

## Recognizing Poverties<sup>1</sup>

*“Poverty has come, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon countries, to mean a low standard of living, measured in terms of consumption or income. But this is only part of the story. Poverty is also deprivation in a wider sense. . . . It has indeed been increasingly recognized that we need to look beyond monetary poverty, and there has been a surge in recent years in both theoretical and empirical studies of nonmonetary measures.”<sup>2</sup>*

*A. B. ATKINS (2019)*

*“Le grand défi qui se présente à nous, qui ressort des problématiques du développement en cette période de mondialisation et qui est rendu encore plus pressant par la crise économique et financière, est celui de montrer, au niveau de la pensée comme des comportements, que non seulement les principes traditionnels de l'éthique social, tels que la transparence, l'honnêteté et la responsabilité, ne peuvent être négligés ni sous-évalués, mais aussi que dans les relations marchandes le principe de gratuité et la logique du don, comme expression de la fraternité, peuvent et doivent trouver leur place à l'intérieur de l'activité économique normale. C'est une exigence de l'homme de ce temps, mais aussi une exigence de la raison économique elle-même. C'est une exigence conjointe de la charité et de la vérité.”<sup>3</sup>*

*JOSEF RATZINGER (2009)*

As recent progress reports on the UN's 2015 renewed Sustainable Development Goals 2015 to 2030 project, World Bank briefings, and other major sources demonstrate, the eradication of extreme poverty worldwide will require more than macro-economic measures alone.<sup>4</sup> Accomplishing this first of both the UN's 2000 to 2015 Millennium Development Goals project and of the present Sustainable Development Goals 2015 project to 2030, despite their approval by roughly an astonishing 190 UN member countries, will also require sustained engagements to combat non-monetary poverty. Challengingly, some internationally distinguished development economists believe that some of the most important of such engagements will also require renewed ethical reflection on general human values, rights, and responsibilities. Here, I would like to begin taking up part of this challenge.

My focus here is on the extremely poor, on those who, if they are to live decent lives, are most in need of assistance.<sup>5</sup> Like those suffering today from extremely severe famine in Yemen and elsewhere, very many of those suffering from extreme poverty will die not only prematurely; they likely will die before the end of the year.<sup>6</sup> They will die if, among many others, thoughtful and resourceful persons like some philosophers continue to fail to engage themselves effectively to assist them.

Here I would first like to emphasize several of the philosophical elements in some recent discussions of both monetary and non-monetary extreme poverty. With these elements freshly in view, I would like to examine critically yet constructively the most salient ones from the perspective of a certain understanding of the cardinal notion of ethical engagement. I will conclude with a summary of the main argument and the formulation of several key questions which need further reflective discussion from economists, philosophers, and others today.

## 1. Extreme Poverty: Sharpening the Focus

Today, just what the common expression “poverty” denotes varies from one culture to another. And determining further just what the perhaps already overly familiar phrase “extreme poverty” denotes is both easy and difficult.<sup>7</sup> It is easy because the internet’s increasingly powerful search engines yield an abundance of pertinent materials for determining the sense of all three expressions – “extreme,” “poverty,” and “extreme poverty.”

However easy at first, determining the denotation of “extreme poverty” in our own circumstances in Central and Western Europe today is also difficult. For after the generally mixed results for the first of the UN’s 2015 MDGs on the eradication of extreme poverty, and after the mixed results of the initial progress reports on the currently running UN’s SDGs for the eradication of extreme poverty, new doubts have arisen about the narrowness of the denotations underlying these quite substantial programs. In such unstable contexts of understanding, working with some sensible restrictions, stipulations, and working definitions makes good sense.

As for some restrictions, my remarks here mainly concern neither global nor national instances of extreme poverty but regional ones instead. In particular I focus on extreme poverty mainly among normal adult individual citizens in EU countries in 2019 so far as the currently available data allows. Thus, I am excluding from my discussion as yet uncounted persons, extremely poor children, the elderly, the handicapped, migrants, societies, households, families, and groups.<sup>8</sup> I am also excluding the very important links today between extreme poverty, climate change, and current radically changing understandings of democracy.<sup>9</sup>

Although I will be centering the general discussion on non-empirical and indeed non-material kinds of extreme poverty, pertinent

empirical data and their proper metrics are nonetheless indispensable for serious reflection on extreme poverty. Accordingly, I rely on the necessary underlying data sets and time series of the EU's statistical services and those of the World Bank, regularly updated and readily accessible through internet postings.

Regarding some useful stipulations, the general discussion and my concluding questions for further critical discussion will mainly arise for the sake of comprehensiveness and uniformity from the very careful denotations of the key terms to be found in the most recent works on poverty and extreme poverty of the internationally renowned developmental economist and policy theorist A. B. Atkinson (1944-2017) and his major sources.<sup>10</sup>

Concerning some general working definitions, we may note that *poverty* today is regularly understood with respect to persons' capacities to participate in everyday society. Sociologically speaking, "individuals, families, and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources [mainly, income resources rather than consumption goods] to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities, and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong."<sup>11</sup> Still, although controversy continues, poverty is mostly defined currently not in terms of income but in terms of consumption.<sup>12</sup> Thus poverty comes today to be understood mainly as the "inability to afford an adequate standard of consumption."<sup>13</sup>

## 2. Differences in the Details

What counts as "*an adequate standard*" differs from country to country and from society to society. Some economists continue to hold that lacking an adequate standard of consumption denotes

the inability “to afford what average people have.” Such poor persons are said to be relatively poor; they lack the average means to participate in their society’s normal activities. Other economists hold that lacking such an adequate standard denotes persons’ “consumption capacities falling regularly below some fixed minimum consumption level,” a subsistence level whose aggregated cost for the necessities of life such as minimum food, clothing, and shelter is called the poverty line. Such poor persons are said to be absolutely poor.<sup>14</sup>

At this general level, *extreme poverty* may then be understood as destitution, or “great need of food, shelter, etc.”<sup>15</sup> In other words, extreme poverty is the condition of undergoing regular deprivation of the necessities not just for health but for life itself. Another way of characterizing extreme poverty at the international rather than at national or local levels and the World Bank’s approach since 2015,<sup>16</sup> is to set “the poverty line” for households below the purchasing power parity (PPP) for \$1.90 per day.<sup>17</sup>

The *poverty line* is the income or consumption level “supposed to be just enough to avoid less than adequate consumption.” It may either be fixed (absolute) or fluctuate (relative).<sup>18</sup> For example, on 18 October 2018, the World Bank revised its previous descriptions of the poverty line. It introduced two complementary global poverty lines: the lower-middle-income poverty line at PPP \$3.20 per person per day and the upper-middle-income poverty line at \$5.50 per person per day. The World Bank designed these new descriptions to complement, not replace, the previous international poverty line (\$1.90 per person per day). They can now be used as a flexible benchmark for countries across the world whose level of development makes any fixed international poverty line of more limited use in gauging levels of poverty.

Poverty thus is a graduated or scalar phenomenon; it has a real number as its value, but it appears in degrees, whether simple, mod-

erate, or extreme. These degrees, however, can be measured more exactly. We need to know not just whether an individual is suffering rather generally from moderate poverty; we also need to know wherever the data allows to what exact extent he or she is suffering from moderate poverty. Figuratively speaking, we need to know the depth of poverty, what the specialists describe, somewhat curiously, as “the poverty gap.”

The *poverty gap* may be defined more precisely as “the mean shortfall in consumption or income from the poverty line. The mean is to be measured over the whole population, counting the non-poor as having zero shortfall, and to be expressed as a percentage of the poverty line.”<sup>19</sup>

Note however that “as countries grow richer,” the World Bank reports, “their definitions of basic needs change. Carrying out basic functions of life might require more goods in some countries than in others. Accordingly, another key notion, the societal poverty line, ensures equality across countries in terms of carrying out the same basic functions of life in each society.

For instance, in a poorer country, participating in the job market may require only suitable clothing and sufficient food. In richer economies, however, one may also need to have internet access, a vehicle, and a cell phone. Thus, the societal poverty line “is based on a combination of extreme poverty, which is fixed in value for everyone, and a relative dimension of well-being that differs in every country depending on the median level of consumption. In 2015, 2.1 billion people were poor relative to their societies, three times the number of people living in extreme poverty.”<sup>20</sup>

Many different kinds of poverty exist, whether monetary or non-monetary, material or non-material, individual or societal, and so on. And poverty exists in many different degrees, whether simply, moderately or extremely, and so on. One key distinction then is that

between monetary and multi-dimensional poverty.<sup>21</sup> For, according to the World Bank, “as the definition of poverty broadens to include additional aspects of deprivation, the composition of the poor changes. Monetary poverty is predominantly a rural phenomenon; 81.3 percent of the monetary poor are living in rural areas. If poverty is considered more broadly with the multidimensional lens, the distribution of poverty tilts even more toward rural areas. 83.5 percent of the multidimensionally poor are rural dwellers, implying that, relative to urban households, rural households suffer cumulatively more deprivations in access to education and essential utilities.”<sup>22</sup>

Besides narrowing the scope of our subject here, restricting its contents, and stipulating some general working definitions, we should still try to make such generalities more particular. Consider very briefly then a representative recent summary of the relative successes only in realizing just the first objective of both the 2000 Millennial Development Goals (MDGs) and the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

“The SDGs built on the MDGs,” the English developmental economist Nicholas Stern writes, “and set targets for 2015-2030 across seventeen dimensions that fall largely under the same headings [such as eradicating extreme poverty] but are now broader and deeper. They include inequality as well as poverty, are more explicit on gender issues, and focus throughout on sustainability, the environment, and climate. . . . Crucially, the SDGs advanced beyond the MDGs in applying to all countries and in bringing sustainability to center stage. They were concerned now with the rights of future generations and equity in relation to those who would follow, as well as current poverty.”

When read against the backgrounds of recent UN and World Bank reports on the eradication of poverty and extreme poverty these authoritative remarks are striking for their more than casual

insistence on the non-empirical and non-material aspects of both poverty and extreme poverty. This focus contrasts strongly with the much more habitual and almost exclusive institutional focus on the material aspects of these complex phenomena.

Moreover, these remarks also highlight the problematic character of the relational aspects of poverty and of extreme poverty, that is, the interrelatedness of these phenomena with such major issues as climate change, future generations, and other concerns. Consequently, a not-inadequate approach to eradicating both extreme poverty and poverty worldwide must be more than exclusively economic or even more broadly exclusively social-scientific; it must construe poverty and extreme poverty in both material and immaterial forms whether cultural such as education or spiritual such as renunciation. It must, in a word, be “multi-dimensional.”<sup>23</sup>

### **3. Eradicating Extreme Poverty**

In trying to eradicate extreme poverty, some developmental economists have sketched out at least four major approaches, each with its strengths and weaknesses. Briefly recalling these social-scientific approaches proves useful before turning to the question of whether additional philosophical perspectives could also be pertinent.

On the specific understanding then of extreme poverty as destitution, what are the main approaches today towards eradicating such suffering? I will briefly address each approach, starting from apparently the least effective to the most effective.<sup>24</sup> I will, however, exclude here discussion of any of their combinations, such as the important variant of combining the third and fourth approaches.

Following criticisms of the 2017 World Bank’s report on world poverty that views of those actually living in extreme poverty were underappreciated in contrast to those of experts living in high-income countries,<sup>25</sup> some developmental economists re-examined



the different ways in which subjective approaches could be applied to efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Many of their consequent views might usefully be put under the heading of participatory approaches.

Here extreme poverty is understood as a maximum degree of poverty when poverty itself is taken generally as “an enforced lack of socially perceived necessities.”<sup>26</sup> These necessities were those possessions and activities that “every family should be able to afford and that nobody should have to live without.” Qualified interviewers were instructed to solicit subjective views of those actually living in extreme poverty by asking one or the other of four suggested questions.

One suggested question was to ask how respondents perceived their own poverty status, “without any reference to a poverty line.” Another question was whether respondents thought that their actual consumption met the standard they considered necessary to avoid poverty. A third suggestion was to ask exactly the same question but to follow up by determining independently what the household consumption actually was and hence whether their consumption did or did not meet the standard considered. A final suggested question, one closest to World Bank current methods for estimating global poverty, was to ask respondents just where they thought a poverty line “defined in terms of consumption should be set.”<sup>27</sup>

Responses to any one kind of question like these pose substantial difficulties for the interpretation of such questions. One problem follows from the important differences among these questions. For example, the third question – but not the first – implies a contrast between subjective and objective assessments. More importantly, respondents’ subsequent adjustments may skew their initial responses to any of these questions. For example, responses “may reflect both adaptation and aspiration. Where people have adjusted to low levels of living, they may have adapted to these levels and regard mere survival as escaping poverty.”<sup>28</sup>

## RECOGNIZING POVERTIES

Thus, although participatory subjective inputs may be helpful in rationally updating regularly the values of international poverty lines and in settling on the dimensions and indicators on both monetary and non-monetary poverty, clearly approaches based on objective observations of persons must contribute to the elimination of extreme poverty.

Another approach, a basic needs approach, newly reactivated today after its first introduction at the beginnings of the twentieth century, involves scrutinizing the relation between extreme poverty and basic physiological needs. These basic needs are most often understood today mainly in terms of nutritional needs only. For example, the basic nutritional needs are taken as the contents of a food basket which meets those, and perhaps also of several other baskets for clothing, shelter, and so on.

This approach to eradicating extreme poverty typically involves three components. First, basic nutritional requirements must be determined in terms of calories per day, varying as a function of age, gender, and so on. Then, a food budget is elaborated in terms of the costs of providing such nutritional basics. Finally, other additional needs may be added, most often however of a monetary nature exclusively such as shelter and clothes allowances.

Specifying basic needs mainly in terms of required nutritional items is, however, complicated, for a variety of specific reasons. These reasons, in addition to age and gender already mentioned, include different levels of activity, varying energy needs, and so on. Moreover, availability and costs of basic foods change continuously. Still more, account must be taken of the distinction between basic foods required and those actually consumed.

In the instance of extreme poverty, expenditures on food alone are most often not on basic foods. And even where such expenditures are allocated for basic foods, only the total expenditures on basic

foods alone come below the pertinent national poverty line. No resources are available for anything else. And yet some non-food needs, such as having access to minimum shelter, are also necessary for life.

On reflection, then, it seems clear that a basic needs approach to the elimination of extreme poverty, while certainly not merely subjective, “cannot be said to provide [even]. . . a purely physiological foundation for measuring poverty, since at each stage of the calculation a significant degree of judgment is being exercised.”<sup>29</sup>

Still another approach to eradicating extreme poverty is the human rights approach.<sup>30</sup> This approach is generally understood, unlike the participatory approach, as not subjective. It mainly derives from reflection on the large list of human rights set out in the UN’s 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This list indicates both material and immaterial concerns. Thus, Article 25 claims, “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services.” Furthering this list, Article 26 adds, “Everyone has the right to education.”

The rights at issue here are neither family nor group rights but (controversially for some Asian Confucians) the rights of individual persons.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the expression “everyone” here is understood universally as gender blind. Thus, the expression includes equally both women as well as men, whether born in or out of wedlock, regardless of age groups, social classes, politics, or religions. The specific rights of children came under special discussion in the subsequent UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.<sup>32</sup> Still more, the listing of these rights, however imperfect, has led to the further development of multidimensional approaches to poverty and the development of, among others, the MPI, the Multi-dimensional Poverty Index at the UN and at the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI).<sup>33</sup>

More promising perhaps is another objective approach called the capability approach. Instead of identifying extreme poverty as the non-fulfillment of a certain set of basic needs, the extremely poor person on this approach is understood as being essentially deprived of a certain set of basic capabilities. This deprivation limits the person's freedom to live a decent human life.<sup>34</sup> This approach has played "an important unifying role in thinking about countries at different levels of development."<sup>35</sup>

The capability approach has been much studied, and the literature on its advantages and weaknesses is substantial.<sup>36</sup> So much attention continues to focus on capability approaches, partly because of their contributions to resolving demanding definitional problems with poverty, and partly too because of their contributions to the clarifications of the recurring but difficult distinctions in different domains between absolute and relative poverty. Still further, the operationalization of capability approaches has proved essential for elaborating so-called multidimensional indicators for the measurements of poverty.

#### **4. Capabilities Components**

On several major assessments and from the perspective here on extreme poverty, the capabilities approach has two major components. The first is a rather novel focus not on the choices extremely poor persons make but on the scope of their choices. In particular, the capabilities approach focuses on what extremely poor persons have the actual capacities to choose. "Actual capacities," alludes to the brute fact that extremely poor persons do have possibilities to choose, but all too often most of these possibilities are blocked. Moreover, some of the accessible options are simply not unknown to extremely poor persons.

A second major component in this approach to eradicating extreme poverty is an emphasis on describing the intervening links in extremely poor persons' actual choices from the desired end to the final functioning. Amartya Sen gives the example of someone having under the general economic heading of the consumption of "goods and services," not so much a "good" but a "service," that is, a "commodity." In particular, the example goes, having a bicycle. The first link in the chain to well-being in this example is "possessing a bicycle [a commodity that] has the characteristic [the second link] of allowing you to travel: this characteristic ensures the capability to get to work [the third link], and that [capability] underpins your well-being," the final link.<sup>37</sup>

Unlike the basic needs approach which moves from the first link, necessary commodities, directly to the final link, a standard for well-being, a capabilities approach focuses on the intervening links in the chain. This focus turns out to be crucial because this focus highlights the often-overlooked fact that the functioning of certain basic capabilities change with the varying levels of consumption in continuously changing societies. Extremely poor persons' capacities to act satisfactorily are always deteriorating with respect to what it takes to function correctly in the life of a social community which itself is always continuing to evolve.

Perhaps the most substantial contribution of the capability approaches' attempt to eliminate extreme poverty, however, is their singular elucidation of extreme poverty as extreme physical and/or mental deprivation. "The relevance of disability in the understanding of deprivation in the world is often underestimated, and this can be one of the most important arguments for paying attention to the capability perspective," Sen writes. "People with physical or mental disability are not only among the most deprived human beings in the world; they are also, frequently enough, the most neglected."<sup>38</sup>

Reflective and efficacious concern with this dimension is fundamental for eradicating extreme poverty. Nonetheless, determining even with the help of a capabilities approach just where the poverty threshold should be set (as the EU's continuing hesitations between measuring poverty as a function of 50 per cent or of 60 per cent of median disposable income with several adjustments clearly show) does not exclude the abiding necessity for sound judgment.

### **5. Engagements, Actions, Intentions**

When we look over at least these four major approaches today to eradicating extreme poverty and especially over their respective strengths and weaknesses, at least one major feature seems salient. All of these social scientific approaches are more or less direct approaches to eradicating extreme poverty. They involve measurement, the design of anti-poverty policies, experimental prototype programs, the concrete application of tested strategies and techniques, and so on.

Until recently much of this work has focused on eliminating extreme poverty by alleviating mainly material deprivations of whatever sorts. Since the evaluations of the Millennial Development Goals in 2015 and the renewed commitments of more than 190 countries to fulfilling the more numerous and more carefully researched and focused Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, praiseworthy efforts are being made to examine increasingly non-exclusively material deprivations. Relevant examples are the contributions of educational and health deficiencies to the many-faceted phenomena of extreme poverty. And one key distinction here seems newly salient: the difference between direct and indirect measures to eradicate extreme destitution.

Could some kinds of philosophical activity have a pertinent place here? Could there be some kind of philosophical responsibility for engagement with the eradication of extreme poverty? How so?

## PART TWO. ETHICS

I would suggest here that mainly indirect efforts of some philosophical teaching, conferencing, and publishing can make an important difference in diminishing the prevalence of extreme poverty. They can do so by freshly parsing and thereby reevaluating the roles of intentions and not just actions in alleviating extreme human suffering.

The plausibility of such a proposal becomes clear, I believe, in examining at least four main aspects of the elusive phenomenon of engagement and its connections with philosophical reflection. But first of all, what appear to be the main senses of the perhaps overly familiar English language expression “engagement”?<sup>39</sup>

Recent editions of standard dictionaries in both British and American English record a surprising number of usages for both the substantive and the verbal forms of the word “engagement.” In the case of British English, no fewer than, respectively, seven and eighteen separate uses are recorded, including for the verbal forms both transitive and intransitive constructions. In American English, six senses are recorded for the substantive, and for the verbal forms, ten for the transitive and four for the intransitive.<sup>40</sup>

In the contexts of our discussions, I think that the primary sense of the several overlapping senses of the substantive expression “engagement” is that of engagement as a legal or moral obligation. In this context, an engagement is a formal promise of a commitment or an undertaking. The main sense of the verbal expression in the more pertinent intransitive construction, “to engage oneself,” is that of a person binding himself or herself morally to undertake or to answer for a matter of social or political commitment. In the particular case of “engagement and philosophical responsibility,” the long-standing exemplary reflections and actions of the philosophers Michael Dummett (1925-2011), with respect to the impoverished situations of most immigrants, and Peter Singer,

with respect to the very poor, can be seen as supporting this interpretation.<sup>41</sup>

As these examples show, however, making a simple distinction between direct and indirect engagement and philosophical responsibility is necessary. Besides his direct physical engagement for some years in assisting extensively his spouse's social assistance activities on behalf of many of those migrating to the UK in the late eighties and nineties, Dummett was also indirectly engaged in this work through some of his professional teaching and writing philosophy. Similarly, besides his and his spouse's direct physical engagement on behalf of "The Life You Can Save," a social movement on effective altruism, Peter Singer continues to be indirectly engaged in this work also through his professional teaching and writing philosophy.

Given this distinction between direct and indirect philosophical engagement, what then is the particular guise of indirect philosophical engagements only with the specific challenge of alleviating the major sufferings of the extremely poor in the EU today?<sup>42</sup>

By way of an initial response, consider a controversial thesis. Generally, many philosophers have a moral responsibility to engage themselves reflectively to understand better many pressing problems. One is just how in particular the immaterial situations of the extremely poor require their active and not just reflective attentions. Let us now consider four elements making up such a claim.

Reflective philosophical engagement with the extremely poor starts with (1) reflective attention.<sup>43</sup> Such reflective engagement with the destitute, again generally, entails analyzing just how from one's common human nature,<sup>44</sup> it follows that both philosophers and destitute persons share immaterial and not just material vulnerabilities. Some of these vulnerabilities impose on philosophers moral obligations to come to the effective assistance of those destitute persons who, unless both immaterially and materially unassisted



adequately, will otherwise die prematurely. A detailed example may be helpful.<sup>45</sup>

When, say, a passerby “sees” an extremely poor person and his or her situation, say a disheveled, dirty, disoriented, and smelly person lying on the sidewalk begging, what is he or she visually perceiving? That is, restricting ourselves for the moment to the strictly empirical aspects of the visual situation only, what is going on?

Without trying to rehearse all the myriad details, the bare empirical essentials for our philosophical purposes are something like the following.<sup>46</sup> The passerby is seeing the starkly needy person not with his eyes but with his brain.<sup>47</sup> In particular, what the perceiver’s brain “sees” is not the product of any single system but of two separate processes.<sup>48</sup>

## 6. Seeing Destitute Persons

The first visual process comprises the observer’s conscious visual experience; it yields the conscious perception of a visual object, say the homeless street person on the sidewalk. This stream of visual information (“the ventral stream”) flows from the primary visual cortex at the back of the brain to the inferior temporal cortex of the brain’s temporal lobe. The other visual process comprises the observer’s non-conscious visual guidance resulting in interactive movements with respect to this visual object, say the observer’s starting to move towards the person. This information stream (“the dorsal stream”) flows from the primary visual cortex to the posterior parietal cortex in the top of the brain.

Now although both streams of visual projection are anatomically substantially different, behaviorally both streams join. Generally, one expert writes, “the selection of appropriate goal objects depends on the perceptual machinery of the ventral stream, while the visual con-

trol of the goal-directed action is carried out by dedicated on-line control systems in the dorsal stream.”<sup>49</sup>

The observer’s seeing the starkly impoverished homeless street person here does not involve the immediate and direct activation of the dorsal stream, the non-conscious “vision-for-action” system. Were the observer’s foot, however, to be “frozen” in mid-stride while stepping closer to the beggar’s outstretched arm before consciously “seeing” that he was about to tread on that person’s other hand, this temporally short system would have already been activated, as this system involves non-conscious retinal saccades some of which trigger reflex movements.<sup>50</sup>

The observer’s seeing the homeless street person here, however, does involve the immediate (but not the direct) activation of the ventral stream, the conscious “vision-for-perception” system. But were the observer to “see” not the outstretched hand but a piece of discarded debris, this relatively long system would be activated. That is, this conscious visual system would relay the neurological signals of the visual sensations again immediately through the visual thalamus to the motor cortex, but then, farther and indirectly, through the frontal cortex and not through the prefrontal cortex.<sup>51</sup>

By contrast, when some passerby “sees” the outstretched hand of the person on the sidewalk, he “sees” both the inchoative fact that a severely impoverished street person is begging for money, as well as the completed fact that he must do something immediately to assist this person.<sup>52</sup> Here the stream of the observer’s vision-for-perception system passes through the long conscious visual system as in the preceding case, but the stream also passes through a further complex deliberative system before arriving at the motor cortex. The motor cortex then mediately activates the vision-for action system in response to the antecedently resulting conscious decision of the observer to take immediate action.

Note that the heightened neural activity in the visual perceptual processes at work in all three cases (apparently perceived sidewalk debris, a veridically perceived human hand, a truly perceived starkly needy person) always passes through not just the visual thalamus but through the reticular formation. This brain nucleus controls the sustaining of attention, the second key element here.<sup>53</sup> What then, we now want to know, is this second moment in the reflective philosophical engagement here with the extremely poor? Do we call it the (2) sustaining of reflective attention?<sup>54</sup>

The sustaining of reflective attention is the fixation of the fovea on the visual object and the maintenance of that fixation. It requires arousal, orientation, and focus. A specialist explains:

*“Arousal* is dependent on a group of nuclei in the midbrain. . . called the reticular activating system. [...] When the [a specific group of ] reticular neurons are stimulated, they release a flood of neurotransmitters [dopamine and noradrenaline]. . . [some of which are] particularly involved in activating the prefrontal lobe. Stimulation of this group of reticular neurons also creates alpha brainwaves – oscillations of electrical activity at 20-40 Hertz – which are associated with *alertness*. [Note here the essential role in attention of alertness which is the resultant of arousal.]

*Orientation* is done by neurons in the superior colliculus and parietal cortex. The superior colliculus turns the eyes to the new stimulus, while the parietal cortex disengages attention from the current stimulus. . . .

*Focus* is brought about by the lateral pulvinar – a part of the thalamus – which operates [the fovea] rather like a spotlight, turning to shine on the stimulus. Once it is locked on, it shunts information about the target to the frontal lobes, which then lock on and maintain attention.”<sup>55</sup>

Return now to the passerby perceiving the starkly needy homeless person lying on the sidewalk. The passerby is alert, orientated, and

focused on one set of aspects only of the diverse elements being absorbed both consciously and subconsciously. Leaving aside the neurophysiology, we can ask whether the observer has now not just empirically “locked onto”<sup>56</sup> something; we can ask whether the observer has also “seen” something non-empirical like moral obligation and moral values in the situation.<sup>57</sup> In short, we can ask whether the perceiver has perceived in the street person’s gesture among other matters the manifestation of a moral value, an obligatory good.<sup>58</sup>

After reflection it seems to me that if I “see” an outstretched hand of an extremely impoverished person lying on the sidewalk, then I find myself immediately in a moral and ethical situation.<sup>59</sup> Among many other things, the visual features of this situation structurally force on me the conscious realization that I am now confronted with questions about moral duties and moral obligations as well as with issues about ethical values and ethical ideals.

In short, sometimes situations I “see” may exhibit some objective salient features that require both accurate description and right judgment.<sup>60</sup> These features include moral elements that alert me to my having a serious personal obligation to do everything I can to assist the desperate homeless person lying on the sidewalk. They also include ethical elements that focus my awareness on such ethical values and ideals as the value of life that I cannot not act to preserve without seriously compromising my own inalienable sense of integrity as a conscious and reflective person.

More particularly, some philosophical reflection that starts with (1) reflexive attention, continues through (2) the sustaining of that attention, and on to (3) heightened awareness.

The structures of human perception are of such a nature that some instances of philosophical reflection about moral obligations to assist the destitute entail not just philosophical reflection and enhanced attentiveness but also an increased awareness. This heightened

awareness is not just of the material and immaterial solidarity of all persons, but rather it illuminates the ontological interdependence of one person on another.<sup>61</sup> This heightened awareness consists especially of a specific form of intentionality.

That is, some human intentionality understood as (4) *the directedness of attention and awareness* is of such a nature that instances of philosophical intentions to assist the destitute entail not just moral attentiveness and ethical awareness. They also entail a directedness of attention to enacting the material and immaterial solidarity of all persons, grounded in their ontological interdependence on one another.<sup>62</sup>

### **Envoi: Interdependencies**

In concluding, for my part, I do not think philosophers can be the especially reflective persons they are without recasting their ontological status as individuals into that of ontologically interdependent entities. Call these entities here “relationals.” Such entities cannot be more fully what they are without, to the degrees possible, endowing other interdependent relational entities with the capacities they themselves possess.<sup>63</sup>

## Endnotes for Essay Eight

- <sup>1</sup> This essay is a revised version of an invited text first prepared for presentation in shorter form at the XXXVIII International Symposium in Eco Ethics held at Sigtunastifelsen, Sweden from 6-10 November 2019. My thanks to Noriko Hashimoto, Bengt Kristensson, and Jayne Svenungsson for their generous invitation.
- <sup>2</sup> A. B. Atkinson, *Measuring Poverty Around the World* (Princeton: PUP, 2019), pp. 80-81. For detailed references here see Atkinson's endnote and especially the pertinent items in his posthumous book's extensive bibliography. In close connection with Atkinson 2019 see also A. B. Atkinson, *Inequality – What Can Be Done?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2015), esp. pp. 82-112 and Index, and *Poverty and Shared Prosperity: Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle* (Washington: World Bank, 2018) to which much of Atkinson's last work contributed. Part of what justifies relying here mainly on Atkinson 2019 is the fact that four internationally distinguished economists – F. Bourguignon, A. Brandolini, J. Mickelwright, and N. Stern each of whom had earlier co-authored books with Atkinson – worked together extensively and very precisely to update and bring this outstanding work however incomplete to publication.
- <sup>3</sup> J. Ratzinger (Benedict XVI, emeritus Pope), *L'Amour dans la vérité*, n° 36 (Paris: Bayard, 2009), pp. 58-59.
- <sup>4</sup> *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018: Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle* (Washington: World Bank, 2018).
- <sup>5</sup> "Focusing on the bottom few per cent, not averages [or aggregates], is the best way to tackle poverty," write M. Pelling and M. Garschagen, "Put Equity First in Climate Adaptation," *Nature* 569 (16 May 2019), 327-329. Citing the carefully calculated numbers in S. Hallegatte and J. Rozenberg's article in *Nature Climate Change* 7 (2017), 250-256, they also write, "If current climate and development trends continue, then by 2030, tens of millions of people will join the 736 million now living in extreme poverty" (p. 328).
- <sup>6</sup> On famine as partly a partly a philosophical and not an exclusively economic problem see P. McCormick, *When Famine Returns: Ethics, Identity, and the Deep Pathos of Things* (Heidelberg: Winter Universitätsverlag, 2003).
- <sup>7</sup> In previous work both on poverty since 2009 (see Bhalla and McCormick 2009 cited below) at the national level in France and on poverty generally if not globally considered I have relied for basic definitions and distinctions on recent editions of general dictionaries and particular reference, among others the two volume *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (2007) and *The Oxford Dictionary of Economics* (2012 and 2017). Turning from the general and the national to the regional levels of poverty in the European Union (EU) today, the major definitions

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and distinctions here are now taken mainly but not exclusively from the publications of those international specialists on poverty at the UN, the World Bank, and the EU who may be grouped largely around their frequent co-author, A. B. Atkinson and dating largely from the UN ratification of the new Sustained Development Goals (SDGs) and the UN's COP21 Paris international environmental treaty of 2015.

- <sup>8</sup> For some of these excluded persons here see A. Bhalla and P. McCormick, *Poverty Among Immigrant Children in Europe* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). In addition to the focus here mainly on individuals and not on families, households, or groups see the very important more recent category of "societal poverty" included in the capabilities approach described below. See: D. M. Joliffe and E. B. Prydz, "Societal Poverty: A Relative and Relevant measure," *Policy Research Working Paper 8073* (Washington: World Bank, 2017), E. Marlier and A. B. Atkinson, "Indicators of Poverty and Social Exclusion in a Global Context," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 29 (2010), 285-304, and E. Marlier, A. B. Atkinson, B. Cantillon, and B. Nolan, *The EU and Social Inclusion: Facing the Challenges* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2007).
- <sup>9</sup> Recent examples here might be those of Putin, Erdogan, and Maduro.
- <sup>10</sup> For two overviews of the extraordinary work of A. B. Atkinson (1944-2017) see R. Aaberge *et al.* [16 others], "Tony Atkinson and His Legacy," *Review of Income and Wealth* 63 (2017), 411-444, and N. H. Stern, "Tony Atkinson on Poverty, Inequality, and Public Policy: The Work and Life of a Great Economist," *Annual Review of Economics*, 9 (2017), 1-20. "The Nobel laureate, Amartya Sen's remark on the back cover of Atkinson 2019 is worth citing in full. "Tony Atkinson did everything he thought he should do to help others and to help the world, while being robustly engaged in solving the problems that could tempt and engage an outstanding economist. The impact of his contribution to economics can be seen in a great many different areas in the subject, but our understanding of poverty [Atkinson 2019] and inequality [Atkinson 2015] in particular has been totally transformed by his foundational work (my underlines with respect to the general theme here).
- <sup>11</sup> P. Townsend, *Poverty in the United Kingdom: A Survey of Household Resources and Standards of Living* (London: Allen Lane, 1979), p. 31; cited in Atkinson 2019, p. 47.
- <sup>12</sup> On this still controversial matter see Atkinson 2019, pp. 58-62.
- <sup>13</sup> See *A Dictionary of Economics*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., ed. J. Black, *et al.* (Oxford: OUP, 2017).
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* See also the two-volume edition of *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2007).
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>16</sup> For a fuller yet still brief standard description of both poverty and extreme poverty see: W. Brown, "Poverty," in: *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics*

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and *International Relations*, ed. G. W. Brown *et al.*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2018), pp. 444-445.

- <sup>17</sup> Purchasing Power Parity or PPP is standardly understood as the “theory that exchange rates between currencies are determined in the long run by the amount of goods and services that each can buy” (*Ibid.*).
- <sup>18</sup> *A Dictionary of Economics* 2017, p. 404.
- <sup>19</sup> Atkinson 2019, p. 97. “The World Bank global estimates for 2013, with the \$1.90 a day per person poverty line, show the poverty gap as 3.23 per cent and the head-count rate as 10.67 per cent. In aggregate terms, the 767 million in poverty had a total annual poverty gap of 161 billion international dollars: 3.23 per cent of 7.18 billion x 365 = \$161 billion where 7.18 billion is the total world population. To put this figure in perspective, it is some 1 per cent of the 2013 gross national income of the United States” (*Ibid.*).
- <sup>20</sup> *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018: Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle* (Washington: World Bank, 18 October 2018), my underlines. The report continues: “Why is the societal poverty rate higher than extreme poverty? By design, the societal poverty line increases as average income rises. The average societal poverty line across all countries increased from \$5.30 in 1990 to about \$6.90 in 2015, reflecting the steady growth in real median consumption. In the early 1990s, the societal poverty rate and the extreme poverty rate were largely similar concepts because most of the world population was living in countries with low median national consumption, where by the IPL and SPL were either identical or close in value. But now, because few countries exhibit high rates of extreme poverty, the SPL is capturing significantly more information about the distributional aspects of growth.”
- <sup>21</sup> “The World Bank’s multidimensional measure is anchored on consumption or income as one dimension of welfare, and also includes several direct measures of access to education and utilities (such as electricity, water, and sanitation). For a few countries where extensive data is available, the measure is extended to look at other important dimensions of well-being including health care and nutrition, as well as security from crime and natural disasters. Going forward, the World Bank will monitor progress on multidimensional poverty at the global level using the three-dimensional measures – income/consumption, access to education, and utilities. The UNDP’s index includes only non-monetary indicators, whereas the Bank’s multidimensional measure includes consumption or income below \$1.90 as one of the indicators along with the other dimensions” (*Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018: Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle* (Washington: World Bank, 2018).
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* Again, the report continues informatively: “With respect to household composition, households with children are overrepresented among both the monetary poor and the multidimensionally poor, regardless of the gender or number



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of adults in the household. . . . Measuring inequalities within households is not an easy task. Accurate data on food consumption across individuals in a household are difficult to collect whenever household members cook together and share meals. Other consumption items, such as housing, are de facto public goods within the household that are shared among household members and cannot be allocated to specific individuals even in principle. . . . However, there is evidence from studies in several countries that resources aren't shared equally within households. One way to go beyond the household level is to look at how food is shared within families. In Bangladesh, for example, household survey data reveals that household heads – mostly men – have much smaller calorie shortfalls than non-household heads. That's why more comprehensive data is needed to deepen our understanding of how poverty affects individuals and to assess how social programs can be better tailored to meet their needs. . . . Additionally, many household surveys only provide data at the household level and don't go in depth to calculate the differences in consumption or allocation of resources among members within a household. To truly capture how individuals experience poverty, we need more surveys to understand consumption patterns of individuals so that governments can implement policies to bridge the inequalities within households.”

- <sup>23</sup> For an excellent critical discussion of multi-dimensional poverty, see Atkinson 2019, pp. 80-96, including a range of indicators and their regular changes, choice of dimensions, units of analysis, and reference populations.
- <sup>24</sup> Here I follow the specifically pertinent elements only of Atkinson's much broader discussion in Atkinson 2019, pp. 31-57.
- <sup>25</sup> See *Monitoring Global Poverty: Report of the Commission on Global Poverty* (Washington: World Bank, 2017) and A. B. Atkinson's "Cover Note" of 18 October 2016 to the *Report* (Washington: World Bank, 2016).
- <sup>26</sup> Atkinson 2019, p. 33.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.
- <sup>30</sup> The current literature on human rights is now become impossible to compass. The main source for the summary account here is J. W. Nickel, "What Future for Human Rights?" *Ethics and International Affairs* 28 (2014), 213-223. More recently, see S. Moyn, *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2018), esp. pp. 119-172.
- <sup>31</sup> See especially J. Griffin, *On Human Rights* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), and the critical essays in *Griffin on Human Rights*, ed. R. Crisp (Oxford: OUP, 2014). On the rights of groups see D. Newman, *Community and Collective Rights: A Theoretical Framework for Rights* (Oxford: Hart, 2011). For a Rawlsian perspective see M. Seymour, *A Liberal Theory of Collective Rights* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2017).

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- <sup>32</sup> For these documents see the UN website. See especially the *Final Draft of the Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights* (NY: United Nations, 2012).
- <sup>33</sup> Cf. S. Alkire, U. Kanagaratnam, and N. Suppa, “The Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI): 2018 Revision,” MPI Methodological Notes 46 (Oxford: Oxford University, 2018), and S. Alkire and S. Jahan, “The New Global MPI 2018: Aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals,” OPHI Working Paper 121 (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2018). The MPI “uses ten indicators across three dimensions of poverty – health, education, and standard of living – with a household defined as poor, it is deprived in up to six indicators” (Brown *et al.* 2018, p. 445). Note that S. and the OPHI has also worked on extreme poverty (which OPHI calls “acute poverty”) and on multi-dimension poverty in Europe.
- <sup>34</sup> See some of the many works of A. K. Sen, especially *The Idea of Justice* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), and *The Quality of Life*, ed. A. K. Sen and M. C. Nussbaum (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).
- <sup>35</sup> Atkinson 2019, p. 57.
- <sup>36</sup> See quite recently for example, M. C. Nussbaum, *The Cosmopolitan Tradition: A Noble but Flawed Ideal* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2019), pp. 236-254.
- <sup>37</sup> This description of Sen’s key example is Atkinson’s in Atkinson 2019, p. 46.
- <sup>38</sup> Sen 2009, p. 258; cited in Atkinson 2019, p. 49.
- <sup>39</sup> Note that the word “engagement” exists in both English and French where syntactic processes such as reflexivity and semantic senses although closely related nonetheless differ in some important ways. Here I focus on several main senses of the English language expression only.
- <sup>40</sup> For British English I rely here on the 6<sup>th</sup> ed. of the two-volume *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), and for American English, I rely here on the 4<sup>th</sup> ed. of *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000). Although some differences in usage are evident, as for example the strong tendency in American English to use the substantive mainly as denoting a commitment to appear in a particular place at a particular time (hence the frequent synonyms – appointment, assignation, rendezvous, etc.), I will ignore these differences here and rely mainly on the uses of the substantive and verbal forms in British English.
- <sup>41</sup> Cf. respectively M. Dummett, *On Immigration and Refugees* (London: Routledge, 2001), and P. Singer, *The Most Good You Can Do* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2016).
- <sup>42</sup> Cf. especially J. Bradshaw and E. Mayhew, *The Measurement of Extreme Poverty in the European Union* (Brussels: European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, 2011), and, among others, A. B. Atkinson, *Poverty in Europe* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1998); A. S. Bhalla and P. J. McCormick, *Poverty Among Immigrant Children in Europe* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan,

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- 2009; *Income and Living Conditions in European Countries*, ed. A. B. Atkinson and E. Marlier (Luxembourg: Eurostat, 2010); C. T. Whelan, B. Nolan, B. Maître, “Multidimensional Poverty Measurement in Europe,” *Journal of European Social Policy* 24 (2014), 183-197; C. Jencks, “Why the Very Poor Have Become Poorer,” *New York Review of Books*, 9 June 2016; *Monitoring Social Inclusion in Europe*, ed. A. B. Atkinson, A.-C. Guio, and E. Marlier (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the EU, 2017).
- <sup>43</sup> See for example S. Watzl, *Structuring Mind: The Nature of Attention and How It Shapes Consciousness* (Oxford: OUP, 2017). For a comparative philosophical view see J. Ganeri, *Attention, Not Self* (Oxford: OUP, 2017), and the reviews by A. J. Vaidya in *Mind* 128 (2019), 292-302 and by M. Chadha in *The Philosophical Review* 128 (2019), 352-356.
- <sup>44</sup> See especially M. Kronfelder, *What's Left of Human Nature? A Post-Essentialist, Pluralist, and Interactive Account of a Contested Concept* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018).
- <sup>45</sup> See McGill University's (Montréal) internet site for explanations at the elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels of the brain bases for human behaviours including visual perception at: <http://le.cerveau.mcgill.ca>. See also L. W. Swanson, “Naming and Classifying Nervous System Parts,” in his *Brain Architecture* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), 229-234; and M. A. Goodale, “Visual Brain in Action,” in: *The Oxford Companion to the Mind*, ed. R. L. Gregory, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2004), pp. 928-930. See also *The Neurobiology of Saccadic Eye Movements*, ed. R. H. Wurtz and M. E. Goldberg (Elsevier, 1989). For the organization and the physiology of the human visual system see the successive articles in R. L. Gregory 2004, pp. 931-937 and 937-938 respectively. My presentation here of three different «loops» derives from C. Marendaz, *Du regard à l'émotion: la vision, le cerveau, l'affectif* (Paris: Le Pommier, 2009), pp. 136-139.
- <sup>46</sup> The classic modern book is that of the 1981 Nobel Prize laureate (with his long-time collaborator, T. N. Wiesel), D. H. Hubel, *Eye, Brain, and Vision* (New York: Freeman, 1988) which summarized the first generation of post-war discoveries about visual perception culminating in the 1960's and 1970's articles of Hubel and Wiesel. The next major discoveries were summarized in *Analysis of Visual Behaviour*, ed. D. J. Ingle, M. A. Goodale, and R. J. W. Mansfield (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982 (see especially the article D. Van Essen then summarized much of this generation's work in his “Information Processing in the Primate Visual System: An Integrated Systems Perspective, *Science*, 255 (1992), 419-423. Much of the most recent work has a different character since it tries to benefit from an integration of results involving the new information technologies underlying the newest scanning and microscopy technologies, comparative non-human primate research, and continuing traditional research involving recordings of re-

sults deriving from individual brain probes. Note that much recent research no longer starts from visual inputs in the retinal screen and then follows the different informational pathways towards outputs, but now starts from visual outputs and works back through the informational pathways towards the retinal screen inputs. See especially the detailed overview in the inaugural lecture of G. Orban at the *Collège de France, La vision, mission du cerveau: Les trois révolutions des neurosciences* (Paris: Fayard, 2007), especially pp. 63-74; and, for example, M. Koyama, I. Hasegawa, T. Osada, Y. Adachi, K. Nakahara, and Y. Miyashita, "Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging of Macaque Monkeys Performing Visually Guided Saccade Tasks: Comparison of Cortical Eye Fields with Humans," *Neuron* 191 (2004), 3795-3800; and Y. Kamitani and F. Tong, "Decoding the Visual and Subjective Contents of the Human Brain," *Nature Neuroscience* 8 (2005), 679-685.

<sup>47</sup> The general contemporary background is to be found in J. P. Frisby and J. V. Stone, *Seeing: The Computational Approach to Biological Vision* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010). The book divides seeing into a computational level, an algorithmic level, and "a hardware implementation level" after the original general schema of David Marr.

<sup>48</sup> L. G. Ungerleider and M. Mishkin, "Two Cortical Visual Systems," in: *Analysis of Visual Behaviour*, ed. D. J. Ingle, M. A. Goodale, and R. J. W. Mansfield (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), pp. 549-586). Some recent research has revised the results of this key paper. See for example the discussion of how the initial division between the dorsal and ventral systems is now to be enlarged in such a way as to include the subdivision of the dorsal system itself into the dorsal-dorsal that terminates in the higher parietal lobe and the dorsal-ventral that terminates in the lower parietal lobe (in G. Rizzolatti and C. Sinigaglia, *Les neurons miroirs* [Paris: Odile Jacob, 2008], pp. 53-54).

<sup>49</sup> A. D. Milner, "Vision-for-Action," in: *The Oxford Companion to the Mind*, ed. R. L. Gregory, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2004), p. 927.

<sup>50</sup> That is, without passing through the frontal cortex the unconscious visual system would directly conduct the streams of electro-chemical pulses (into which the different elements of the retinal screen has transformed the light waves falling upon it) through the thalamus relay station in the limbic system to the motor cortex of the brain thereby triggering the reflex to "freeze" the observer's step before he treads on the person's hand.

<sup>51</sup> Very roughly, the long loop of neural activity here would run from: the retinal screen – to the visual thalamus – to the medial geniculate body – to the visual cortex – to the parietal cortex – to the frontal cortex – to the intermediate and upper levels of the upper colliculus which already is incorporating some inputs from the parietal cortex – then, just as with the short system, on to the reticular formation already incorporating some inputs from the limbic systems

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in the cerebellum – to the subsequent eye movements accompanying whatever actions the observer would then undertake. In short, the neurological signals of the visual sensations here would pass through the total conscious visual system, including through the subsystems of the complex network of the very important basal ganglions in a part of the prefrontal cortex.

- <sup>52</sup> In fact, the visual brain perceives much, much more, including direction, speed, spatial situation, colour, three-dimensionality, and so on. For our purposes here, however, simplification is necessary.
- <sup>53</sup> The reticular formation matures (i.e., becomes fully myelinated) only in adolescence. Most pre-adolescents notably have short spans of attention. Cf. *Effortless Attention: A New Perspective in the Cognitive Sciences of Attention and Action*, ed. B. Bruya (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010). Usually attention and action require effort. Sometimes however – and this is the case that interests us here – attention would seem to be without effort. These papers focus on the phenomenon of “effortless attention.”
- <sup>54</sup> Cf. D. H. O'Connor, M. M. Fukui, M. A. Pinsk, and S. Kastner, “Attention Modulates Responses in the Human Lateral Geniculate Nucleus,” *Nature Neuroscience*, 5 (2002), 1203-1209; and K. Nelissen, G. Luppino, W. Vanduffel, G. Rizzolatti, and G. A. Orban, “Observing Others: Multiple Action Representation in the Frontal Lobe,” *Science* 310 (2005), 332-336.
- <sup>55</sup> R. Carter, *Mapping the Mind* (Berkeley: UCal Press, 1998), pp. 186-187; my emphases and italics.
- <sup>56</sup> It is the ocular-motor system that fixes the fovea on some specific feature of the visual object, and both the ocular-motor system and the vestibular system that maintains the fixation of the fovea on that feature. Cf. G. A. Orban, *La vision, mission du cerveau: Les trois révolutions des neurosciences* (Paris: Fayard, 2007), pp. 23-24.
- <sup>57</sup> For some of the philosophical complexities here which I pass over, see: W. Wu, “Visual Attention, Conceptual Content, and Doing it Right,” *Mind*, 117 (2008), 1003-1033, with an excellent bibliography.
- <sup>58</sup> For moral perceptions cf. J. Matey’s summaries in her 7 August 2019 *Notre Dame Philosophical Review* of *Evaluative Perception*, ed. A. Bergqvist and R. Cowan (Oxford: OUP, 2018). “Robert Audi’s ‘Moral Perception Defended’ defends the reality and perceptibility of moral phenomena and argues that perception of moral features can ground moral knowledge. Although moral properties are not observable in the way that sensible properties such as shape are, they can be perceived by way of phenomenal states that integrate sensations along with emotions and other ‘seemings’. For example, when we see moral wrongdoing, we may experience a sense of unfittingness at what is visually detected. The sense of unfittingness, moreover, is felt to be integrated with the sensory properties that it is based on. According to Audi, these integrated experiences are perceptual in the sense

that they dispose one to attribute the moral property in a way that is epistemically direct. ‘Evaluative Perception as Response-Dependent Representation,’ by Paul Noordhof, presents a view about the rich, non-sensory evaluative content of perceptual experience that can accommodate two concerns that arise for evaluative perception. First, some cases of evaluative perception lack phenomenal presence. Second, evaluative properties exist by virtue of their non-evaluative bases, but the bases can be quite diverse, so the unity of these bases under a single concept requires some explanation. Noordhof contends that both features can be explained by the view that evaluative perception involves intrinsic response dependent representation. In ‘Doubts About Moral Perception,’ Pekka Väyrynen undermines the phenomenological motivation for moral perception by offering a simpler, more unified account. Although evaluative moral properties may be contents of representational states that have perceptual representations as parts, what may seem like perceptual representations are actually the result of habitual, implicit, non-inferential transitions in thought. In addition to being more easily accounted for otherwise, Väyrynen argues that there are no explanatory or epistemological benefits to the view that moral properties are perceptually represented. While moral properties may seem integrated with perceptual experiences, they can make both an epistemic and phenomenological difference without being represented perceptually.”

<sup>59</sup> Cf. C. O’Callaghan, *Beyond Vision – Philosophical Essays* (Oxford: OUP, 2017), and the review by I. Applebaum in *The Philosophical Review*, 128 (2019), 341-348.

<sup>60</sup> «[L]es deux voies communiquent abondamment entre elles pour de multiples raisons: contrôle d’attention, collecte de données sensorielles en vue d’une décision, et peut-être même échange d’informations visuelles d’un type particulier, concernant notamment la forme tridimensionnelle,» G. Orban, *La vision, mission du cerveau: Les trois révolutions des neurosciences* (Paris: Fayard, 2007), p. 46. Cf. S. Street, “A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value,” *Philosophical Studies*, 127 (January), 109-166; S. Street, “Constructivism About Reasons,” *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*, 3: 207-246; S. Street, “Evolution and the Normativity of Epistemic Reasons,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Suppl. Vol. 35: 213-248; R. Van Gulick, “Consciousness,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edition 2014, ed. E. N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/consciousness>.

<sup>61</sup> See P. McCormick, *Relationals: On the Nature and Grounds of Persons* (Kracow: Copernicus Centre Press, 2020).

<sup>62</sup> See among others U. Kriegel, *The Sources of Intentionality* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), and K. Neander, *A Mark of the Mental* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017).

<sup>63</sup> See: K. Neander, *The Mark of the Mental* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017), and especially D. Bouget and A. Mendelovici, “Phenomenal Intentionality,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/phenomenal-intentionality/>.