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We Refugees
Standpoint and Border Ethics

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Abstract: This essay argues that a contemporary trend in analytic ethics, namely the use of second personal moral reasons, is hamstrung in its efforts to guide moral deliberation about difficult cases such as the plight of Syrian refugees due to its commitment to the formal constraint of the second person. Whereas second person reasons might be able to explain the objectivity of moral principles, they do not explain why we should care about the people to whom our obligations are directed. It is further argued that Karl Jaspers' moral philosophy constitutes a better guide for moral deliberation and is also better positioned to explain why you and I have moral obligations to distant others too, such as Syrian refugees. Framing moral reasons through a first personal plural standpoint has the potential to ground them existentially, and explains how the self is morally related to the plight of the Other.

Keywords: Jaspers, Karl; Syria; *Existenz*; ethics; moral reasons; encompassing; existential ethics; situation; refugees; second person standpoint; transcendence.

In analytic ethics, the "second personal standpoint" is emerging as an influential view of moral reasons. Stephen Darwall contends that we "inescapably presuppose" reasons are second personal when we act, which means that the agent always treats another as "a you" in relation to the self—a you which has commitments, obligations, and privileged projects just as the self does.[1] This essay uses the current Syrian refugee crisis as a point in case regarding our response to refugees to demonstrate that, whereas the prescriptivity of morality can be guided by second personal reasons, the language of true normative obligation is, instead, first-personal plural (a "we") and can be grounded in important existential ways, which can be informed by the work of existentialist philosophers, such as, for example, Karl Jaspers.

The Syrian refugee crisis is a significant event for ethicists who are concerned about events that impact borders (including citizens' health, safety, security, and education), because it has morally relevant ramifications for the health, economy, security, development, and technology across numerous countries. After explaining the second person standpoint's main tenet and applying this standpoint to the Syrian refugee crisis, I will demonstrate that it is unable to account for our obligations to the Syrians because it requires a formal, objective relationship between the moral agent and the Other, which functions independent of meaningful, contextual features of either subject. Jaspers' existential

[1] The essay benefitted tremendously from input received at the 2017 APA Central Division meeting of the Karl Jaspers Society of North America. Thanks, especially, to comments from Brendan Sweetman, Gregory Walters, and anonymous referees for *Existenz*.

ethics, however, is grounded in the I-Thou relationship and can use reasons derived from the first personal plural standpoint as a necessary (rather than a merely possible) foundation of a moral global response to Syrian refugees. For Jaspers' ethics, the situatedness of the Other creates a normative encompassing tie between persons, the result of which is a conceptual and pragmatic connection between a moral agent's act and those it affects. So, a global response to the Syrian crisis can be attuned to the existential needs of those impacted. Jaspers thinks that the bearer of moral rights has the special privilege to change the direction of an action, but this is only possible through the solidarity of the close proximity of "the indwellers" who seek out the soaring movement Jaspers sees as representative of true, authentic being.[2] The consequence that can be drawn from this crisis is that we bear responsibility to give refugees a dignified response to their exigent needs. Finally, in his relational view Jaspers maintains that each person has reciprocal rights and claims regarding each other, as well as the competence to acknowledge and act on these reciprocal normative claims. Morality would be amiss if the self seeks only tangible happiness without the orientation of the self toward humanity.[3] A first-personal plural framework, however, (when communicative, loyal self-hood is married to an authentic relationship to the Other) can provide an existential, ethical indubitable which founds all action, and our response to the refugee crisis: "I am aware of myself as that which I myself am, because it is what I ought to be."[4]

The Syrian Refugee Crisis and Morality's Call

United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien reported on January 26, 2017 that the Syria civil war, now in its sixth year, is "a slaughterhouse, a complete meltdown of humanity, the apex of horror," which has killed hundreds of thousands of people and forced more than eleven million people from their homes, a full five million of whom are children.[5] Civilian infrastructure (which includes power and water systems but also community schools, mosques, homes, and public areas) has suffered extensive damage within Syria, and thereby led to mass casualties. In many cases, children have fared the worst from the violence, and many of those who have survived have been orphaned, suffered physical and psychological trauma, and have become ill, malnourished, abused, or exploited. Of the total displaced population, over five million Syrian people have fled the country. Where do they go? Most Syrian refugees remain in the Middle East—in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt; slightly more than 10% of the refugees have fled to Europe. Out of the five million displaced Syrians, the United States has taken in 12,586 (.0017%).[6] The host countries have to meet a range of disparate exigent physical needs of those Syrians who have fled their country. Often, those needs are as transient as the nature of the families who require them. Typical support includes food aid, health assistance, hygiene support, baby care kits, water and sanitation, and shelter repair kits. As families are resettled in a host country, they also require psychosocial care for their children, education, and training for adults in child protection and employment. But, even in countries who are better positioned to extend domestic support services to refugees, arguments for extending that support can fall flat, especially if there is an epistemic worry about whether we can know that we are obligated to help refugees. In the United States, public sentiment as to whether the States collectively are obligated to accept refugees has, to date, widely been along party lines. In October 2016, 54% of registered voters stated that the United States does not have a responsibility to accept refugees from Syria, while 41% stated that it does. Among supporters of Donald Trump, 87% say the

[2] Karl Jaspers, *Man in the Modern Age*, transl. Eden and Cedar Paul, New York, NY: Routledge 2014, p. 190.

[3] Karl Jaspers, *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, transl. E. B. Ashton, New York, NY: Harper and Row 1967, p. 105. [Henceforth cited as *PFR*]

[4] Karl Jaspers, *Way to Wisdom*, transl. Ralph Manheim, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1954, p. 55. [Henceforth cited as *WW*]

[5] "Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien Statement to the Security Council on Syria, New York, 26 January 2017," *UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)*, http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/under-secretary-general-humanitarian-affairs-and-emergency-relief-61, accessed August 3, 2017.

[6] Jens Manuel Krogstad and Jynnah Radford, "Key Facts about Refugees to the United States," *Pew Research Center* (January 30, 2017), http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/01/30/key-facts-about-refugees-to-the-u-s/, accessed August 3, 2017. [Henceforth cited as *KFR*]

U.S. does not have a responsibility to accept displaced Syrians, compared with only 27% of Hillary Clinton supporters who said the same (*KFR* online).

Although it is interesting to ascertain public feeling regarding whether the United States should accept (or accept more) refugees, it poses a broader intellectual challenge to look at the moral grounds whether there is any obligation that we—you and I—have to Syria refugees. Analytic ethics has made strides in recent years on a project with which Continental thinkers have long toiled: to explain morality at least in part through human dignity and the relational tie that subsists between people. Kant scholars have more experience doing this and their theoretical framework is probably more suitable for it than the one of utilitarian scholars who conceive of obligations to those closest to us through utility that is maximized in and by personal projects and commitments. The relational ground of ethics is, of course, difficult to capture through analytic ethics, because many analytic thinkers believe that objectivity in morality is preserved only through its formal, universalizable force. The result is that even if a right-making criterion for an act is integrated into something as substantive and meaningful as the dignity of humanity, its prescriptivity must be explained through a formal principle.

The Second Person Standpoint and Syria

In the context of analytic ethics, Stephen Darwall provides a fascinating counter to other contemporary views by introducing a second person standpoint.[7] He attempts to explain the objectivity of morality through the formal constraint of the second person standpoint ("you"), grounded in the way agent and the other are related. Darwall's perspective is influenced by Peter Strawson's contention that whether an action is desirable is a wrong kind of reason for holding someone accountable, because desirability does not explain why I (as a moral agent) have the moral authority to make a claim on another person.[8] Darwall combines Strawson's position with that of Fichte, so that morality presupposes a "mutual second personality," or a reciprocally-recognized view of the other person's claim on me.[9] Darwall amplifies Fichte's reciprocity to include two conditions of mutual second personality: (1) Moral reasons for acting are created when one person explicitly or implicitly demands something of one agent in relation to the other agent (*SPS* 3), which has the consequence that second-personal reasons depend on the authority of another agent.[10] (2) Moral reasons thus created are grounded in the de jure authority of the addresser vis-à-vis the addressee (*SPS* 4). These conditions ensure that my act of thinking about your claim toward me objectively demonstrates that you have proper standing to make a claim, and so, when I act on the claim, I act for a second personal reason. Elisabeth Herschbach explains:

> When we make demands, lodge complaints, assert our rights, enter into agreements, deliberate about our duties, and hold people accountable for their actions… we enter into reciprocal relations of recognition in which each of us presupposes a shared authority to make claims on others, to give other people reasons for acting.[11]

Herschbach's comment is illuminating, in that, for relationships that are equal, reciprocity is implied and an agent's moral authority to make and receive claims provides sufficient reason to respond to, and make, claims. But for relationships that are by their nature unequal, the reciprocity condition of second-person authority creates difficulties. The Syrian refugee crisis provides an excellent case to elucidate these difficulties.

Three Problems With Explaining Obligations Concerning Syria

Assessing even the most widely-agreed upon morally

[7] Stephen Darwall, *The Second Person Standpoint: Morality, Respect, and Accountability*, Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006. [Henceforth cited as *SPS*]

[8] Peter F. Strawson, *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays*, New York, NY: Columbia University Press 2008, pp. 2-4.

[9] Johann G. Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, transl. Peter Heath and John Lachs, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press 1982, p. 230.

[10] Stephen L. Darwall, *Honor, History, and Relationship: Essays in Second-Personal Ethics II*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press 2013, p. 5. [Henceforth cited as *HHR*] Elsewhere, Darwall distinguishes second-personal reasons from agent-neutral reasons and state-of-the-world reasons (*SPS* 6).

[11] Elisabeth Herschbach, "Review: The Second Person Standpoint," *Metapsychology Reviews Online* 11/10 (6 March 2007), http://metapsychology.mentalhelp.net/poc/view_doc.php?type=book&id=3532&cn=135, accessed August 3, 2017.

relevant considerations to solve whether one is second-personally obligated to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis assumes that second-person reasons outweigh state-of-the-world reasons, but evidentially for the crisis, this assumption rings false. As it stands, there are state-of-the world reasons that are stronger than the second person address related to the refugees, which can better explain our obligations to help others. The plight and suffering of Syrian refugee children, for example, is a pain which produces reasons independent of (and stronger than) that of the formal second personal address. Saying that "Syrian orphans are in dire distress and you can help," is existentially and morally more forceful than, "You! Get off my gouty toe." The difference is one of perceived proximity. Darwall's well-known example of standing on someone's gouty toe (*SPS* 277) presents an immediate response which I can respond to, if I am indeed standing on someone's gouty toe and am actually able to get off that toe. The assumption here is, that if I can get off that toe but I do not, in an all things considered judgment, I would be doing something morally wrong. Helping Syrian refugees may not present to you a need with the same immediacy as getting off another's gouty toe, not only because of your physical proximity to the situation but also due to the expectation that others, inclusively other governments, will help. Although the problem of obligations to distant others plagues all moral theories, it is especially pernicious to the second-person standpoint because of its moral foundation that when others make claims on me, those claims are justified through the reciprocity of moral authority. If the standpoint is correct, the facts that there are victims of atrocity who seek aid and that you can provide aid are equally salient to the second person reason that I have to get off your gouty toe.

This leads to a second problem for the second-person standpoint, the evidential problem of the lack of reciprocity between agent and addressee. Darwall's position assumes reciprocity between agent and addressee. However, atrocities are the sorts of harm that by their nature have no moral reciprocity,[12] because they stem from a systemically-corrupt authority relation between agent and addressee. Genocide, for example, has all of the characteristics of an atrocity as it produces its horrendous consequences through a social or political structure that creates the conditions under which those in power can eradicate a people, or groups of people. Whereas the success of second personal formal moral reasons comes when the agent sees the Other as worthy of a claim; atrocities are those in which the Other is subjugated so that he or she can no longer make a claim. Further, in the Syrian crisis, the oppression of the refugees is so severe that that other agents such as agencies, relief organizations, or governments have to make a claim on their behalf—frequently, the refugees have lost most of which previously constituted their identity—their homes, their country, their families. Syrian refugees are neither in a position to reciprocate a moral claim, nor are they even able to make one. The fact of their presence in the world makes their need known—we know they are in need—and if morality is prescriptive as the second-person standpoint suggests, one can expect this standpoint to prescribe binding supportive action from the world's richest populations to the world's neediest ones. Jay Wallace frames the problem this way: the second-person standpoint makes moral obligation hostage to the responses of those involved, when obligation should be independent of those responses.[13]

The third problem for the second-person standpoint in relation to the Syria refugee crisis is that it allows for moral pinch hitters to do the work in our stead.[14] A moral pinch hitter is someone who, whenever I believe I have a second personal reason to act in a certain way, is called upon to perform the act I am obligated to perform, with the same end result of action (*IOR* 152). Typically, we use moral pinch hitters when our obligations are shared or when all that is required of me is to ensure that an act is done by someone. Moral pinch hitters can, at times, facilitate better moral results than a moral agent who acts; for example, when I give my money to Oxfam as my moral pinch hitter to help those in need. In cases like these, I assist people who need it, but even more effectively because I empowered collective others to act on my behalf. At other times, however, using moral pinch hitters seems morally

[12] Inspired primarily by Claudia Card's work, I appropriate the atrocity paradigm and its understanding of "atrocities" to refer to the category of evils that are culpable, preventable, create intolerable harm, and threaten the great good of someone's life. See Claudia Card, *The Atrocity Paradigm*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2002, pp. 3-26.

[13] R. Jay Wallace, "Reasons, Relations, Commands: Reflections on Darwall," *Ethics* 118/1 (October 2007), 24-36.

[14] Jill Hernandez, "The Integrity Objection, Reloaded," *International Journal for Philosophical Studies* 21/2 (April 2013), 145-162. [Henceforth cited as *IOR*]

impermissible; for example, if I employ my graduate student as a moral pinch hitter to teach my young child how to be kind, instead of modeling kind action for her through my actions. In these instances, I offload a direct moral obligation to someone who is not so obligated, so that, even if in this case my daughter learned to be kind, she did not learn because of parental action. Moral pinch hitters are a problem for views such as Darwall's, because they ensure that I never have to act on someone else's behalf as long as someone else does the action I am obligated to perform. Imagine attending services in a synagogue that actively assists Syria refugees, and although you have never directly supported that effort, you occasionally give money to the general fund of the synagogue and so you believe you have sufficiently discharged your duty to the refugees. You have means to assist refugees and you believe someone should do it, but you allow your moral pinch hitter to fulfill your obligation, without participating at all. A point of moral obligation is that it obligates me to act, rather than relying on someone else who is similarly obligated to act.

These three problems posed to the standpoint by the refugee crisis are especially curious given Darwall's recent shift to explain our second personal obligations to the Other through a relational tie to this Other. In his 2013 book, Darwall dedicates exactly one paragraph to Continental philosophy while actually claiming:

> In what follows, I want to explore an area in which empathy's role has been, to my eye, anyway, less explored, namely, in understanding what it is to be with another person in the sense of being together with that person. [*HHR* 111]

Scholars trained in Continental ethics know the long-tradition in history of exploring moral obligations in the sense of "being together with" another person, for this reason I turn to the work of two such scholars—Karl Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel—to think about the Syria refugee crisis and any potential moral obligations we have to these refugees in need.

Jaspers and Standpoint

Analytic ethics does not consider itself indebted to Continental philosophy on the issue of the moral ground for obligations to others. But, analytic ethics runs into unnecessary difficulties (such as those mentioned above) in maintaining its views when it ignores long-held moral traditions in Continental philosophy. Jaspers' moral perspective, for example, would reject second person reasons as the sole ground for morality at least since the standpoint requires that the agent relate to the Other formally, as mere object. The vivid results of what would happen if Darwall's view would be properly informed by this tradition are seen, for example, in the following quote, in which I substitute Darwall's original phrase "second personal" with the revised phrase "first-person plural":

> I argue that the modern conceptions of morality and human rights are grounded in the idea of equal [first-person plural] authority—the notion that we share a common basic standing or authority to make claims and demands of each other and hold one another mutually accountable. In calling these modern moral concepts [first-person plural], I mean that they implicitly refer, in a way other ethical and normative concepts do not, to claims and demands that must be capable of being addressed [in the first-person plural]. I argue that it is part of the very idea of a moral (claim) right that the right holder has the authority to make the claim of the person against whom the right is held and hold him accountable for compliance….When we hold people accountable, whether others or ourselves, we take a [first person plural] perspective on them and implicitly relate to them in a way that is different than when we view them in an "objective" or third-personal way. [*HHR* 1]

In the second person address, the "you" is an objective, formal relation that is also substantively empty. Such a moral address does not take into account the relationship of the "you" to the "I." Jaspers rejects formal systems of representing being:

> But every conceptual and every visible form of being human lacks universal validity. The form is only one aspect of historic *Existenz*, not *Existenz* itself. And every form of possible human perfection proves upon reflection to be defective an unachievable in reality.[15]

Rather, the emphasis on the first-person plural reflects the relational quality Darwall wants by relating "to them in a way that is different" (*HHR* 1). The relational "we" resists objectifying its participants, because the agent (in part, anyway) identifies herself with those to whom she relates.

The second person standpoint cannot have the relational quality Darwall wants if morality functions

[15] Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy of Existence*, transl. Richard F. Grabau, Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press 1971, p. 27. [Henceforth cited as *PE*]

to guide and explain guidance for behavior relating for, and about, others, because a formal constraint like the second person standpoint subsists without the substantive I-Thou relationship that is integral to Jaspers' moral framework. Indeed, utilizing a relational ground to moral obligations, such as Jaspers provides, can partially resolve the three problems the Syria refugee crisis poses to the second person perspective. While it would be too ambitious to comprehensively assess Jaspers' conception of the existential ground of human dignity in one single essay, I nevertheless attempt to sketch out an outline of how Jaspers' existential ethics can respond to the second person standpoint (and its ineffectiveness when addressing issues like the refugee crisis). This will certainly provide fodder for future conversation and, even more so, to commit us to future action.

The second person standpoint presents itself as a viable moral theory that better explains the objectivity of morality through the second personal relationship between agents. But, we rarely engage with others formally, second-personally. In fact, Jaspers would reject the idea that we can see the Other as purely a formal "you." He states:

> Nor do we attain a series of standpoints constituting a totality in which we arrive at absolute being by moving through the horizons—as in circumnavigating the earth. For us, being remains open. [*PE* 17]

There is always substantive, meaningful content in the "you" to whom we relate. Jaspers views obligations through this content. The situatedness of the Other produces a normative encompassing tie between persons, the result of which is a conceptual and pragmatic connection between my act and those it impacts. Moral dilemmas are circumscribed by our personal and limits that derive from our interrelated conditions, those instances in which our lives do not go on as planned—the "inevitable antinomies which prevent a person going on as usual. A personal solution is necessary to accustom which implies change or development."[16] The morally relevant considerations of the analytic second person standpoint are frequently filtered through a principled, objective casuistry in order to make a moral judgment, yet morality grounded in the Other requires a subjective recognition of our shared experiences, relevant resources, desired moral ends, and potential existential limits. Just as scientific cognition will never reach the whole of being in its effort toward objectivity,[17] morality that ignores the encompassing tie among beings will be insufficient to explain how the self relates (and should relate) to the Other, all the more so as its enterprise is subjective.

To properly assess our relationship with Syria refugees and any potential encompassing tie with them, Jaspers' own story becomes salient. Near the end of World War II, Jaspers wrote that he spent a long time thinking about what it actually meant to be German, that his own being-German was inescapable and part of his own identity. Yet, the horrors of the war, the threats to his own family's well being, and his desire to see justice achieved at the international level drove him to the much broader concept of "world-citizenship," when he discusses the global responsibility shared by nations to combat atrocities committed in the War:

> How longingly I sought a court of last resort above the nations, a law which legally can aid the individual who is lawlessly being ravished by his state! When there is inhuman injustice, there ought to be a safeguard against the state which commits the crime. The solidarity of all states could constitute this supra-national court. The principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of a state is the cloak for the admission of injustice.…Against such sovereignty stands the responsibility of all states not to tolerate inhumanity and lawlessness in any state without action, because in the long run everyone is threatened is whenever such a crime happens.[18]

Jaspers' experiences with war map onto the current global situation in striking ways: he originally did not pay much attention to the atrocities perpetrated by Germany, and then became aghast at the extent of the horrendous evil leveled by his own country, which was followed by his insistence that standing by mutely obviated the encompassing tie between German citizens and victims of the Holocaust. Action is required on behalf of "the individual who is lawlessly being

[16] Christoph Mundt, "Jaspers Concept of 'Limit Situations': Extensions and Therapeutic Applications," in *Karl Jaspers' Philosophy and Psychopathology*, eds. Thomas Fuchs, Thiemo Breyer, and Christoph Mundt, New York, NY: Springer 2014, pp. 169-78, here p. 169.

[17] Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy is for Everyman. A Short Course in Philosophical Thinking*, transl. R. F. C. Hull and Grete Wels, London, GB: Hutchinson 1976, p. 50.

[18] Karl Jaspers, "Philosophical Autobiography," in *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp, La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing Company 1957, pp. 1-94, here pp. 65-6. [Henceforth cited as *PA*]

ravished by his state" (*PA* 65). As Giunia Gatta writes, suffering "can unmake one's identity and facilitate awareness of the self as situated" because, for Jaspers, suffering is a "shatterer of unity and unities" among beings."[19] Communicating about our obligations requires us to share reciprocally with the plight of those who suffer.[20]

More than the second person standpoint, the encompassing is better equipped to explain the relational bond between the moral agent and the Other for it explicitly demonstrates the reciprocity among agents. There is unity among beings as the result of a process in which the self becomes itself in its relation to the Other self; unity, for Jaspers, "obtains only from man to man in mutual reciprocity" (*RC* 785). We see that Jaspers succeeds in explaining more soundly than Darwall, why obligations are tied to the plight of the Other: To show the solidarity of the "close proximity of the indwellers" who seek out the "soaring movement" Jaspers sees as representative of true, authentic being, a special privilege is conferred to the bearer of moral rights that changes the direction of a moral agent's action. Morality's practical point in guiding everyday conduct is generated by this solidarity among beings, and as Eduard Baumgarten states,

> in the transformation of non-knowledge into a soaring flight in the encompassing of a riddle. The inadequacy of Reason…invites him to entrust himself exclusively to that Reason, in order that, at its limits, he may become aware of the Encompassing.[21]

While reason can account for the universal prescriptivity of a moral principle, it is insufficient to explain why agents are bound together in and through moral obligation. The encompassing tie of agents, however, describes why we can care about the Other—we are bound together, our plight is shared, and we are related.

Whereas Darwall argues, "Making a claim or putting forward a demand as valid always presupposes the authority to make it" (*SPS* 275), Jaspers posits that, in absence of transcendence, there is no authority, no reciprocity: "Authority is based on transcendence. Because all appearances at all the modes of the encompassing are symbols of transcendence, they have authority for men" (*PE* xxiv). Moral authority, for Jaspers, is grounded in the contextual features of the lived experience of people in boundary situations. One such feature is the cultural traditions in which people live, which generate indelible identities and set the limiting conditions for how individuals within (and without) the culture live and subsist together. A particularly devastating result of the Syria crisis is that it robs the refugee not just of what makes her a citizen of her country, but the atrocities strip her of those cultural symbols that help her identify with herself.

> An example of authority is the cultural tradition in which every person lives and matures. Without this tradition he would be nothing but an aggregate of purely biological and psychological drives. His tradition gives him substance and form—in short, his human being. [*PE* xxiv]

Disconnecting Syria refugees from their cultural identity creates a loss of self, a boundary situation for the refugees, in which the precariousness of their existential condition is wholly dependent on the Other. The physical border of Syria that once protected and provided must be crossed for bodily survival, and the only option to live available to refugees is a boundary condition that cannot be overcome by those directly involved without receiving support from others. Correlatively, we who care for refugees are foundering, aware of our own inadequacies, the potential for failure, and our sense that these people (and our own security) are at risk.

The moral decision to act on behalf of those who have lost their identity, in the face of our own contingency, requires an emphasis on Existenz and transcendence, as "a protest against the objectifying

[19] Giunia Gatta, "Suffering and the Making of Politics: Perspectives from Jaspers and Camus," *Contemporary Political Theory* 14/4 (November 2015), 335-354, here p. 337. [Henceforth cited as *SMP*]

[20] Already in his early writings, Jaspers anticipates the core human need to communicate reciprocally, "every really deep elucidation is possible only… in reciprocity." See Kurt Kolle, "Karl Jaspers as Psychopathologist," in *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp, La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing Company 1957, pp. 437-66, here p. 445. Jaspers replies that he agrees with Kolle on this point, that "Only between men does the process obtain in which the self properly becomes itself only in its relation to the other self." See Karl Jaspers, "Reply to My Critics," in *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp, La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing Company 1957, pp. 747-869, here p. 785. [Henceforth cited as *RC*]

[21] Eduard Baumgarten, "Radical Evil: Pro and Con," in *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp, La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing Company 1957, pp. 337-67, here p. 353.

and dehumanizing tendencies" (*PE* xix). This protest aligns with Jaspers emphasis on the dignity of human life, that most authentic attributes of existence and transcendence are human, as Gerhard Knauss states, "[Man] knows himself created by Transcendence, not as far as his mere existence is concerned, but in his human dignity."[22] Transcendence reaches out beyond objectivity and, as Jaspers explains,

> expresses the dual feature that within any level of the world one never fully articulates all possibilities, and that beyond objective determination is a background or horizon of being itself to which Existenz is related. [*PE* xxi]

Since true humanity contains free self-possession, we must be ready to stand in the stead of those who are no longer free to ascend toward *Existenz*, to communicate with others so that we can create together possibilities that someone in a limiting situation may not herself be able to create. For the person who has lost the possibilities for action, reciprocity can assist in generating new avenues to flourish. In a similar way, Jaspers writes:

> During his development he needed support; he lived by reverence and obligation; where he could not yet decide on the basis of his own origin, he relied upon decisions others made for him. In the gradual process of his liberation, an inner source grew to clarity and resolute power until he heard the truth in himself with full determinateness. [*PE* 49]

Authentic existence, Jaspers contends, prizes another person, accepts and confirms another's potential, and requires a deep level of contact between people, equality, mutual recognition, affirmation, and solidarity.[23]

Finally, Jaspers' relational view maintains that reason can play a role in ethics to explain the relation of the self to the Other as it occurs in the encompassing, to allow the self to make claims against and hold mutual rights of each other, as well as aid the agent to acknowledge and act on these reciprocal normative claims. A benefit of reason's role in ethics (contra Darwall) is that it allows Jaspers to escape the moral pinch hitter dilemma: we are tied to the Other inescapably. But this relationality is not grounded in an a priori conception of moral reasons and is also not without an understanding of human power relations in the world.[24] Fritz Kaufmann contends that, for Jaspers,

> personal intercourse seems to be, above all, of the nature of an evocation—a challenge for each partner, to realize, perhaps to transform, his own Self in the face of the other and in loving struggle with him.[25]

Morality, then, is fruitless if the self seeks only to foresee tangible happiness without the orientation of the self towards humanity (*PFR* 105). A first-personal plural framework, however, when combined with the loyalty of the self to authentic, communicative self-hood, can provide an existential, ethically grounded basis which founds all action: "I am aware of myself as that which I myself am, because it is what I ought to be" (*WW* 55). The prescriptivity of morality becomes justifiable through the community of human pathos, that the "everything that is, is in that it can be perceived and used, is raw material, is means and ends without a final end…[truth] lies in whatever arises here and now in the immediate situation, and in what results" (*PE* 37). Each individual self falls short of perfect and definite selfhood; those in boundary situations rely on those who live with the privilege of being able to aim for ascendency. If those who are able to act only ponder about whether they should, the only possible results are indifference or dejection. Yet,

> In situations such as these [boundary situations], the individual, as *Existenz*, may become aware of the foundations of all Being and, though not objectively conscious of their significance and content, act in a

[22] Gerhard Knauss, "The Concept of the 'Encompassing' in Jaspers' Philosophy," in *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp, La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing Company 1957, pp. 141-75, here p. 165.

[23] Ronald D. Gordon, "Karl Jaspers: Existential Philosopher of Dialogical Communication," *Southern Communication Journal* 65/2&3 (Winter-Spring 2000), 105-120, here p. 113.

[24] For example, Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, transl. E. B. Ashton, New York, NY: Fordham University Press 2009, p. 28. See also Kurt Salamun, "Karl Jaspers' Conceptions of the Meaning of Life," *Existenz* 1/1-2 (Fall 2006), 1-8. Salamun argues that Jaspers denies an a priori role of reason in ethics and reason rather contributes to moral attitudes and thinking about the virtues. Reason "is to give the basic impulses for a radical change or conversion of common worldviews, attitudes, and modes of behavior, including the domain of politics" (p. 6).

[25] Fritz Kaufmann, "A Philosophy of Communication," in *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp, La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing Company 1957, pp. 210-95, here p. 290.

manner singularly historical and inimitable.[26]

There are some potential dangers in reading Jaspers as being able to at least inform, if not replace, the second person standpoint in ethics. Jaspers' ethics starts with a situated I, but as Gatta points out, moves to an awareness of the complexity of a community and the self's openness to community, especially in times of suffering, requires struggle (*SMP* 344). Being open to plural, political actors whose diverse perspectives can make identification with the Other difficult, and at times, unlikely. The nature of plurality can endanger the community envisioned by Jaspers, since utter difference between agents and sheer numbers mean that trust and friendship cannot be presumed by the multiple actors in a political situation. But, a bit ironically, his perspective also endangers plurality, since the mere criterion of being bound to the Other as a goal cannot distinguish between positive solidarity among differently-situated actors and mere agreement regarding a goal.

> The precariousness of this relationship (between communication and intimates) this lasting discontinuity between I and Thou in the midst of their impassioned struggle for one another, may tempt men to discontinue their relations altogether in a mood of despair or defiance.[27]

But such tendencies are counteracted not only by longing for close community, but above all by the resoluteness of the will to total communication—a will to unity in co-*Existenz*, pervaded, sustained, and directed, perhaps by the unity of the all-encompassing Being (*P2* 122ff).

A potential answer to how Jaspers can posit a self, tied to the Other, in spite of complex and (even) disparate existential conditions, I think can be found in Hannah Arendt, the longtime friend who had elaborate philosophical discussions with Jaspers, when she writes:

> If the solidarity of mankind is to be based on something more solid than the justified fear of man's demonic capabilities, if the new universal neighborship of all countries is to result in something more promising than a tremendous increase in mutual hatred and a somewhat universal irritability of everybody against everybody else, then a process of mutual understanding and progressing self-clarification on a gigantic scale must take place.[28]

Truth about this world and our obligations within it emerge as existential content clarified by reason, communicating itself and appealing to the reasonable existing of the Other, comprehensible and comprehending everything else. For Jaspers, truth binds us together and so reveals itself to those who are privileged to be obligated by the plight of the Other, and to treat the Other as a "we" rather than a formal "you." Jaspers observes:

> For in all the dispersion of the phenomenon "man," the essential is that men are concerned with each other. Wherever they meet they are interested in one another, confront one another in antipathy or sympathy, learn from one another, exchange.[29]

He also refers to love and we are obligated, dare I say, to love one another. Love, "represents the reaction to those other selves in whom I find the will to truth, the desire for being, which risks everything even though it faces unavoidable failure."[30] By recognizing one's own self in another self, as a sort of shared essence coalescing as *Existenz* (free being, striving for the One), love for the Other becomes irreplaceable, the suffering of the Other becomes our plight, and response to their prospects becomes part of our future.

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[26] Helmut Rehder, "Literary Criticism and the Existentialism of Jaspers" in *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp, La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing Company 1957, pp. 719-46, here p. 738.

[27] Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy, Vol. 2*, transl. E. B. Ashton, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press 1970, p. 983. [Henceforth cited as *P2*]

[28] Hannah Arendt, "Karl Jaspers: Citizen of the World", in *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp, La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing Company 1957, pp. 539-49, here p. 541.

[29] Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, transl. Michael Bullock, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1953, p. 248.

[30] Mark Gedney, "Jaspers and Ricoeur on the Self and the Other," *Philosophy Today* 48/4 (Winter 2004), 331-342, here p. 338.