. This respect requires a dynamic foundation of sympathy, rather than resting on the static ground of "universal moral duty".

Collective egoism

"Pleasantries in the face of controversies", which so often characterise diplomatic practice on the level of appearances, have a deeper grounding in the nature of the quasi-cooperative game, and yet a deeper one in the dynamic features of professional relationships in diplomacy.[13] The stern Kantian ethics of universal duty is not appropriate to the applied ethics of the professions, because professions require a degree of "collective egoism" that is not generally opposed to ethical requirements. While philosophers have debated egoism's potential compatibility with ethics, where ethics is initially seen as a form of "internal" regulation of behavior arising from unrestrained egoism, most of the discussion centred on individual egoism, and on the idea that one might appear to act morally, but may in fact act egotistically, because one does what one does for the wrong motives: I may accept social norms and fulfil social expectations, thus acting "ethically" on the surface of things, not because I accept the norms that I obey, but because acting so will provide me with

[13] Aleksandar Fatić, "Modern diplomacy in the Balkans", *Montenegro Journal of Foreign Policy*, vol. 3, no. 1–2, 1998, pp. 61–74.

beneficial social interactions that I otherwise need. In other words, if I act as a rascal, even though I may wish to do so, or believe to be entitled to do so, I will not be able to enter into partnerships and arrangements that I need to prospect in the society; thus I may appear to act morally, while in fact acting entirely egotistically, focusing only on the furthering of my own interests. This is a well known argument put forward by David Gauthier, who concludes:

> "We must distinguish clearly between persons who act only on self-anchored reasons, and so adhere to social requirements only when it is beneficial for themselves to do so, and those who, for self-anchored reasons, dispose themselves to adhere to social requirements whether or not it is actually beneficial for them to do so".[14]

Assuming that the moral choices made are "self-anchored", or authentic for the person, egoism that is sincere appears to qualify as a life-strategy that does not militate against ethics. One popular criterion for the theoretical sustainability of moral precepts is the so-called "test of universalisation", again deriving from Kantian ethics: if a moral principle is to be considered viable, it must be universalisable, or, to paraphrase one of the formulations of Kant's categorical imperative: "one must be able to wish the maxim of one's action to become a universal principle". The common objection to egoism is that egotistic people cannot desire everybody else to be egotistic, because that would endanger their own vital interests; they "free-ride" in the social space created by the assumption that everybody else (or at least most other people) will act morally and *not* egotistically, by acting egotistically amid the moral norms and thus deriving benefit that others do not gain. There are, however, views that "the theory of universal prescriptivism (...) does not rule out any ultimate principle as possibly being a moral principle, so long as it passes the test of prescriptive universalizability. On prescriptivist grounds, no absurdity is attached to the possibility of ethical egoism, in itself, being a moral principle".[15]

While it remains unclear how a systematic egoism could be justified (for in the most radical form it would militate against any type of respect for general interest, and thus, ultimately, against the sustainability of rules and a social order as we know it), there are grounds to argue that egoism can be sustained as a life strategy in a limited form, *against a set of pre-determining circumstances*.[16] In a society that is unjust, ruled in an authoritarian way, or undergoing a major and radical crisis of values and morality, egoism may be a

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[14] David Gauthier, "Reason to be moral?", *Synthese*, vol 72, 1987, pp. 19–20.

[15] Chong Kim Chong, "Ethical egoism and the moral point of view", *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, vol. 26, 1992, p. 25.

[16] See Wim J. van der Steen, "Egoism and altruism in ethics: Dispensing with spurious generality", *The Journal of Value Inquiry,* vol. 29, 1995, p. 34–5.

morally justified strategy, for any other choice would in fact not be strategically feasible. In natural disasters and wars, there are situations where "everyone to his own devices" is in fact the only available strategy of survival.

The question of whether "collective egoism" is egoism in the first place will not be addressed here, as it is a matter of definitions and there is insufficient space at present to delve into reasons to include collectives into the concept of subjects of egoism. There are authoritative philosophical views on egoism and the Ego that present it not in opposition to, but as a manifestation, even embodiment of, aprioristic morality. Scheler himself points this out poignantly:

> "(…) the problem of individual and society, and of self and other as conscious subjects, is also, in its most fundamental sense, a problem of *value*, an ethical as well as a juristic problem. Indeed there is a whole group of philosophers who have sought to establish the existence of other persons in general primarily from this point of view—and who would consider any other grounds for their existence to be merely derivative from that which is designated by the idea of a 'responsible being' in general. Fichte is the clearest, acutest and most radical exponent of the problem from this point of view. He argued more or less as follows: the central core of the Pure Ego consists in a *primordial consciousness of duty*, or pure consciousness of obligation; or pure consciousness of obligation; (in virtue of his interpretation of the 'primacy of practical over theoretical reason' this constitutes, for him, as it does for Kant, not only the prior condition of all apprehension of value and practical decision, but also of all theoretical assertion and denial of matter of fact) (...).[17]

To avoid complex matters of definition, the discussion will henceforth rest on a *prima facie* view that collectives can be egotistic in structurally the same way as individuals can, and that egoism is in fact the value-particularism that the modern discourse conventionally takes it to be.

Both arguments discussed above (Gauthier's and Chong's), which attempt to position egoism on the map of morally acceptable strategies, deal with *individual* egoism alone. I shall attempt to establish here that *collective egoism* fares much better in these arguments.

Professions as collectives are structured broadly within the context of protecting general interest: they are intended to serve general interest, yet in this process they develop their own particular interests. Thus furthering the particular interests of a profession, especially one within the public service, may or may not factually hinder the general interest, but is not in principle opposed to the general interest. In other words, from the point of view of public morality, the

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[17] Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, p. 227.

fact that certain professions have their particular collectively egotistic views and strategies, which may, in concrete cases, militate against the general interest, is not in itself considered immoral. The constellation of collective interests within the public sphere includes morally legitimate corporate interests of the professions, and thus a morally acceptable projection of reasonable "collective egoism" by members of that profession. On one level, the ethics of the public service couches interests and regulates optimum behavior by public servants generally; a special diplomatic ethics articulates another level of "collective egoism" by the specific profession and provides formulae or prescriptions for optimum outcomes in individual deliberations by members of that profession, dwelling on the relative weight that needs to be attached to professional interest and the general duty of the profession. In the context of diplomacy, the interest and the duty are very close on the level of the appearances, as the duty is to pursue the quasi-cooperative game with a view of maximizing the results *in the long run*, and the interest is to maintain a high degree of mutual respect, cooperation and general well-being within the profession.

While the interests of any public service profession are very similar, regardless of the nature of the tasks entrusted to that profession (they include a general well-being and prosperity for the profession and its members), the tasks themselves are wildly different and some structurally challenge the profession's interests. In antagonistic professions, such as that of a police officer or a soldier, the nature of the tasks is a risk to the professions' interests, and the fewer the tasks, the better-off the profession is. The less war and crime, the better-off the army and the police will be, because fewer of their members will be killed or hurt, and more stability and less stress will exist in their ranks. However, with cooperative- and quasi-cooperative games-based professions, including diplomacy, the opposite is true: the more cooperative tasks the profession gets, the better-off it is, because it is more able to cultivate its social capital, resource its personnel, and lift the public profile of the profession.

An ethics of diplomacy, in a fundamental sense, is in the normative sense conducive to, rather than being restrictive on, its own pursuit of its well-being: a diplomacy that feels good in its role is an asset to the public administration even in trying economic and political times. In important ways, diplomacy is not supposed to share the fate of the rest of society, as it must be the representative edge of that society within the quasi-cooperative environment where rules of the game call for opulence and pleasantry. In this context, an ethics for diplomacy is less challenging and less stern than that for the other sectors of the public administration; it allows the protagonists of the profession to pursue mutual identification and corporate identity-building that rest on the dynamic role of mutual sympathy *as diplomats*. It is in this, largely insulated capacity, where they cultivate mutual sympathy as an operational method and

a corporate culture, that they are most able to achieve substantive results — ones that are often attributed to "personal chemistry" and "charisma".

The work of sympathy as a mechanism for establishing cooperative relations is smooth within the context of a profession whose collective egoism is part of a legitimate moral rationale for its mission: while the society is at war, in poverty, or isolation, it is the task of diplomacy not to be at war, poor or isolated: it must transcend the circumstances of its society and find a way to both fare well and feel good about itself, in order to be optimally effective in advancing its tasks. While a society loses soldiers to the enemy, it is the task of the diplomat to be friends with another state's diplomat; while most people in a society may be hungry, the diplomat's role is to go to opulent dinners and work her way through the often long-winded avenues of pleasure and sociability that ultimately lead to substantive diplomatic discussions. In a sense, sympathy is the essence of diplomatic practice, and thus sympathy as a key dynamic principle in a professional ethics for diplomacy plays a pronounced role.

Clearly even in diplomacy there is unavoidable room for antagonistic strategies, including the various disciplining and controlling procedures; however such procedures can be reconciled with a general ethics of sympathy because the cases where they apply by definition radically deviate from the prevailing professional ethics. If the key value for the profession's ethics is sympathy, then clearly cases where antagonistic measures will have to be applied will be only those that do not respond to "soft" regulation by ethics; the fact that antagonism exists does not conceptually or principally militate against sympathy.

Conclusion

Selective philosophical considerations of certain testing topics for applied ethics, such as those of respect for persons or collective egoism, show that diplomacy as a cooperative game profession is privileged on various theoretical levels. First, it is a profession whose mission is not always to share the fate of its society; rather a certain level of indulgence and well-being is a pre-requisite for diplomacy's ability to effectively represent the state in international relations. Secondly, diplomacy's mission implies a degree of horizontal inter-connectedness on the level of values between diplomats of the various countries that largely insulates diplomacy from the general circumstances pertaining to any particular country, while at the same time allowing diplomatic effectiveness to be attributed to "personal charisma" or "chemistry" between the diplomats of various countries. Finally, and fundamentally, diplomacy's special mission within the society has theoretical consequences for an ethics of diplomacy, which provides ample room for sympathy as the key functional value, and which tolerates considerable collective egoism, rendering it ethically acceptable.

For all of the above reasons, an ethics of sympathy, based on Scheler's perception of the primarily cognitive roles accorded to sympathy (unlike love, which Scheler considers on a different level from sympathy), does indeed seem appropriate for diplomacy. While such professional ethics will always need to remain within the bounds of the foundation ethics for the relevant society — where the foundation ethics will rest on normatively stronger values than that of sympathy, namely ones that are capable of clearly discriminating between the right and the wrong — as an applied, professional ethics, it will stand out as perhaps the easiest professional ethics for the public sector to reconcile sympathy, corporate interests of the profession, a considerable degree of self-indulgence and accumulation of privilege on the one hand, with the duty to serve the society, on the other.

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