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Parkinson, E., Sklad, M. and Tsirogianni, S. (2015) Global citizenship and the notion of moral emotions. *Journal of Social Science Research*, 8 (1). pp. 1498-1509. ISSN 2321-1091.

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Global Citizenship and the Notion of Moral Emotions

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ABSTRACT

In the past, little attention has been paid to the socio-psychological dimension of the phenomenon of severe poverty in Africa. Despite the institutional nature of the global economic order, including policies of the European Union, the World Trade Organisation, and the International Monetary Fund, it is people who design, support, and maintain this system, and individual constructions of the world and structural inequalities that reinforce one another. This also finds its expression in different ways, e.g. people's social representations of severe poverty in Europe's former colonies (Park, 2008, 2011). This article investigates, how we, members of the European middle class, construct ourselves as ethical beings in the context of African poverty: What is the link between our social representations, identity construction and (in)action with regard to severe poverty in Africa? What are the discursive mechanisms we apply in the construction of an ethical *self* and what is the notion of the 'African *Other*'? In a nutshell: What do our social representations make us do?

Indexing terms/Keywords

Global responsibility; ethical self; severe poverty; moral reactions; justice

Academic Discipline And Sub-Disciplines

Psychology; Cultural Studies

SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION

Global Citizenship

TYPE (METHOD/APPROACH)

Survey/Interview

Council for Innovative Research

Peer Review Research Publishing System

Journal: Journal of Social Sciences Research

Vol. 8, No.1

jssreditor.cir@gmail.com

www.jssronline.com



INTRODUCTION

The clandestine power of dominant discourses is to create an invisible normality. Part of the contemporary European normality is a global institutional order under which at least 46% of humankind live below the poverty line as defined by the World Bank. According to these calculations from UNICEF (2003), it would only take an additional 7 billion US dollars (to the money officially already available) over a period of 10 years to give all children between 6 and 15 years a school education. To put these figures into perspective: 7 billion dollars is less than Europeans (of the 15 member states of the European Union before the enlargement of 1st of May 2004) spend per year on ice-cream (Ziegler, 2005, p. 84). Regardless of whether one considers severe poverty as a phenomenon caused by rich countries and chooses the approach of justice and redistribution, or whether one prefers to join the charity discourse and chooses the approach of aid and help, one question remains: How do we¹, people living in Europe, construct ourselves as ethical beings in the context of global/African poverty? What is the link between our social representations, identity construction and (in)action with regard to severe poverty?²

Social Representations Theory

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of an individual's social representation of African poverty, it is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of which discourses these representations refer to and from where they are fed from. For what lies at the heart of one's representation, and the question of one's personal activity, is basically one's personal response to all big questions of human existence: What do I believe is a good life? (Taylor, 1989; Tsirogianni et al., 2012) What do I think is the meaning of life and how do I want to achieve this in the context of the existing contradictions present in our European societies? Furthermore, questions such as: Do I believe that something like 'human nature' exists, and if so, do I believe that humans are egoists by nature or rather by nurture? – What do we merely acquire because we need it for our self-image and the construction of an ethical self, and how do we actually live?

Moral reactions

One issue which is underrepresented in Social Representations Theory (Moscovici, 1984) is the notion of emotions and therefore also the link between cognition and emotion with a special focus on moral reactions (Park, 2007a). Traditionally, moral psychologists assumed that moral judgment involves a deliberate process of reasoning and reflection. According to this rationalist account, emotional reactions associated with moral judgments are caused by moral reasoning and can also be changed by altering one's reasoning (Kohlberg, 1969; Piaget, 1965). The adherents of the intuition-based model point out that however logically reasonable this account might seem to be, it does not explain several empirical findings. Haidt's (2001) main point is that most judgments and behaviours appear to be formed automatically and with little intention, awareness or effort. Furthermore, conscious reasoning seems to be the consequence of these unconscious behaviours and judgments rather than the cause of them. Motivational biases seem to chronically distort reasoning in such a way that people reason to support a pre-existing decision rather than analyse it logically or rationally. Finally, there exists only a weak relationship between moral reasoning and moral action. Haidt stresses that even when moral reasoning correlates with moral action, this weak correlation can be almost entirely explained by a covariation with intelligence. In brief: moral judgments are based upon rapid and automatic emotional responses to morally relevant stimuli, and moral reasoning is 'only' a *post hoc* explanation or justification of these emotional reactions.

These automatic evaluations are certainly dependent on one's *representations*, the content of the actual subject, and are linked to the current goals related to the issue and the desired outcome; they are based on an *egocentric assessment* of what is good or bad from one's own perspective. Outcomes that benefit oneself and fit into one's representations of the subject invoke positive automatic evaluations; whereas outcomes that hurt and represent a threat to the self, invoke a negative automatic evaluation. "These automatic egocentric evaluations are then seen as valid representations of reality, and opposing viewpoints as self-interested distortions." (Epley & Caruso, 2004, p. 178).

METHODOLOGY

This study rests on three insights: a) People construct their identities around an abstract notion of good (Taylor, 1989; Tsirogianni & Gaskell, 2011); b) Everyone constructs their identity in opposition to an 'other' (Mouffe, 2005); and c) The insights of the intuition-based model of moral reactions (Haidt, 2001). Taking these insights as a starting point, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 Europeans (12 males, 8 females) in Berlin, London and Cape Town, with whom I met between 1 and 12 times. Half of the interviewees had work experiences or worked during the time of the interview for NGOs and institutions working towards structural change and global justice or for charity organisation helping the 'wretched of the earth'; the other half of the interviewees had never taken on any activity in this regard. Every interview lasted from 1 to 2.5 hours, out of which I analysed 36 hours' worth of transcribed material. Criteria for interviewees were being of white ethnicity, between 25 and 40 years' old, raised in 'old rich' European countries, holding a university degree and not having financial commitments (e.g. no elderly parents to care for, no children). I used NVIVO as a technical tool, and Discourse Analysis (Gill, 2000; Parker, 2005) as theoretical tools.

¹ The consequent use of the terms 'we' and 'I', which might be rather unusual in an academic paper, is meant to represent that I do not wish to exclude myself from the researched group and is aimed at preventing this paper developing a 'sour moral undertone'.

² This article is based on an earlier version which was published as Park (2009).



To probe the interviewees' social representations of severe poverty and their personal positioning towards it, I used a short story as a moral stimulus with regard to the 'African Other':³

In the film *Central Station*, Dora is a retired school teacher who makes a modest living sitting at the station writing letters for illiterate people. Suddenly she has an opportunity to earn \$1000. All she has to do is persuade a homeless nine-year old boy to follow her to an address she has been given. She is told that he will be adopted by wealthy couples. She delivers the boy, gets the money, and spends it on a television. Her neighbour spoils her good mood by telling her that the boy is too old to be adopted. She says that he will be killed and his organs sold for transplantation. Perhaps Dora was aware of this possibility all along, but was able to block it out of her mind.

One of the questions of my topic guide was: What are the differences and/or similarities between Dora's and our situation as individuals in Europe when we, for example, buy clothes which are produced in sweatshops?³ - The question of whether one sees parallels between Dora's conduct and that of consumers in Europe buying clothes produced under unfair conditions presupposes already a certain social representation of the world which is embedded in a particular discourse. According to Rawls (1971), it would be factually wrong to draw this analogy, because international relations are fundamentally different to relations between compatriots. One of my claims is that the question of similarities and parallels to European consumers only makes sense to the interviewees if they adopt a transnational perspective rather than think in terms of national boundaries. Another issue is, do people take on the perspective of Dora, a person who unintentionally, unpurposefully, may have contributed to the suffering of the boy? In other words: do they focus on Dora's intentions? Or do they focus on the outcome and the consequences for the boy? What becomes their reference parameter? The crucial point about this vignette is that it entails elements which allow – from a certain specific position of the world – the relationship between the person who is advantaged and the other person, who may have ended up in a less fortunate situation, to be constructed as a relational one.

A major part of the convenience which we in rich countries enjoy would be impossible without the exploitation of natural resources and human labour in poor countries; if the conditions under which our consumer goods are produced were different, even the European middle class could not afford the lifestyle to which we are accustomed. To offer one example: if clothes were produced under ethically fair conditions, we would not be able to replace our allegedly 'old-fashioned' clothes according to fashion seasons. Still, one could argue that it is almost impossible to avoid buying unethically produced clothes in Western Europe. But from this fact it does not follow that it is therefore *morally* right to buy them and to save the money one would have spent otherwise if one bought the same (more expensive) clothes produced under ethical conditions. It is an open question what a morally defensible action could be; according to Pogge (2005) it would be making up for 'reaping the harvest', for example, by giving the money we 'saved' to a group working on poverty relief and structural change.

Typology⁴

Based on an analysis of the interviews, we developed a typology of six types (see: Appendix 1), whereby the concept of type only refers to its most basic understanding of functioning according to the all-or-none principle. The point is that the order of the types remains the same, regardless of which of the following lines the continuum is created: how much do people combat what they consider to be the reasons for severe poverty, what and how (passionately) do people report to feel about severe poverty, or how do people construct the 'African Other' and talk about severely impoverished people in general.

Typology: I Cosmopolitans, II Political Activists, III Religious Believers by Self-Definition⁵ (IV Believers in a Just World, V Representatives of the Middle Class), VI Neoliberal Aspirant High Achievers;

I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Combat what they consider to be the reasons for severe poverty					no action
Feel strongly/report to experience a diverse range of emotions					feel nothing
Africans as equals					Africans as 'others'

According to our analysis, there are three components and if all of them are part of one's social representations of severe poverty in Africa, it seems to be inevitable that one is engaged and active against global injustices: a) If people take responsibility for the past, b) if people feel empowered to act and take responsibility to influence future political discourses, and c) if one constructs the 'African Other' as an equal and not as morally inferior.

Or more precisely: Firstly, it seems to be 'easy' (in the sense of: not necessarily requiring action) to take responsibility for the past, as long as one feels helpless to do something about the future. This would result in statements like: 'It is my fault, I caused it, I am sorry – but you know that there is nothing I could do about it'. Secondly, it seems to be 'easy' to acknowledge one's ability to do something about the future if one does not feel responsible for its causes. This would

³ I used the keyword "sweatshop". Most interviewees answered my question if I asked them about 'child labour'.

⁴ I am highly aware that psychologists have the reputation of creating stage models, rankings etc. in which it *just happens* that the researchers themselves appear on the highest stage, together with Jesus, Ghandi and Martin Luther King. The criteria for the ones on the 'highest rank', the cosmopolitans, came out of the data; the criteria are so narrow that I *would not* fulfil them.

⁵ Christians, who define themselves by their Christian identity, describing themselves as: "My religious beliefs are of high importance and are my main guidelines in life."



correspond to statements like: 'I could do something about it, but I did not cause it. Why should I do anything?' Thirdly, it seems to be 'easy' to take responsibility and to acknowledge one's ability to do something about the future, as long as 'the other' is constructed as an inferior 'other'. This would be represented by statements like: 'It was my fault, I could do something about it, but the issue is so minor, why do you even want to talk about it?' Part of the ethical self-construction in the context of global poverty seems to be that it is psychologically impossible for people holding representations in which the following three factors come together: a) it was our fault, we caused it b) we have the power to do something about the future and c) The 'global poor' are like us. These three beliefs do not co-exist, so resulting in the outcome: just leave the world like it is and let/keep making the 'African Equals' suffer and die.

In this article we will only introduce interviewees who stated to consider global poverty to be one of the most pressing contemporary problems which are types I, II, and III; the analysis of type VI is shown in order to contrast the first three types. The types IV and V do not occur because they do not fulfil the criterion given for this article.

Type I: the Cosmopolitans

These subscribe to all three components given above:

a) They believe that severe poverty is a phenomenon produced by 'us'. Using a highly emotional language, they state: "Europe and the US, the main economic entities, screw up the economies of the poor countries." (Francesco) Or "we are doing the same in a different way than when we were colonialists," (Marcus). B) They believe that they personally can contribute to the required change. The construction of reasons for poverty already entail ways for potential solutions to which they as individuals can and do contribute: "Even small actions, buy fair trade products, sign petitions." C) They construct the 'African Other' as equal and in general, report to experience not only a cascade of emotions but also a much broader variety of emotions than any of the other interviewees: anger, outrage, sadness, guilt, shame.

"They are quite reserved, the Massai, like the British, and they sort of reminded me of the Scottish. They wear sort of tartan and stuff, you learn they have fashion the same as we do but it is different, (...) They have similar values, money is still important to them, status is important, so there are certain unifying sort of attitudes they have just like the English." (Marcus)

What is salient here is how closely Marcus constructs the Massai to himself: he describes himself as being half *Scottish* on his father's side, being born in *England* and defining himself as *British*. Talking about his self-assessed competences while working voluntarily in his trained profession in Tanzania, he uses an infant metaphor to describe *himself*; he ascribes the 'African Other' a position for themselves, so that in a setting where the 'African Equal' are the majority, he has a shifting position:

"You feel like a baby, like a child. You can't really communicate anything sophisticated. In your own country, you are pretty well-read, but then you go to another country, and you just can't, I felt really stupid." (Marcus)

Being confronted with severely impoverished people, Marcus reflects how certain emotions motivated him to do (even more) unpaid work in his trained profession: How did it make you feel to be confronted with people living in severely impoverished conditions?

"That is *really shitty*, actually that is part of my motivation to do the voluntary work: when I was in India, you see people on the street, big cities where *it is just like hell to live in* and you can't really do anything about it, really. I mean you can give money to people but that doesn't really help them in the long run so I thought *I wanted to do something* and [the decision to do voluntary work] *was an empowerment thing for me as well*. [...] *I hate that guilt thing*. I found, in a way when you see so much poverty, that your *compassion has to go on hold* because you can't do anything about it, it's frustrating, fucking hell, I felt so powerless. The only way to deal with it is by closing off your feelings, taking away your compassion and then getting it back later and trying to do something about it, that helped me." (Marcus)

But what is 'it' precisely that he perceives and which makes him feel so strongly that he feels the urge to withdraw his compassion? Why do these emotions linger so strongly, or why does the mechanism of 'out of sight, out of mind' not function in his case? What is this "hell" he has seen? The crucial point about severe poverty and misery is that it goes beyond the state of privation, because it inescapably reduces humans to their most basic physical aspects. Certain physical needs cannot be ignored and thus subjugate humans – independent of status, class, race or gender – to a tyranny (Arendt, 1963; Park, 2011a). And I would like to claim that it was this 'tyranny' which Marcus meant when he described it as "just like hell to live in". The assumption suggests itself that the experienced emotions may be disgrace/dishonour and shame. According to Kant, the origin of an emotion like shame is a situation of defamation/dishonour and expresses outrage about a humiliating situation; a situation which contradicts an original right every human has by virtue of humanity. This is summarised by Ziegler (2005) as: "I feel shame about the ignominy, which is done to others and disgrace for my own blotted honour as a human being," (p. 12).

If just behaviour is a means of gaining approval and *respect from ourselves* and others (Deutsch & Steil 1988), what does it mean for the individual psyche to construct severe poverty not as a *humanitarian catastrophe* but as an *unjust* situation 'made by us'? What are the consequences of such an 'inner/emotional world' for one's world-view? How does it make one *feel* about *one's own world* (Europe), and how does one have to re-construct one's view of an ethical Europe, the core – Europe's moral backbone? Are we all victims of a huge deception? Does this deception include all the stories we were told when we were children, stories which constituted our categories of good or bad and right or wrong? Do stories which we



were told in kindergarten, at school and later at university, stories which we read when we open the newspaper, or hear when we switch on the television, need to be reconstructed? Does this reconstruction go down to the deepest layer of what constitutes Europe (Park, 2007; Kilomba, 2007)?

And interviewees of this type can only think of similarities between Dora and European consumers:

“Yes, this is a big issue. Our behaviour is very similar to Dora’s because we have been knowing for a long time that so many goods are produced in developing countries by using child labour. Yes, we, like Dora, didn’t go back to that place and take the child with her. [...] I can’t describe how I feel, it is so unjust.” (Francesco)

Type VI: the Neoliberal Aspirant High Achievers

These acknowledge the first two components and openly reject the third one: a) They believe that severe poverty is a phenomenon produced by rich countries – and report they do not associate any emotions with it: “Maybe I am just cold or something, but [being confronted with extremely impoverished people] doesn’t make me feel anything.” b) They believe that they could contribute to the required change if they wanted to – but don’t want to and openly say that they are not in favour of a political change: “The global institutional order is not just, but then you are also selfish and think about your own economy and it is good for us ... therefore, I would say leave it like it is.” c) They refer to animal metaphors, e.g. monkeys and donkeys, and say openly that they believe that the ‘African Other’ is of less value than a European person: “I think one life here [in Africa] is not really as valuable as in the Netherlands,” (Mia). Related to this dehumanisation, the acknowledgement of the impact of colonisation and contemporary politics can coexist with blaming the ‘African Other’ for the reasons of poverty: Africans are described as too lazy, too slow, crawling along, incompetent to work in proper jobs like Europeans do and they refer to “African genes”, “evolution” and “African culture” for the reasons for this (see: Appendix II).

“For sure there are parallels; [in our case] it is even stronger than in the story, we have the evidence that they have to work under horrible conditions, but I guess, we are very rational. She will probably compare and weigh up her new fancy television to her feeling of guilt, so we do a bit the same.” (Matt)

“I think the difference is the fact that it is anonymous; in both cases you are making money out of the fact that someone else is suffering. If you buy clothes for 9 Euros you know that it is made by a little kid from Taiwan, how else could it be done? You don’t feel it if you buy it, the difference is really psychological, it doesn’t touch you.” (Mia)

What Cosmopolitans and Neoliberals have in common and what distinguishes them from the other types is the absence of a need to construct their conduct as ethically immaculate in this discourse; however, their reasons for doing so differ. The Cosmopolitans view matters and people as being either negatively or positively affected by the global institutional order, so that one is – without any moral implications – either a ‘victim’ or a ‘perpetrator’. The positioning as a ‘perpetrator’ presupposes that one can bear the idea that our acts might have unintended harmful consequences for others. Hence, the point of reference is not ‘the lack of our evil *intentions*’ but the unintended harmful *consequences* of our actions. Neoliberals, on the other hand, who construct the ‘African Other’ openly as morally inferior, consider ethics as an obstacle to a successful life, instead believing in the ‘survival of the fittest’.

Still more interesting than the answers categorised under types I and VI are the ones given by interviewees with an apparent psychological need for an ethical self, who explicitly name global poverty when asked directly about their personal assessment of the most pressing problems faced by the world today. Interviewees categorised as types II and III claim to subscribe to the first two components *to some degree*. Furthermore, they claim to acknowledge the ‘poor Other’ as equal, because they need it for their self-image, but in reality do not do so.

In what follows, we will analyse the interviewees’ answers and reveal their underlying logic. I wish neither to imply that there are no differences between our and Dora’s situation, nor do I wish normatively to say that one has to construct the world in a similar way to Cosmopolitans or Neoliberals. However, according to the philosopher Jerome Neu (2000), many psychological problems are actually logical problems, and I would claim that – in this context – logical problems reveal and fulfil certain psychological functions. By getting into the intricacies of people’s arguments, one reveals the degree of threat which the ethical self perceives.

Type II: Political Activists

These subscribe to *some degree* to components 1 and 2, claiming to consider the ‘African Other’ as an equal but indeed constructing the ‘African Other’ as ‘an Other’: as superstitious, hyper-religious, incompetent, and selfish. Political Activists are not necessarily less engaged than Cosmopolitans, but they construct themselves as ‘warriors for the good’, with a hegemonic view of the world and a strong construction of the ‘African Other’ as an ‘Other’.

“I think the directness is the difference; how aware you are of this because she did have directly an impact on this boy’s life, whereas it is so natural for us to go into a shop and buy shoes - we don’t often, people don’t know, what is behind this pair of shoes, ... Yes, it is negative, because it might be child labour behind it and slavery and stuff like that, but what is the alternative? You can’t just go around and say no more child labour, because then they go into prostitution, and you are even more responsible because that is even worse than working in a sweatshop, ... The directness [sic] of the impact gives you an excuse because you are sort of abstracting; it is actually quite convenient



because the guilt is divided up between every individual consumer and every individual person working for Nike as sort of being involved in that, so it is a collective guilt⁶ probably more than an individual guilt.” (Jenny)

The unnamed veil which shrouds Jenny’s entire statement is the core of similarity. She begins her comment with the statement that “the directness is the difference”, which implies that the issue might be the same at its core; followed by “the directness of the impact gives you an excuse”, “the guilt is divided up”, “so it is a collective guilt”. This indicates that she perceives many similarities; however this remains unspoken. In other words: in the way she constructs the differences, she also affirms the similarities.

Excluding oneself: she switches from self-inclusive “we don’t often” to self-excluding “people don’t know”.

Defence of her fellow citizens: While the Neoliberal points out that if one wants to know about the sweatshops, it can simply be derived from the price of the goods, in Jenny’s case it is not so much about being capable of knowing it, or needing more background information, but about wanting to know it in the first place. By claiming that people are uninformed, Jenny defends her fellows.

Weak expressions which mask: She uses a euphemism when commenting on issues like “child labour, slavery and stuff like that” as “negative.”

Thinking in extreme binaries: She introduces a pseudo-comparison by the rhetorical question: “What is the alternative?” echoing a phrase popularised by Margaret Thatcher which came to be known as the TINA-principle: There Is No Alternative. The implied lack of alternatives provides a decisive mechanism: by constructing another extreme which seems to be even less justifiable, it puts the first option in a more acceptable light. And the pseudo-alternative she constructs is – what I coded as – a fantasy. Not any fantasy, but a very specific one: children as sex workers. Hence, the actual sweatshops become less threatening.

Built-in ‘cracks’ in one’s logic: According to Jenny’s logic of “you are even more responsible because that is even worse,” responsibility works like this: the more harm you do, the more you are responsible for it. One could argue that the role of child prostitute and the degree of suffering would be worse (an approach which might also say more about our attitudes towards sex work than about the reality of sweatshops) – but this would not have an impact on the extent of *our actual* responsibility. Jenny derives the lack of guilt European consumers feel toward the ‘global poor’ from a lack of alternatives to participating in the global institutional order – two ideas which are mutually exclusive in her view. This is an approach guided by an invisible additional element: intention⁷.

“If Dora was aware that it was quite likely that the boy was going to be killed; yes, you have to be quite selfish to do something where someone can be killed,...The important difference is, it depends on the motivation; if you do it mainly with the selfish motivation of saving money then, yes, that is an important parallel.” (Michael)

What does it mean to put the focus on the consumer’s intention, so that the consequences for the victims are only judged on the basis of our mind-set? On a psychological level, this means that the ‘Other’ is only used for its function and importance to the self; without leaving one’s own (white) position, it becomes the *object* of our psycho-hygienic needs without a position for itself. The object assumes a shifting position based on our *subjectivity*, our intentions. On a structural level, this construction of ‘the Other’ can be interpreted as being part of a discourse which serves the function of stabilising the dominant system, a system in which no stranger and no ‘Other’ exists outside of its function for the self (Tissberger, 2007).

The power of the mechanism of focussing on one’s intentions lies in the fact that oneself is the one and only authority to judge whether one’s intentions were right or wrong. In the context of the Dora vignette, one indicator that this mechanism is at work is that the interview passages became massively long, up to 3.5 transcribed pages in response to a single question, whereas responses in which this mechanism was not at work were only very few sentences long. This may already be an indicator of how much the ethical self was struggling to defend itself, how hard it was manoeuvring to come up with a narrative which would preserve and sustain the self as an ethical one when potentially directly attacked.

“In our case, in order to avoid being an unethical shopper, it would probably be a full-time job, so there is a difference. I would feel guiltier in that instance, just because I would be forced to face it. I know it is not right. I know you can make a direct comparison; nevertheless, I choose to keep on shopping fairly indiscriminately. I try to worry about bigger things ...The idea that you can change something by the way you consume is rubbish; it is a kind of compromise.” (Susan)

Fantasy vs. open question: Susan speculates that being an ethical shopper would “probably” be a full-time job. This suggests that she has never tested it out. Actually, it is surprising how little time you really need to gather the required information for ethical shopping *once* and then to keep yourself updated (comparable to the literature research for a Ph.D.). This qualifies the sentence to be categorised as a fantasy. The underlying approach of this argumentation is: Child labour can be judged as being bad as long as it does not cause inconveniences for us.

Building up of hierarchies: The assertion “I try to worry about bigger things” may be regarded as ambiguous. On the one hand, it can be seen as the building up of a hierarchy of issues based on perceived relative importance. When asked what

⁶ Whether ‘collective guilt’ actually exists or not may be open to debate. Hannah Arendt (1967) claims it does not exist.

⁷ I am open to suggestions that this point might be less a defence mechanism but primarily an expression of her hegemonic worldview – which is in itself a useful ‘defence’.



she considers to be the most pressing contemporary problems, she names global poverty as number one. And then in this context, it becomes marginal and negligible. Or the statement may be interpreted to mean she wants to target bigger issues, such as agricultural subsidies. But how is it that in this context one excludes the other? Do such activities as buying fair trade products and lobbying politicians by definition mutually exclude each other?

The global poor as a homogenous mass with the focus on the system ('us'): According to Susan, buying fair trade products is "rubbish" because it would only be a compromise in comparison to the required fundamental change the world needs. Improving working conditions for only a few people, while millions of others continue to live in severe poverty, is indeed an act of little consequences if the aim is to reduce the figures of the 'global poor'. But if one switches the focus from the system 'us' to the individuals working in the sweatshops, one perceives that improved working conditions might mean the world to people affected by them (Pogge, 2002).

Type III: Religious Believers by Self-Definition

These subscribe to *some degree* the components of 1 and 2, and thinking of extremely poor people makes them feel "bad" as the only reported emotion. What can be seen most clearly here is what can also be framed as a general rule: if people, for example, refer to the discourse of responsibility in combination with a constraint like "a responsibility in some ways", "a kind of responsibility" or also "poverty might be more or less caused by rich countries", this constraint assumes the function and will be used at some point as an emergency exit, as a vehicle in one's discursive manoeuvring in one's ethical self-construction. Interviewees with an extensive psychological need to construct themselves as 'ethical immaculate' and to construct every single action they perform to be ethical, show the highest degree of cognitive polyphasia (Jovchelovitch, 2002): the application of ideas from different belief systems in their ethical self-construction. For example, they use the same arguments for their personal defence which they use to blame their fellows for not doing enough or accuse European politicians for not doing enough and defending their inactivity in the next sentence. Claiming to perceive all people as part of humanity being related to each other and of equal worth, they construct the 'African Other' as helpless, uneducated, backward and refer to a discourse, using a child metaphor for the description of the process of (de)colonisation, in which Africa as an entire continent becomes belittled:

"It is like having a child and looking after them and telling them what to do, maybe not looking after them well but looking after them, and then leaving them, saying right, sort yourself out, now."

In their Religious Believers by Self-Definition show the highest degree of discursive manoeuvring of all types in their reactions to the Dora Vignette:

Do you think we are personally guilty? (Interviewer)

"You could say that we are guilty; when we are buying running shoes, you could say that these are made by young kids, they are exploited, and you encourage those people, the boss, and the companies, to continually exploit those kids. Yes, you are guilty, you are part of the action, your fault might be very minor but still ... But we are educated in a way that forces us to buy those products ... You don't feel guilty, otherwise you couldn't succeed⁸." (John)

Are you saying 'we don't *feel* guilty' or 'we are *actually* not guilty'? (Interviewer)

"We are actually not guilty as individuals. We are not promoting, we are just wearing running shoes because we have to. Don't buy anything which is produced in circumstances of exploitation, you couldn't become someone, you have to become someone that is the purpose of life, you want to be happy." (John)

Is it really impossible? (Interviewer)

"It is possible but you would be like an animal; just the same, you couldn't be accepted by your peers. That is a need, a fundamental need, if you don't have something like a TV, some nice clothes, nobody would accept you; you have to follow some rules, for sure, if you are going off the track...." (John)

First, he acknowledges the aspect of 'being guilty and not feeling guilty', second he constructs himself as helpless and as being "[forced] to buy", thirdly he introduces the theme "the purpose of life" which, fourthly, results in the implicit construction of our "fundamental needs" vs. 'the fundamental needs of the poor': Their needs and rights become an obstacle in the fulfilment of our happiness. Religious Believers with the strongest need for an ethically immaculate self show, from all interviewees, the most extreme forms of *cognitive polyphasia*.

CONCLUSION

I followed the interviewees' intricacies and revealed their underlying rationalisations in order to show how the ethical self defends itself against the threat induced by a short story. What one can see in all quotes representing interviewees of types II and III is the moment of acknowledgement of similarities between Dora and our situation - just before rationalisations and other defence mechanisms are activated: "Yes, it is negative because it might be child labour behind it and slavery but ..." (Jenny), "I know it's not right, I know that you can make a direct comparison but ..." (Susan), "yes, you are guilty, you are part of the action, your fault might be very minor but still ..." (John). In a nutshell: the decisive element of

⁸ This interviewee began his degree with the aim of working for the World Bank and one day becoming the chief economist at this institution. With degrees from highly reputable universities, this might be a realistic aim. Interviewees with a student status were chosen based on their career ambitions: these might indeed be the people shaping world politics in the near future.



interviewees' social representations of severe poverty and how they construct themselves as ethical in this discourse is introduced after the "but".

The belief that one's own group is unfairly advantaged is threatening. Significantly, it is not so much about the issue of inequality in general; troubling is not the idea that 'the other' group has less than it should, but rather that 'the own' group has more than it should and must therefore be considered as being unfairly advantaged (Chow, Lowery & Knowles, 2006). Furthermore, how much more threatening to an ethical self must the idea be that this issue of us having more than we should is embedded in a long history of 'European normality'? If one examines the research done seeking to explain the actions of the Righteous Gentiles, who seriously risked their own lives rescuing people during WWII, the most important motivational factor seems to have been that of 'helping another', which presupposes equality: "I did nothing unusual; anyone would have done the same thing in my place" (Oliner & Oliner, 1988, p. 113). "It was easy to do because it was our duty." (Geras, 1996, p. 29) "There was no question [...] you could do nothing else; it's as simple as that." (p. 24) "It was a natural thing to do." (p. 41) In a nutshell: The rescuers did not rationalise, did not construct persons in need as 'others', did not blame the victims and did not engage in acts of cognitive polyphasia; they could think of no reason not to act.

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Appendix I

	I. Cosmopolitans	II. Political Activists	III. Religious Believers by Self-Definition	IV. Believers in a Just World	V. Representatives of the Middle Class	VI. Neoliberal Aspirant High Achievers
Assessment of the most pressing contemporary problem, when asked directly	Global poverty			National issues in their countries: environmental issues, unemployment, homeless people in 'their own' countries, legal human rights issues (discrimination of gays, restriction of freedom of press and speech), global security (fear of terrorist attacks in own country)		
Result of my interview analysis	Coherent	Incoherent, when it comes to topics and issues which are of high personal importance (e.g. questions of loyalty towards conservative parents)	Extremely incoherent			
Knowledge about GIO	Well informed	Mixture of knowledge and opinion	Opinions: facts constructed around an 'ethical self'; extremely incoherent	Purely opinion (admit freely that they do not even read newspapers, watch news etc.)	Opinions (but they believe that they are well informed)	Well informed or no knowledge/opinion at all
Assessment of the GIO:	GIO as highly unjust; Africa as the example per se of global injustice	GIO as highly unjust;	Strong case of cognitive polyphasia; "GIO as unjust but ..."	GIO as just	GIO as just	GIO as unjust
Reasons for	Purely West:	More abstract:	Cognitive	Mainly domestic	Purely	Purely domestic factors



African Poverty	global institutional order, e.g. WB, IMF; WTO (strong emotional undertone: "We do the same as when we were colonialists.")	capitalism, free trade; ("You are complicit. There is no way to get around it.") 'cracks' when it becomes personally important, e.g. touches questions of loyalty;	polyphasia: opinions about arms trade etc. stand parallel to explanations in purely domestic factors; "natural development"	factors (corruption, mismanagement, irresponsible deals between African governments and multinationals); new information about unjust GIO as shocking;	domestic factors; defence of the GIO;	(corruption, mismanagement) (they 'blame the victims' and claim that it's down to 'African incompetence' but acknowledge by the same time the role of the EU and reflect Europe's colonial past)
Construction of African Other	Respectful Constructions of Africans as distinct but not different	According to the type, the 'African Other' is constructed in a specific way as 'Other'				
When and how do people refer to children/animals?	"You feel like a baby, like a child, you can't really communicate anything sophisticated, you know, in your own country, you are pretty well read, but then you go to another country, and you just can't, I felt really stupid [working in Tanzania]."	"You can't just go around and say no more child labour, because then they go into prostitution, and you are even more responsible because that is even worse than working in a sweatshop."	"It [colonisation] is like having a child and looking after them and telling them what to do, maybe not looking after them well, but organising them and telling them what to do and then [after the process of decolonisation] leaving them, saying right, sort yourself out, now."	"In Europe, we are a lot of steps ahead of Africa, and you can help them a little bit, I mean, like a small child, you cannot leave it alone and it will not grow up without help."	"This is why the schemes like adopt a donkey work, it is this specific thing, I did that, adopt a child, so I am responsible for this bit of good, and it is consistent." "Maybe I am inhibited because it is not politically correct because it would be stupid to say people in Africa are all like monkeys, they do everything slower, but it is also culture."	"If [Taiwan] keeps developing and the children there are going to school and they are not going to sew any shirts for H&M anymore, then [rich countries' companies] are probably just going to Angola, there are probably children everywhere to do this."
Acknowledgement of own colonial history	"It is caused by us."	Link between past/present: GIO	"It wasn't me, I am not even from a colonial country." (turn from British to Australian identity)	"It wasn't me."	"It wasn't me and there must be a threshold."	"Who cares [about poverty caused by us], kick them [people from the former colonies] out of the Netherlands."
Awareness of own privileges	"My privileges are based on their exploitation."	"Rich countries got rich by consuming the Third World's resources."		"Rich people studied hard and deserve their wealth."	"People die every day in the UK as well, we are mortal, get real."	"The GIO is good for us – so, leave it like it is." "I didn't ask for what you call privileges – why not enjoy them?"
Solvability of the problem	Severe poverty could easily get eradicated if the political will existed.	Severe poverty could get eradicated if the political will existed.	Yes	Maybe	Maybe	Yes
Responsibility: does the issue have to be solved in general?	Yes	Yes	Only African governments are responsible; strong thinking in national boundaries, all knowledge	Not really	Not really	No



			about the GIO becomes irrelevant			
Responsibility on an individual level	Definitely	Restricted	Duty of assistance	Only if you harm directly, personally, intentionally	Only if you choose to feel responsible	No
Reported emotions	Moral outrage, anger, personal guilt,	Only one interviewee reports anger; in general: anger as an unuseful emotion	Sadness, pity	makes them feel "bad" but shocked when confronted with severe poverty	makes them feel "bad"; being confronted with severe poverty does not arouse emotions, e.g going on a organised tourist township tour (does not even appear in their narrative if not asked explicitly	Does not arouse any emotions
How do they deal with politically disinterested friends?	Try to convince; avoid people, cancel contact; strong inner conflicts	"I don't have to talk all the time about what makes me tick." – They just talk about other subjects.				"I would still talk to my friend even if she would work for an NGO and start to ride a bike."
Do they blame their fellows for their inactivity?	blame strongly their fellows and reflect the irrationality of this act	no (blame as a very unuseful emotion)	Yes (might use the same arguments to blame their fellows and also to defend their own inactivity)	No – but blame e.g. the Pope	No – but blame Bill Gates	No
Personal History of Discrimination	Reported discrimination at an early age, which makes them feel 'different' from other people:					Discrimination as a teenager ("too rich")
	Experience is transferred to political setting		Experience is transferred to broader setting with a humanitarian approach	Interpretation stays on personal level		
Political awakening	Reflected about reasons for their way of thinking, which they consider as an important issue for themselves; conclusion: was 'breast-fed' to them through parents and their parents' history (literally from the minute they were born)	Process of politisation started when they were young adults as a 'political awakening'; they stress the importance of 'political role models' like lecturers, friends whom they consider to be authorities;	A rather humanitarian approach to 'problems of the world'.	Interested in issues, which are constructed as 'humanitarian' but not 'political' ones ("Why do people deserve to live in severe poverty?")	No	No
Motivation for Action	Attempt to make 'peace' with the world, hence: fight for justice	Change the world how oneself would like to see it	Fulfilment of Catholic requirements			



	Developed a <i>positive marginality</i> : feel different from a lot of their fellows/ deviant, odd, able to take the perspective of the 'Other'					
Non-White, non-European self-chosen friends	Yes	No (no non-White friends who were raised in non-European countries)				
Action	Become professionals, work unpaid in their profession; speak out in any every-day-life situation, try to raise awareness wherever, whenever	Give up to 20% of their salary to groups working on structural change; become a member of a party, organise public discussion; go to protests	Go to protests, sometimes buy fair-trade products; donate sometimes	They donate money if they have a certain surplus (e.g. are not saving for a world trip); they are willing to get persuaded by friends to go to protests;	Work as a professional in a poverty relief organisation (accidentally), donate money (interviewee framed the act as "adopt a donkey"), got reluctantly involved in fundraising activities for Tsunami victims in East Asia because of social pressure from friends	Not concerned about political problems at all, do not do or have intentions of doing anything: it might happen by chance that they buy clothes which are produced under fair conditions – but consider it to be an unimportant issue; another interviewee works as a voluntary teacher in southern Africa because of the 'scenery' (to gain experiences none of his friends have) but not because of the 'charity' aspect
Analytical level: self	No need for ethical self, although ethics of high importance	Oneself as the warrior for the good	Strong need for an ethically immaculate self	Oneself as a good person, in case of doubt: oneself as helpless and "dumb"	Oneself just does what others do; in case of doubt: uninformed and helpless	No need for ethical self in this context; life as 'survival of the fittest', ethics as an obstacle on the way to success
Memo	Claim to be not materialistic and it seems to be coherent: work unpaid in profession they are trained in, not even enough money for a flat by themselves/ couch surfing at a family members' place and consider themselves as being privileged;		Claim to be not materialistic but live in the most luxurious district/student hall of the city; 2 out of 3 interviewees quit their favourite subject for another one which might pay better (one quit anthropology for law; another one maths for economics)			