

REVISITING DONALD MOON ON THE MORAL BASIS OF THE DEMOCRATIC WELFARE STATE

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ABSTRACT. Donald Moon argues that neither rights nor equality can serve as adequate moral or political basis for a welfare state in addressing the Hegel's dilemma. The Hegel's dilemma is that organisation of economic life through the market in a democratic state produces great wealth as well as great poverty and individuals in such state fall in either category. The wide gulf in wealth among individuals in a market economy is a problem which a democratic welfare state seeks to address but, for Moon, rights or equality is not adequate moral and political basis of the welfare state for solving the problem. He proposes the principles of economic management, provision of services and social insurance as alternative and adequate bases for a welfare state in addressing the problem. This paper queries Moon's proposal. The paper argues that Moon's proposed institutional principles are inadequate in addressing the problem without a fundamental moral and/or political basis upon which these principles can be justifiably founded. The paper posits that rights provide a plausible and adequate foundational moral and political basis for the principles in order to adequately address the problem created by the market economy without jeopardising the idea of human self-respect.

Keywords: Democracy, Equality, Social Insurance, Market Economy, Rights, Welfare State

Introduction

Human beings are social and political beings. They tend to function well when they live in close proximity with one another and engage in social relations with one another. However, because human beings have needs which are insatiable and the

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resources to satisfy these needs are limited, their political nature informs the formation of institutions that oversee, manage and control the social relations among them. When individuals come together to form a democratic political community, they do so with the aim to rule over themselves by constituting a government that manages their resources, affairs and interpersonal relationships. One aspect of the fellowship of human beings is that there are both benefits and burdens associated with their coming together. Thus, they must formulate a socio-political arrangement on how to distribute the benefits and burden of the society. One of such socio-political arrangement is liberalism which is the political doctrine that the justification of the social and political power of a state (that is, a political community) is based on popular sovereignty, rule of law, the neutrality of the state in the affairs of its citizens as regards the definition and determination of good life and the protection of the citizens' rights and liberties.¹ In liberal political communities, the state does not impose or determine the good life on its citizens but protects their freedom of choices and their rights to enjoy whatever benefits arise from their choices. The citizens are considered as free autonomous beings who are to compete for the limited resources of the society in a market economy where the forces of demand and supply determine prices of goods.

One objection against such socio-political arrangement is that it widens the economic gap among individuals in a society. It is criticised of favouring some at the expense of others based on the fact that equal opportunity to compete for the benefits in a society does not translate to equal outcome. The idea of a welfare state is a means by which a liberal political system tries to address this problem. "A 'welfare state' might be conceived as a state which views the welfare of its citizens as the primary claim on its policy, or it might be conceived as state which enacts particular 'welfare' policies."² The idea of welfare is to make up for the imbalance in the economic status of the individuals in a society. It also has an implication for the citizenship status of every individual in a society as T. H. Marshall argued that the social element of a citizen's rights is the "right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society."³ It is the state's effort in providing economic assistance to its citizens in order to promote

¹ See Cristiano, T. and Christman, J. "Introduction" in Cristiano, T. and Christman, J. (eds.) *Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009, p. 5 and Minogue, K. R. "Liberalism" in Outhwaite, W. (ed.) *The Blackwell Dictionary of Modern Social Thought*, 2nd Edition. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2006, p.346.

² Hamlin, A. "Welfare" in Goodin, R. E., Pettit, P. and Pogge, T (eds.) *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 2nd Edition, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2007, p.852.

³ Marshall, T. H., "Citizenship and Social Class" in Jeff, M. and Michael, S. (eds.) *Inequality and Society*. New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2009, p. 149.

their well-being. Such assistance could be in the form of free or subsidized public health care, free public education, nutritional support, social insurance, social security and so on.

Various moral bases are provided as justification for such provision of assistance to the economically disadvantaged. Equality is one. It is argued that there are circumstances beyond the control of individuals which contribute to their economic inequality. This is unfair and is to be eliminated. Hence, welfare is grounded on the basis of attaining equality among citizens of a political community. Another is rights. This is the understanding that parts of the entitlements of citizens of a political community include social and individual welfare packages which contribute to the well-being of individuals. This is to reduce the economic gap that a political system that operates a market economy creates.

The welfare state seeks to address the problem. However, Donald Moon argues that rights and equality as the moral and political bases of the welfare state in addressing the problem are inadequate. Moon claims that both equality and rights “neglect the value of self-respect and ignore the norms that specify what one has to be and to do to attain self-respect.”⁴ He posits that the welfare state can address the problem by establishing institutions that conform with economic management, universal provision of services and social insurance.

My aim, in this paper, is to argue against Moon’s position. I contend that his position is inadequate as any institution or policy that is to conform with the principles of economic management, universal provision of services and social insurance need must be organised on some foundational moral and political basis. I argue that rights provide a more plausible foundation for building institutions that can conform with the institutional principles in addressing the problem. To do this, this paper is organised in five parts. The first part is a critical exposition of the welfare state and Hegel’s dilemma. The second through the fourth parts involve an examination of Moon’s arguments ranging from his rejections of rights and equality as the moral bases of the welfare state to his proposal of the institutional principles, which he claims, adequately address the problem. The fifth part is an assessment of Moon’s argument and a critical presentation of the position that rights provide a fundamental moral basis upon which Moon’s principles can be justifiably founded in order to adequately address the problem of wealth differentiation created by a market economy.

⁴ Moon, J. D. “The Moral Basis of the Democratic Welfare State” in Bonevac, D. (ed.) *Today’s Moral Issues: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*. Mountain View, CA.: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1996, p516.

The Democratic Welfare State and the Hegel's dilemma

In his paper, "The Moral Basis of the Democratic Welfare State", Donald Moon argues that the accounts of the welfare state that center on welfare rights and the objective of achieving equality fail to explain certain aspects of the welfare state such as the contribution of recipients (that is, the economically disadvantaged) in the social insurance scheme and the universal coverage of the welfare state programmes. Accounts of the welfare state that center on equality and right neglect the value attached to self-dignity, self-respect and self-understandings that individuals in a political community have with regards to how the social and political practices of their community dictate the distribution of benefits and burdens. Moon posits that a different understanding of the welfare state avoids these problems. The different account which he proposes is the understanding of the welfare state as "an attempt to solve a serious dilemma that necessarily results from the central role of markets in modern society."⁵

G. W. F. Hegel, in *The Philosophy of Right*, argues that modern political economy operates on a self-interested and utility-maximising patterns. The acceptability of such patterns is to be based on wider social and political values within which the political economy is a substratum. Given the patterns through which the economy operates which includes a laissez-faire arrangement, Hegel argues that there is a problem of great poverty alongside great wealth. The market economy is one where the government interference is minimal in determining market prices or regulating human choices. The market economy is ruled by stiff competition to make profits, and the commercial lives of individuals are riddled with rivalry against one another. This tends to create a wide gap between the rich and the poor. The poor suffers from the non-interference of the state in its citizens' commercial lives and they tend to lose out on everything that makes life better such as health care, education, shelter, food, clothing and so on.⁶

This, according to Moon, is a moral rather than practical problem since the justification for the market economy is the liberalist conception of human beings as rational and autonomous beings who have rights and self-dignity to determine the good life for themselves. On the contrary though, this is defeated since the market economy deprives some individuals of their self-dignity given the outcome of the wide economic gap between the rich and the poor which continues to widen.⁷ The more damaging effect of the great poverty that exists among certain

⁵ Moon, J. D. "The Moral Basis of the Democratic Welfare State", p.516.

⁶ Hegel, G. W. F. *Philosophy of Right*, trans. by Knox, T. M. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967.

⁷ Moon, J. D. "The Moral Basis of the Democratic Welfare State", p.517.

individuals in a liberal political economy is that poor people are “exiled” from the society that they are part of by virtue of circumstances beyond them. Poverty makes poor people strangers in their own political community as they lack the basic amenities of life. However, since Hegel understands the economy to be part of an ideal ethical state where human freedom is realisable, he rejects the idea of giving stipends to the poor. This, for him, does not solve the problem but undermines the citizenship status of the poor and their self-dignity. He proposes two solutions. One is that the state controls or regulates prices of commodities such that the poor can be able to buy so as to have a meaningful life. The second is that there be a corporatist system of public-private partnership or cooperative societies where individual members who are in need are assisted without having to feel the shame of losing their self-dignity.⁸

Moon argues that Hegel’s proposals are inadequate. The idea of state regulation of prices of commodities, for Moon, is only viable in times of war or natural disaster but could lead to greater problems for the state in providing subsidies for market prices which may in turn undermine both the state and the market.⁹ He also considers the public-private partnership as incapable of catering to the needs of the many poor people that a market economy creates in a political community.¹⁰ The moral conundrum associated with the problem of great wealth and great poverty created by the market economy has led some of the advocates of the welfare state – understood as a system that addresses the problem – to give an account of morally coherent system of state. The moral conundrum arises when one considers, on the one hand, that some human beings who are rational and self-dignified beings lack the basic amenities of life attached to the status of citizenship in a political community and, on the other hand, that the state has to promote the social and economic well-being of these individuals through the redistribution of wealth and provision of amenities minimal for the attainment of the good life for those who would otherwise be unable to attain it.

The goal of the welfare state is met with certain objections among which is that it erodes individual freedom by trying to take away from those who have to give to those who do not have especially when all human beings, both rich and poor, are exposed to the same opportunity to compete for the benefits of the society. It erodes the idea of state-neutrality and infringes on the rights of individuals. This is so since the welfare state means of redistribution of wealth may include imposing heavy tax on the rich in order to provide amenities for the poor. Another objection

⁸ Hegel, G. W. F. *Philosophy of Right*.

⁹ Moon, J. D. “The Moral Basis of the Democratic Welfare State”, p.517.

¹⁰ Moon, J. D. “The Moral Basis of the Democratic Welfare State”, p.518.

is that it reduces the humanity of the recipient of welfare package and tend to make them lazier and weaker and see themselves as less. This makes a point to the effect that human beings' self-worth is reduced and their vulnerability is stigmatised since the cases of redistribution of wealth is largely based on pity

Advocates of the welfare state argue otherwise. They maintain that the moral grounds for the welfare state are the moral aspects that underlie the actions and behaviours of the contributors to the welfare scheme and the recipients of welfare packages, that is the rich and the poor respectively.¹¹ Among such moral grounds are rights and equality. For Moon, neither of these moral and political grounds for the welfare state provides an adequate solution to the problem of wealth differentiation created by a market economy. In the sections that follow, I shall examine Moon's position on the accounts of rights and equality as moral and political bases of the welfare state and his proposal of institutional principles which, he holds, present an adequate solution to the problem.

Rights as the Moral Basis for the Welfare State

As members of a political community, human beings are entitled to the benefits (and burdens) that come with their union in a single political entity. The opportunity to enjoy these benefits are wrapped around the idea of rights. For the sustenance of both individuals and the political community at large, there are civic duties and obligations that guide interpersonal relationship and state-individual relationship. Following Marshall's formulation, there are three fundamental rights that make an individual a full and equal member of a political community. They are civic rights, political rights and social rights. Civic rights are the rights necessary for individual freedom, such as the right to own property, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, liberty of person and so on. Political rights are the rights to participate in the exercise of political power. Social rights are the rights to economic welfare and security to the right to share in the benefits of the political community and live a happy life in accordance with the standard of a happy life that prevails in the society.¹²

These rights, altogether, define the citizenship status of an individual in a political community and by extension, the idea of self-identity. The idea of self-

¹¹ Van Parijs, P. "On the Moral Foundations of the Welfare State: Three Research Programmes" in Koslowski, P. and Follesdal, A. (eds.) *Restructuring the Welfare State: Theory and Reform of Social Policy*. Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1997, p. 383.

¹² Marshall, T. H., "Citizenship and Social Class", pp.148-149.

identity here implies the recognition of an individual's potential and qualities in relation to social context. An individual's sense of self-identity is such individual's ability to identify his/her potentials and as well be able to harness such for the attainment of self-fulfillment within the context of the political community. These are made possible by the presence of rights and, most especially, social rights which are majorly affected by the economic system adopted in a political community. As a moral basis for a welfare state, the idea of rights is that individuals are entitled to the economic conditions that will uphold their citizenship identity, help maintain their self-identity and provide the means of attaining the good life.

As a remedy to the problem of great poverty created by the laissez-faire economic system, the welfare state is grounded on the idea that every individual is entitled to an economic condition that is favourably disposed to their living a happy life. Thus, the motivation for redistributing wealth to reduce or eliminate the economic gap that exists between the poor and the rich is the idea of right. In other words, poor individuals have the right to enjoy the welfare package that the state provides in order to better their lives.

Moon argues that grounding welfare on the idea of right is inadequate in addressing the Hegel's dilemma. He states that even if it can be proven that human beings have social and welfare rights, the fundamental problem of losing the status of self-respect remains unsolved. He claims that such patterns that divides the society into two – the haves, the contributors, the active; and the have-nots, the recipients, the passive – is a demeaning pattern that reduces the self-worth of the latter divide of the society.¹³ He claims that even if it is agreed that individuals have the rights to welfare, it is a stigmatising right to exercise. Moon appeals to the psychological ideal of human self-esteem which is the belief that an individual has of himself or herself. The ideal of self-esteem is that of living up to a certain standard that serves as the benchmark for determining the self-worth and self-respect of every human. An individual strives to reach that benchmark and maintain the standard which is dependent on other factors, one which is independence. As autonomous beings and moral equals, human beings are expected to reciprocate the duties and obligations they owe one another. The idea of dependence jeopardises this reciprocity and reduces the independence of individuals. Hence, administering welfare reduces the independence of recipients and ultimately their self-esteem as human beings.¹⁴

Moon argues further that the inadequacy in basing welfare on the general theory of human rights also shows that the moral basis is not altruistic. Altruism, being the quality of selfless concern for the well-being of other people, is voluntary

¹³ Moon, J. D. "The Moral Basis of the Democratic Welfare State", p.518.

¹⁴ Moon, J. D. "The Moral Basis of the Democratic Welfare State", p.519.

and if the contribution of the rich to the welfare programmes is a form of obligation imposed by the state, then the contribution is not voluntary and cannot be said to be altruistic. The economically advantaged can, as an act of benevolence, voluntarily contribute to cater for the poor but the state's involvement and imposition of measures to take from the rich and redistribute to the poor erodes the freedom of the rich and invalidates the duty of benevolence.

As appealing as Moon's arguments seems, I do not agree with him on his account of the psychological ideal of self-worth. Human beings are, primarily, what they are because they have life. Any legal means to sustain this life is acceptable. My intention is not to discard the idea of the independence of individuals but to point out that Moon attaches too much to the relation between it and the idea of self-worth. In the life span of an average human being (say one who lives to a very old age), there is a number of years that such human being would certainly be dependent on others for the sustenance of his or her life. From birth till death, human beings have a number of years that they are dependent on others. This does not in any way reduce their self-worth as human beings. More so, even if it is granted that dependence on others or the state reduces one's self-worth, I think the insistence on self-worth would become secondary in the face of choosing to sustain life. If the market economy had created great poverty that human beings find it difficult to sustain their lives, I think the idea of self-worth becomes secondary while that of life-sustenance becomes primary. And if the welfare state is grounded on the basis that human beings have the right to welfare in order to sustain their lives, then it becomes the worthy thing to do. Moon's claim that the right to welfare is stigmatising and not one that is to be exercised is also faulty if one considers that having the right to something implies that others have a duty not to prevent one from having that thing, such duty is to promote one's interest. Hence, one is not to be embarrassed in enforcing the duty.¹⁵

Equality as the Moral Basis for Welfare State

It is a truism that the market economy creates inequalities among individuals in a political community. These inequalities are not the type that are associated with the choices of tastes or risk or unpleasantness attached to different works but the inequalities that arise as a result of circumstances that are beyond the control of individuals such as natural, ecological and sociological factors. For instance, genetic differences in the physical build-up of individuals give some the advantage

¹⁵ Waldron, J. "Rights" in Goodin, R. E., Pettit, P. and Pogge, T (eds.) *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 2nd Edition, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2007, p.746.

over others with regards to tasks that require physical strength. The less powerful do not have power (or choice) over their genetic build and the more powerful deserve no extra benefit since they did not work or 'deserve' their genetic build. To this effect, it is argued that the welfare state attempts to achieve equality among individuals.

Daniel Shapiro argues that justifications of the welfare state appeal to the principle of justice or fairness. One of such justifications is the egalitarian principle of justice which defends the view that human beings must have substantive material equality.¹⁶ The presentation of equal opportunity in a market economy does not yield equal outcome. Those, who advocate for the welfare state as an attempt to address the inequality that arises through no fault of individuals, propose measures that are to be taken to achieve the material equality. Ronald Dworkin, for instance, proposes,

...the periodic redistribution of resources through some form of income tax...a scheme of redistribution... that will neutralize the effects of differential talents... An income tax is a plausible device for this purpose because it leaves intact the possibility of choosing a life in which sacrifices are constantly made and disciplines steadily imposed for the sake of financial success and the further resources it brings though it neither endorses nor condemns that choice. But it also acknowledges the role of genetic luck in such a life. The accommodation it makes is a compromise...not a compromise of equality for the sake of some independent value such as efficiency.¹⁷

The great poverty created by the market economy can be reduced or eliminated by imposing taxes on the economically advantaged. This is fair since the wealth that the rich enjoy and the poverty that the poor suffer respectively are not what they deserved by their own doing. The justification for the quest of economic equality among individuals in a political community refers to the moral worth of human beings as equals. In the case of the Hegel's dilemma – great wealth and great poverty – the economic or financial difference among individuals makes the economically advantaged to gain power and control the affairs of the society and ultimately dictate the good life for the less economically fortunate. The method of income taxation in order to achieve equality also takes cognisance of the ideal of human self-worth as it would bring the economically less fortunate to the position they would have been if fate beyond their control had not dealt with them.

¹⁶ Shapiro, D *Is the Welfare State Justified?* Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 2007, p.17.

¹⁷ Dworkin, R., "What is Equality? Part 2: Equality of Resources", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol 10(4), 1981:312-313.

Moon rejects the consideration of equality as a moral basis of the welfare state on two grounds. One is that as much as the method of income taxation to achieve equality may equalise income differences that arise as a result of factors that are beyond human control, it is also possible that it equalises income differences that arise as a result of human-controllable circumstances due to the willingness to bear risk, ambition and unpleasantness of task.¹⁸ For example, the risk attached to flying a plane explains the high pay of a pilot. Thus, it would be unfair to impose tax on a high-income pilot so as to equalise the pilot's income with that of a person who earns low income due to the less-risk associated with his or her job. The willingness to bear risk is not beyond human control. Individuals that go ahead to do high-risk jobs should not pay for the faintheartedness of others.

Second is that the idea of equality, as espoused by Dworkin, makes a rigid distinction between a person and his or her circumstances. Moon considers such conception of a person as narrow. For him, a person is sometimes inseparable from his or her circumstances. Thus, the welfare state based on the principle of equality that separates a person from his/her circumstances is inadequate in addressing the Hegel Dilemma.

Further problems I want to identify with the principle of equality as a moral basis of the welfare state are the problems of feasibility and desirability. In the aspect of feasibility, in an economy of great wealth and great poverty, an attempt to equalise income differences may lead to a greater economic imbalance. It is a fact that the resources that make for beneficial life in every society is limited, although the market economy could have caused a great and disastrous disparity in the distribution of resources, the attempt to equalise income may lead to a situation where what is left of the rich (whom tax have been imposed to take care of the poor) is not enough for them to enjoy the benefits of life, while the poor too may now have too much on their hands. This shows that attempt to achieve income equality may also lead to income differences. Hence, it may not be feasible to attain equality in that respect.

The problem above merges into that of desirability. If equality is likely to lead to further inequality, then it raises the question of its desirability. There are other means of redistributing resources such as sufficiency and priority. In the case of the welfare state, I think sufficiency is a desired basis if the tastes of individuals can be regulated. Sufficiency is the view that every individual is to be guaranteed the minimum resources (or income) capable of enhancing the attainment of the good life.¹⁹

¹⁸ Moon, J. D. "The Moral Basis of the Democratic Welfare State", p.521.

¹⁹ Fleurbaey, M. "Equal Opportunity for Equal Social Outcome", *economics and Philosophy*, 11, 1995:40.

Moon on the Principles of Economic Management, Universal Provision of Services and Social Insurance

Having argued that rights and equality as moral bases of the welfare state fail to address the Hegel's dilemma, Moon proposes a set of "institutional principles" which governs the policies of a welfare state. These principles, according to Moon, provide an adequate solution to the Hegel's dilemma in a way that equality and rights do not.²⁰

The principle of economy management requires that the management of the economy be in the hands of the states in order to achieve full employment. The state as an organised institution that operates in a defined political territory with the monopoly of rule-making derives its legitimacy from individuals within the society.²¹ As part of its protection of the citizens' rights, the state also serves as the provider of vital social services and economic infrastructure that benefit the lives of individuals in the society. Since political legitimacy of the state resides in the citizens, the state's management of the economy in order to produce social and economic infrastructures does not yield to the erosion of human self-respect. The state exists because it is a formation of human beings, thus, its management of the economy sees to the fact that citizens who constitute it are provided with what will make them live a good life.

When the state provides full employment for its citizens, the dynamic nature of economy means that some jobs will disappear. Some people will be incapacitated to work while some will retire due to old age. Moon argues that the welfare state would be guided by the principles of universal provision of services and social insurance. The state's principle of universal provision of services which includes free education, for example, means that recipients of such services are not deprived of their self-respect.²² This is so since the recipient of such services are members from which the state derives some of its legitimacy. Universal provision of such services stem from the idea of duties and obligations that govern the relations between the citizens and the state.

The third principle, social insurance, is one that, according to Moon, addresses the differences in the needs of individuals in a political community. He explains the principle thus,

²⁰ Moon, J. D. "The Moral Basis of the Democratic Welfare State", p.523.

²¹ Dunleavy, P. "The State" in Goodin, R. E., Pettit, P. and Pogge, T (eds.) *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 2nd Edition, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2007, p. 793.

²² Moon, J. D. "The Moral Basis of the Democratic Welfare State", p.523.

...the establishment of social insurance enables people to receive differential benefits without violating the idea of reciprocity, which is fundamental to their sense of themselves as moral equals. Two obvious examples are social security and unemployment compensation. Both of these systems are set up as insurance schemes, so that those who collect benefits under them see themselves as...receiving something to which they have a right just because they have contributed their fair share to provision of those benefits.²³

The unique dimension of the welfare state to the observance of these three principles in the provision of public services is the generalisation of the services to a wide range of human needs. The principle of social insurance also maintains the self-respect of the recipients of social and welfare services since recipients are not passive but active contributors to the scheme.

Moon, thus, submits that the principles of economic management (being in the hand of the state), the universal provision of services and social insurance scheme plausibly address the moral breach in the society as a result of the market economy. This moral breach is the main crux of the Hegel's dilemma and, for Moon, his proposed principles address the dilemma without jeopardising human beings' self-respect.

Towards a Plausible Moral Basis for the Welfare State

I shall begin my argument by stating that I agree with Moon that the principles of economic management, universal provision of services and social insurance are good means of addressing the problem of economic differentials created by the market economy. I, however, disagree with him that these principles are adequate in addressing the problem. My position is based on the fact that these principles are only economic and political practices which aim to address problems associated with economic differentials among individuals in a political community without having to jeopardise their sense of self-respect. These principles are presented without a foundational basis in theoretical moral or political framework. In other words, Moon's position cannot satisfy the question of justification for the principles he proposes. For instance, it is intelligible to ask what the justification, moral or political, for the principles of social insurance and universal provision of services is. I posit that rights provide a plausible justification.

²³ Moon, J. D. "The Moral Basis of the Democratic Welfare State", p.523.

One of the most fundamental and basic human rights is the right to life. The right to life, according to J. O. Famakinwa, is parasitic and derived in the sense that it depends on the right to basic life-sustaining material goods.²⁴ Any lawful means adoptable in sustaining life is acceptable even if it sets aside the idea of self-respect. The import of the basic human right to life implies that the rights it is derived from – the rights to life-sustaining material goods – are as basic and important. Rights can then be said to be the fundamental moral aspect that underlies both public and private behaviours as well as state-individual relation. This is so since rights involve the entitlements that individuals in a political community have to sustain their lives. It is still reasonably possible to ask for moral or political background that individuals in a welfare state have in enjoying welfare programmes without the inclination to damage their self-respect. I think the claim of rights (to life, to protection of life, to sustenance of life) is a justifiable ground to address economic differentials without resorting to the damage of human's self-respect.

A more important reason for holding economic and social rights as plausible foundation for principles of economic management, universal principles and social insurance in the welfare state's quest to reduce or eliminate great poverty is that they satisfy a justificatory framework. James Nickel presents six structures to argue that economic and social rights to welfare programmes are justifiable. For the purpose of this paper, I shall adopt four of these structures. These structures require that economic and social rights to welfare programs: (i) fit the general idea of human rights (ii) be sufficiently important (iii) require the modality of rights rather than some weaker norm and (iv) impose burdens that are not wrongful on duty bearers.²⁵

The first justificatory structure raises the question if economic and social rights fit into the general idea of human rights at all. The response to this is clear, as earlier argued, as the more fundamental human right to life are parasitic on economic and social rights. Thus, the citizens' claim to welfare program is an extension and exercise of their human rights. The second structure derives from the claim that economic and social rights to welfare are not as important as civil and political rights which include the rights to individual freedom and political participation. The importance of economic and social rights to welfare resides in the fact that other rights are parasitic on it. For example, the rights to individual freedom may be jeopardised if the economic condition of an individual is nothing but great poverty. Economic power also determines political power. Hence, the implementation of other rights is difficult without securing economic and social rights.

²⁴ Famakinwa, J. O. "Interpreting the Right to Life", *Diametros*, 29, 2011:22-30.

²⁵ Nickel, J. W. "A Defense of Welfare Rights as Human Rights" in Cristiano, T. and Christman, J. (eds,) *Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy*, pp. 441-449.

The third structure is about whether economic and social rights are necessary given other norms of welfare such as charity, self-help and assistance to family members. The problems with these other norms include that there is limit to charity as a source of welfare, there are people who are incapacitated to even help themselves while there are some who, by ill-fate, have no family members to assist them. In cases where these norms are possible, they are better as supplement to the implementation of economic and social rights which make up for their shortcoming or even absence. The last justificatory structure concerns whether the claim to economic and social rights place much burden of the state on individuals who bear the duty to right-holders. The welfare state is not a state of freebies but one of equal opportunity in order to address the inequality in resources/benefits. Both right-holders and duty-bearers of economic and social rights have a bilateral relation or reciprocity of duties and obligations. Thus, this reciprocity of duty avoids the placement of much burden on individuals as it can affect those targeted by the welfare state in instituting welfare programs too.

These justificatory structures satisfied by the rights to welfare are a validation of the position I hold that rights are a plausible moral and political ground for the welfare state in addressing the wide economic differentials created by the market economy. The institutional principles proposed by Moon must be grounded on rights if they are to be justifiable principles that govern the policies of the welfare state.

Conclusion

So far, I have argued that rights are a plausible moral and political basis for the principles that govern the policies of a welfare state. This argument is in response to Donald Moon's position that neither rights nor equality can address the problem Hegel identifies with the market economy – the problem of great poverty alongside great wealth.

I began by expounding the idea of the welfare state and Hegel's dilemma. I examine the welfare state, in line with Moon's presentation, as a quest to address the problem of economic differentials in a market economy. I proceeded to assess Moon's argument for rejecting rights and equality as moral bases for the welfare state. I disagreed with Moon's rejection of rights as moral bases for a welfare state. I maintained that his arguments put more emphasis on maintaining human self-respect than sustaining human life. I argued that human self-respect is dependent on human life and the rights to life-sustaining material and non-material goods are not damaging to self-respect.

I agreed that Moon’s proposed institutional principles are helpful governing principles for the welfare state but posited that they require a justificatory basis. This basis, I argued, lies in rights – economic and social rights. This, I argued for, on the basis that the rights to welfare are in themselves justified basis for addressing the economic differentials – the wide gap between the rich and the poor – that exist in a market economy.

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