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A Singerian Reading of the Global Strategies to Eradicate Famine in Africa (2005-2010)

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Abstract. The present paper is a theoretical attempt to examine the issue of distributive justice, through a Singerian reading of the most recent episodes of global famine crises in Niger (2005-2006 and the 2010 Sahel famine) and the 2011 Horn of Africa famine. The recurrence of the phenomenon of starvation in the underdeveloped regions of the globe asked for the creation of various instruments in managing grave discrepancies, real disparities, in mundane distributive justice; this theoretical endeavor discusses the efficiency of the UN organizations designed for assuring "redistribution of wealth" at the global level (*i.e.* the Emergency Relief Fund and the World Food Programme) and of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), as opposed to NGOs' initiatives in the three aforementioned cases, through the prism of Peter Singer's renowned theory of distributive justice concentrated in the study "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" and further developed in *The Life You Can Save*. Drawing extensively from utilitarianism and Rawlsian *Theory of Justice*, Singer develops his argument by addressing the moral dimension of distributive justice (including charity) and "humanitarianism" and its subsequent repercussions and implications at both philosophical (*i.e.* applied ethics on "the psychology of giving") and practical, empirical levels (*i.e.* the actions of states, supranational structures, but, most importantly, of citizens of "affluent societies"). The main argument put forward by the present paper is that the representation and the construction of the various organizations, associations and aid actions involved in the recent famine crises are, in fact, the practical extension of the Singerian scheme of distributive justice, in theory a hermeneutical flexibility of the aforementioned conceptualization of the Australian thinker, of the model of distributive justice from individual level to a global, international dimension. Hence, the paper attempts a translation of the latest famine crises and their management by international organizations through the lance of Peter Singer's "obligation" to global-oriented redistribution of resources (particularly, food, water and monetary resources). The present study is concerned with four major issues: (1) the brief presentation of the three most recent famine crises in Africa and the fashion in which this type of situation has been dealt with by both supranational organizations and NGOs; (2) the reiteration of Singer's theory on distributive justice, as this theory is presented in the two pieces mentioned above; (3) the theoretical mechanisms of transferring individual obligation to "give" (*i.e.* to donate, to practice charity) into collective, global obligation to eradicate food and water crises and extreme poverty, and (4) the attempt to translate and interpret UN's, US' and NGOs' strategies to redistribute 'wealth' through 'Singerian' lances. Four sections divide the content of this paper in order to tackle the four points.

Key words: distributive justice, Peter Singer, famine, redistribution, World Food Programme, USAID, affluent society, Africa.

In the spring of 1972, in the first issue of *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Peter Singer ventured on a new, quite challenging topic in the broad area of global justice studies: the very pertinent and present *problématique* of global distributive justice at the individual level. "Famine, Affluence, and Morality,"[1] his inaugural article, is an application of a

1] The account on the Singerian perspective on the moral necessity of individual "giving" is detailed from the famous essay "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" (1972).

moral paradigm on the ethics of "giving" and it is central in the teleological implications of the act of 'donating.' Singer would further develop its piece inspired by the 1971' food crisis in East Bengal in the famous book *The Life You Can Save*, a study which, far from being deprived of any militancy and normative biasness, is of paramount importance for subsequent inquiries into the philosophical logic of *giving*.

Singer starts from a harsh critique of what one would label as "international politics" and its general conduct, by arguing that episodes of extreme food crises in underdeveloped countries or in countries affected by war or even natural calamities are neither "inevitable," nor "unavoidable in any fatalistic sense." The logic he proposes is, moreover, quite simple, accessible, as he sees it, to any citizen of an "affluent nation," *i.e.* economically developed and democratically consolidated country. But, the first stage in the logic of *giving* is necessarily and inextricably indifference, ignorance to the sufferings of foreign peoples, of unknown nations; generally, suffering of any nature of people so foreign to individuals in affluent societies, that the only shared traits is the very fact they are both human beings, cannot generate in the decisions of the latter a shift from indifference, from apathy and would not, in any case, trigger some form of either empathy or sympathy with the condition of the former. Singer enumerates the ways and means in which the exercise of *giving* can be performed at the individual level: giving "large sums to relief funds," writing "to their parliamentary representatives demanding increased government assistance," demonstrating and manifesting virulently in the streets against the apathy of their governments in respect to famine in far away countries, holding "symbolic fasts." A second stage in triggering the moral act of *giving* is the extension of publicity given to a food crisis; publicity assures the task of making one aware of the gravity of a certain situation, taking place in another part of the world. Exclusively and terribly concerned with the singular act of individual donation, Singer completely misses the impact of media in connecting "affluent" societies with underdeveloped regions, channeling S.O.S. messages, facilitating donations, establishing comprehensive and durable links that make distributive justice easier than ever. What the Australian theoretician points out compellingly is the fact that publicity appears only in the conditions in which the magnitude of the crisis, the size of the calamity poses significant difficulties for national governments directly involved in managing the situation: only unprecedented. In whatever circumstance, be it publicized or not, food crises should be dealt with globally and morally. Apathy, indifference, especially at the individual level, cannot be, according to Singer, ethically justified.

As expected, starting from the simple, commonsensical premise that "suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care" (Singer 1972, 229) are morally bad, Peter Singer calls for an entire transfiguration, a virtual revolution of individual moral conceptual schemes for the citizens of affluent societies in respect to the act of *giving*, oriented particularly to the human sufferings of the underdeveloped societies. As a rule, the bulk of utilitarianists, teleologists and consequentalists – after all, Singer is one of them – perceives distributive justice as a matter concerning the human rights *compendium*, not exclusively a political-economic issue. It has been argued, particularly in these philosophical

spheres, that assuring the dynamics of just allocation of goods should be an imperative for the national governments and for the international community alike; hence, one can observe an inclination towards what Isaiah Berlin has loosely labeled "positive freedom" (1969, 118-72) in the treatment of distributive justice and reducing global starvation. Even more vocal, Singer succeeds in refining the argument of the moral necessity of distributive justice: "[I]f it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it." (1972, 235) Opposing to an economist's perspective *tout court* – who will generally see a loss in one's amount of goods and benefits when engaged in a process of donation and giving to another –, the Australian professor assimilates the phrasing "without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance" with the explanation "without causing anything else comparably bad to happen, or doing something that is wrong in itself, or failing to promote some moral good, comparable in significance to the bad thing that we can prevent" (or, otherwise, "if it is in our power to prevent something very bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything morally significant, we ought, morally, to do it"). Therefore, the decision on sharing goods, services, benefits should be a '0-sum' game, in which every player involved acts without losing anything, while morally each of the two sides, "giver" and "receiver," enriches himself through the said act. His hypothesis is applied to the act of *giving* for the citizens of affluent societies, starting from the assumption that this kind of citizens is not to lose anything significant, in terms of money, food, water, comfort, if they decide to donate apparently insignificant parts of these goods to citizens in "underdeveloped societies" in desperate need of basic goods.

As already mentioned, what Singer aims is a reconfiguration of individual moral constructs for the citizens in affluent, highly developed, Western societies, in the sense that the very meaning of the word *duty* should be reconsidered, in the same manner in which the concept of *charity* and its connotation are redefined. As the scholar explains, the very essence of charity is the fact that there is nothing wrong with others not giving; the "generosity" displayed in the act of donating for relief funds is conceived as rarity, as an exceptional case, by no means as a norm of common sense or moral duty: "The charitable man may be praised, but the man who is not charitable is not condemned." (1972, 237) It is in this mentality and fashion of seeing the act of *giving* that Singer calls for an ethical "reevaluation." "Generosity," "kindness," "goodness" should naturally be the "duty" of a moral entity and not giving money to the victims of starvation and water shortages must be perceived as fundamentally morally wrong; an individual not giving for the relief funds, while spending in a "conspicuous consumption" fashion, affluently, on his own unnecessary and extravagant delights, should feel ashamed, guilty and should be morally blamed by his community. Hence, the individual act of *giving* is not charitable and generous, is not an instance of "supererogatory" (*i.e.* "an act which it would be good to do, but not wrong not to do" – 1972, 237). It is a matter of choice and morality. The conclusion leads to the fact that, from Singerian perspective, no act can be qualified as "charity." This is not so, Singer refutes; but, one cannot speak of "charity" when the "giver" is a citizen of

an affluent society, perfectly satisfied with his own socio-economic condition, exposing often marks of consumerist impulse and luxurious, extravagant taste. This type of citizen cannot morally divert himself from "giving" to the victims of famine. This conjuncture is ethically and humanly unbearable, unsupported, unjustified. It is interesting how the scheme Singer finds the most morally sound at the individual level is translated at the global level: the relief funds for the three cases of food crises selected here were originally constituted by the most developed nations, which are generally the most providing, helpful elements in supranational structures concerned with the matter.

For the sake of refining his 'principle,' stated rather as a Kantian categorical imperative, Peter Singer develops two readjustments: (1) the "proximity" (or distance) rejoinder, and (2) the "number" (or, more properly, the magnitude) one. Firstly, Singer explains, the 'principle' should not make a moral difference between helping persons closer to the giver's home or place of his activities (neighbors, colleagues, friends, etc.) and helping persons in a foreign country, whose identities the giver might never know, between providing relief to those with whom contact is established on a daily basis and those with whom any contact might never be established. Secondly, the Singerian 'principle' acts irrespective of any numerical consideration of the givers, of the number of donors helping a given cause; a particular food or water crisis can enjoy the active participation and support in relief actions dedicated to its eradication of a handful of or of several countries, of a few dedicated individuals or of the citizens of entire countries. The Australian theoretician would point out, these circumstances, *i.e.* those regarding the number of givers, should not constitute in either favorizing or inhibiting factors for the individual's moral act of *giving* for the sufferings of others. Therefore, the "proximity" and the "number" rejoinders are thoroughly refuted by Singer, who envisages the moral act presupposed by a donation to be completely independent of such 'special' situations.

As a result, the act of *giving* for the first category of individual citizens should be "uncontroversial," its axiological fundament – uncontested, its morality – irrefutable. It should become a custom, a routine in their daily existence, a commonality in act, an unproblematic instance, up to the moment of a virtual involuntary reflex.

One should not be fooled by Singer's profoundly subjective and militant stance: he admits to some extent that especially proximity can facilitate sympathy and empathy to those willing to donate for the victims of starvation, for instance. In addition, it is virtually natural and immanent to the human beings that they are likely to assist relatives, close friends, coworkers, neighbors, co-inhabitants, co-citizens, hence discriminating between these and other categories of foreign individuals or groups in need. What is more, proximity can, in a significant degree, facilitate the helping and relief: being physically close to one in need might give to the giver a hint regarding the type of help he can provide that could best fit the one suffering, the necessary, the most suitable, appropriate assistance for a given condition. Singer does not refute these irrefutable realities, what he argues is the absence of an ethical character in these discriminations. He virtually adds to the indiscriminate character of the act of *giving* its impartiality, its universalizability, its

equitable nature. The unprecedented development of instant communication and very fast means of transportation easies and strengthens Singer's argument: the increasing globalization and interconnectedness neutralize geographical discriminations in relief and assistance of famine victims, they widen the moral responsibilities of citizens in affluent societies towards those in underdeveloped ones.

Regarding the second rejoinder, the "number" adjustment of the Singerian 'principle,' a 'psychological,' subjectively-triggered difference might work here: "one feels less guilty about doing nothing if one can point to others, similarly placed, who have also done nothing." (1972, 232) This is particularly true if a potential giver motivates his apathy by referring to other would-be donors, but enjoying greater resources, who have done nothing. The difference in resources between potential givers would psychologically exonerate those who are less fortunate in terms of wealth. In addition, the amount of help – a matter of number, as well – each of the participants in the relief funds and actions is willing to let go is a matter of profound hypothetical judgement, of mere wishful thinking; one can only premise that all those involved in donation would dedicate an equal amount of resources and, therefore, take into account considerations of number of givers (otherwise, the calculation makes no sense and the entire syllogism concerning numbers of givers and their equal share of donated resources becomes a fallacy). Once again, Singer rejects such an assertion as being morally unfounded and he adopts an even harsher stance in accusing such a vicious judgement, *i.e.* "the absurdity of the view that numbers lessen obligation:" "It is a view that is an ideal excuse for inactivity; unfortunately most of the major evils – poverty, overpopulation, pollution – are problems in which everyone is almost equally involved." (1972, 233)

Singer's inspirational impulse towards discussing distributive justice as individual moral act is given, as expected, by the remarkable and impressive Rawlsian legacy. Dilemmas on the socially just allocated goods have tormented many thinkers before the *emeritus* British philosopher John Rawls, but a robust form was given only with the *A Theory of Justice* (1971). Schemes on the equitable distribution on goods have borrowed extensively from concepts of *retributive justice* and *restorative justice*, arguing the Rawls' 'imperative' of fair allocation of goods. Apart from being a more or less simple economical *calculus*, the debate on distributive and – since recently – redistributive justice represents a case in point for contemporaneity.

In practice, though, it became conspicuously apparent that individual acts of *giving* are far less efficient that global, state- or supra-state-sponsored actions in dealing with food and water shortages in particular. One such useful, effective extension of the concept of *giving* in the sphere of distributive justice is the amount, the consistency of the help provided: atomized endeavors of donations are rarely significant at the global level. Singer's argument itself has some substantial feeble points and misinterpretations, being extremely unclear and ambiguous regarding: the point of "marginal utility," the effective amount of donated resources that would make the act of *giving* a moral instance and would, at the same time, not cause any suffering to the giver himself, the actual desirability of

"marginal utility," etc. Moreover, his pretence to a sort of a universalized act of individual *giving* seems idealistic and unrealistic, absurd to many. His argument preaches, in an utopian fashion, for the predictability of "sending money to the relief funds:" this type of actions should, according to the Australian professor, not be envisaged as simultaneous or spontaneous, for they should happen orderly, comprehensively, meaningfully, as to actually be helpful. It is this author's conjecture that the comprehensiveness and meaningfulness Singer speaks about and imagines can only be provided by international, state-sponsored or non-governmental, entities; help through relief funds can become comprehensive only with the extension of Singerian scheme of individual *giving* to a global level. Individual initiatives of helping famine victims are extremely contingent in effect and unorganized group activities aiming at constructing relief funds are doomed to end in failure. It is true, gathering goods for neutralizing the effects and repercussions of the food and water crises are meant to start from the individual, citizen level. Nevertheless, it was proven by previous experiences that exclusively through an international or supra-national effort, one can effectively channel his undertakings in assisting in famine situations. What Singer emphasizes in connection to the lack of simultaneousness of acts of *giving* becomes a pertinent observation for the extension of help at the global level: "if everyone is not acting […] simultaneously, then those giving later will know how more is needed, and will have no obligation to give more than is necessary to reach this amount," (1972, 239) knowing that others, after them, will fill the holes in the relief fund. But such a schedule in gradually providing relief is, once again, a matter of international organization and planning, requiring the involvement and implication of organizations working globally, not of individuals alone. Doing "what [one] *reasonably* believes he ought to do" – this is a phrasing that can hardly be operationalized and put effectively into practice. Here comes the role of international organisms, state-coordinated or not, to regulate towards the beneficiaries of the funds what and how much each of the givers finds "reasonably" to donate. The examples selected in the present paper illustrate the ability of global organizations to mobilize support for the assistance of famine victims.

Peter Singer himself would envisage and predict the main refutations, counter-arguments, "objections," rejoinders, etc., that his call to moral "revisionism" concerning the individual act of *giving* might trigger. One of the most conspicuous – and still virulent – refers to the very fact that such a revisionism is an extreme one, it is too drastic, too demanding and, even, to some extent, hypocrite request. This task seems, at first glance, virtually impossible and, at a second glance, extremely problematic, difficult. One premise in this *problématique* is that it requires a change happening overnight in the rationale and moral construct and traditions among the majority of the citizens in affluent societies, Christian countries. But, commonsensically and understandably, one individual – not to mention an entire community of individuals – cannot transform, transfigure his/ her moral fundaments and perspective. In addition, condemning those who do not care about relief funds presupposes an active stance from the part of the condemner: he should be a devoted donor, irrespective of his and other's socio-economic situation. Actually, for condemning

an apathetic, the majority of the community, of the country should be inclined towards *giving* to the victims of starvation, that is, really care about the fates of other strangers. Of course, humanitarian and humanist tendencies exist immanently in every human being, but, unfortunately, people seldom exert such noble sentiments and, consequently, they are reluctant in pointing out to those who, are after all, equally indifferent towards food and water crises wherever. They are prone to condemn, as expected, universally-sanctioned violations of the universally-accepted and seen as necessary moral norms and rules (lie, theft, murder, etc.). Therefore, one should not expect or pretend such an important transformation in the ethical perspectives of individuals. Singer himself bluntly states that his conclusion would appear to the majority of his readers "strange" at best (1972, 240). However, what is especially significant in his seemingly awkward conclusion is his attempt to find why the largest proportion of citizens in affluent societies customarily diverges from it, considering this "deviation" simply an "amoral" issue. Drawing from J.O. Urmson (1958, 198-216) and Sidgwick (1907), Singer investigates the moral "mechanisms" at the basis of the individual act of *giving*, by arguing that *giving*, donating fails currently to represent one of those "imperatives of duty," it does not constitute a prerequisite, a postulate for what humanity must do; it is again, a matter of "what it would be good to do but not wrong not to do," (1972, 238) not advisable, not compatible with the idealistic vision of the kind, epistemic human nature, though, eventually, tolerable and permissible, since, it is considered, it does not produces any direct harm to another human being. Therefore, what exceeds the demands posed by the "imperatives of duty," (239) what is not within the immediate reach of amendable morals, is not to be considered moral or immoral, it is conceived as "inessential" for the wellbeing of the community, since that community is a foreign one; *giving* for relief funds is exemplary for this kind of rationale. A reevaluation of the classical distinction between "acts of duty" and "acts of charity" is imperatively necessary, according to Singer. Interconnectedness increases and donating becomes essential particularly because one's small, closed community transforms gradually into a global one, into the renowned "global village," (McLuhan, 1962) subsequently helping people living far away is the equivalent of assisting people near us; "foreign" and "distant" lose their significance completely in the act of *giving*.

An even pertinent objection is similar to the one advanced again by the theory of utilitarianism as a whole and, particularly, to the claim to maximizing happiness over misery presupposed by this philosophical theory. Though Singer stresses on several departures between his theoretical perspective on the individual *act of giving* and utilitarianism *per se* (*e.g.* the very fact that the *act of giving* is not necessarily a matter of utility, of maximizing pleasure), the same reluctance towards utilitarian-oriented actions prevails: clearly, those preoccupied with the composition of rejoinders to the Singerian 'theory of *giving*' are the same as those who find the morally compulsory act of *giving* unrealistically, unbearable and incompatible with the contemporaneous moral construct of the citizen in highly developed democracies of the "civilized" West. This type of criticism should be, in Singer's perspective, reoriented from his own "theory of

giving" towards the entire moral standards characterizing the civilized world presently, to its moral stance and behavior. Singer expends his focus on the individual act of *giving* only when referring to the influence to the others surrounding the individual and their capacities and willingness to donate; the impact of other people is of paramount importance on the discrepancy between "what it is possible for a man to do" and "what he is likely to do" (1972, 231, 239). In addition, close people's expectations in respect to a person play an even greater role in the resolution to donate, in inscribing the act of *giving* into one's moral equation. Eventually, clearly opposing Urmson and Sidgwick, Singer refutes that hypothesis that the present – and the most appropriate – basic moral code is an extremely indulgent reconciliation between what one ordinary man is capable to do and what he is not: Singer will proclaim: *giving* is by no means an act beyond the capabilities of an ordinary individual, it is surely within his moral reach. Clearly and conspicuously, Singer's 'principle' appears as a negation of the widespread 20th century' rational choice (or rational action) consensus. Singer and his 'categorical imperative' of individual *giving* reject the general assumption that individuals are immanently rational maximizers of self-interest, acting continuously, effectively and efficiently, to obtain what they want. Are human beings "self-regarding" entities *par excellence* rather than ideally "other-regarding" (Lichbach 1989, 169)? This rational choice perspective would assume that individuals are inherently egoistic species, incapable of helping each other and, even more, willing to kill each other for scarce resources and for self-interested purposes. While contemporary events and episodes of recent history have painfully shown the validity of such a conjecture, the present reading of Singerian philosophical standpoint considers it not as a refutation *tout court* of rational action theory, but a refinement of the said theory, under the form of what Michael Laver coined as "social goals" (1981, 29). In order to reassess the implacable consequences of rational choice research school, Laver conveniently – though properly – distinguished between "intrinsic" (*i.e.* goals valued in and of themselves) and "instrumental" goals (*i.e.* those goals that are useful for reaching the intrinsic goals, which are rather means for definitive ends). Additionally, the scholar differentiated between "personal" (*i.e.* goals that the individual obtains for himself) and "social" goals (*i.e.* goals that pertain to other and, thus, can be obtained only with the help of others). In his scheme, intrinsic goals are personal, "asocial," while instrumental goals are social by definition. Therefore, one individual can be rational maximizer of social interests, such as providing money for relief funds and helping distant victims of famine, even if these actions constitute instrumental goals for higher interests (*e.g.* obtaining prestige, reputation, popularity, respect and appreciation from the part of the others). As a result, the Singerian 'principle' is by no means exhaustively opposed to the rational choice theory, but it is a fortunate reinterpretation of the latter, by arguing in favor of the intermediate social interests of human individuals. Despite the fact that donating for the eradication of starvation comes, in the rational theoretical *compendium*, only as secondary means in achieving social esteem and glorification (*i.e.* that letter of recognition, of which Singer briefly writes about, sent by the charity funds to the donor, in which he is thanked

for his "generosity" [1972, 232]), the gesture of *giving* happens eventually and is not less significant if accompanied by the public appreciation of the donor. Moreover, on this basis – probably perceived as "amoral" by Singer, nevertheless a proper, natural starting point in reshaping personal attitudes on donating –, the act of *giving*, practiced on a current basis, becomes customary, routinary, the desire for esteem and social appreciation considerably decreases, reduced to a subsidiary feeling, while the *giving* is perpetuated in this routine: *giving* for the victims of starvation and water shortages becomes gradually imbedded in the morale and moral system of an individual. This is one, though morally debatable, fashion in which *giving* comes naturally and regularly.

Another extremely compelling aspect in the Singerian argument takes into account the tradition of *giving*, at the individual level, that Europe has experienced and has been familiar with, from immemorial times. Singer brings forth the writings of medieval Thomas Aquinas, who would sustain that: "[T]he division and appropriation of property, which proceeds from human law, must not hinder the satisfaction of man's necessity from [material] goods. Equally, whatever a man has in superabundance is owed, of natural right, to the poor for their sustenance." (Aquinas *apud* d'Entreves and Dawson 1948, 171) Ambrosius's teachings from the *Decretum Gratiani* add to this: "The bread which you withhold belongs to the hungry; the clothing you shut away, to the naked; and the money you bury in the earth is the redemption and freedom of the penniless." (Ambrosius *apud* Singer 1972, 236) His quotes, nevertheless, point to a certain type of morality, the Christian one, which ceased too long ago to be the dominant *dictum* on which human beings construct and conduct their lives.

Therefore, from Singer's standpoint, the issue is clear: only by giving away, individually, great sums of money, one can prevent starvation. Sometimes, his argument even rejects the internationally-conducted, government-sponsored, means and mechanisms of providing aid to the victims of famine, for they would favor the bulk of the citizens in developed countries to evade their individual responsibilities of giving to relief funds. This might be so; nevertheless, the most efficient methods in dealing with the problem of food and water shortages until the present moment remain the international ones. Moreover, the reverse of this argument may be plausible, as well: individual expressions of *giving*, cumulatively, are to reduce the national governments' interventions, globally, in famine crises. In practice, however, this conjecture seems faulty: generally, when there is a lack of interest in donating, at the individual level, for relief funds, the same lack of interest and indifference will extend to the national government of apathetic citizens. This mechanism assumes *par excellence* a democratic setting and some democratic procedures, some, even minimal, form of representation consistency. One significant observation can be drawn from this: the extension of the Singerian 'principle' at the global level is contingent to the democratic nature of the countries involved in joint actions to eradicate famine and water shortages. As it will be seen, this observation verifies as plausible particularly because democracy, through its mechanisms of popular sovereignty and coherent representation, is capable of conducting the individual wills of the citizens into government-led or supranational relief

actions. Practically, individual citizens can expand their separate actions into calls and petitions addressed to their governments and their representatives, into active pressure upon their representatives to press for global activities in reducing the effects of famine, through interest/ pressure groups, *ad-hoc* constituted associations and NGOs, through protests and other manifestations, through media channels (radio and television), more recently though Internet, etc. Commonsensically, when the majority of these various means of communication between citizen and his representatives are inaccessible or shut down by the government itself, the individual act of '*giving*' cannot be expended at a global, meaningful level, remaining just an individual act, whose efficiency is to remain expectedly irrelevant, though moral.

Another aspect that points to the effectiveness and efficiency of supranational, international strategies of reducing the repercussions of food and water crises is the importance of globally-designed, sometimes of a holistic facet of, measures to produce population control, on a Malthusian basis[2]. In the absence (or delay) of these strategies of containing the population growth in some specifically problematic areas, it has been argued, any individual or international action in relieving famine is but a desperate and never-ending measure of postponing continuous starvation in different *foci* of world's map. The task of population control can only be a global task, warning therefore to the contingencies of individual action in this sphere. International organizations, especially the UN, are obliged to envisage and attempt to implement measures for the reduction of population growth.

I. 2005-2010: THREE INSTANCES OF FAMINE IN AFRICA

The last two years alone have showed that extirpating famine is by no means a task that the international community has thoroughly checked on the long list of issues on the global agenda. Moreover, it seems like starvation and water shortages in Africa are there to stay for a painfully prolonged period of time. Only in the second half of the 20th century, practical measures were taken up in Africa, firstly through the strong advocacy of Frances Moore Lappé, who founded the Institute for Food and Development Policy (an NGO later to be known as "Food First") and who initiated probably one of the most unrealistic plan for eliminating global starvation, the "*Diet for a Small Planet*" Plan of 1971 (Jenkins, Scanlan and Peterson 2007, 823-47). Far from obsolete Malthusian *calculi*, indigenous political scientists have stressed even the role played by the strengthening of liberal institutions and democratic procedures in reducing the frequency of famine episodes: Indian political theorist Amartya Sen argues that, since the independence of 1948, the construction of a liberal framework and the practice of the democratic exercise, through free, competitive elections, free press and the promotion and protection of (a still reduced range of) individual freedoms constituted in inhibiting factors for the outburst of famine in India (1981, 433-64). In the same vein, Alex de Waal (1997) discusses the

2] See, for the treatment of famine as a Malthusian crisis, Vaughan 1987, 50-76.

various situations in Africa, stressing similarly on the importance of "political contract" signed between ruled and rulers, in a Rousseauian fashion, that would constitute in an efficient mechanism of preventing food and water crises; moreover, what is of paramount significance for de Waal is the fact that, in the absence of social-political contracts in the African countries, there is no wonder that the danger and the toll of starvation is still so present, so stringent on the continent. One should also take into consideration, de Waal warns, that, by providing help through international instruments, the responsibility and accountability for not being able to provide for the basic needs of the population is transmuted from the national governments to international organizations and NGOs; this type of attitude is favorable in perpetuating food crises and the total disregard towards the logic of distributive justice in Africa. In practice, nevertheless, two categories of actions are being perfected at the international level (as already observed by de Waal, insignificant and often proved futile measures are being made by the African national governments): (1) prevention activities, and (2) relief actions. While the success of the former is desirable, it is increasingly conspicuous that the latter are generally preferred and employed. It is de Waal again to describe the role of humanitarian and its charitable acts: "Humanitarianism – or rather, the actions of Western relief agencies – has become a major determinant of Euro-American policy towards Africa. The humanitarians have become hugely powerful: their information, even their presence, influences the perceptions and concerns of Western diplomats. Their intermittent ability to dominate the headlines and embarrass their home governments into action gives them leverage. Some have tried to use this leverage to tackle what they see as the root causes of humanitarian crises. For others it is a chance for undreamed-of institutional expansion. The combination of the two has proved particularly potent. […] Charitable action needs only vague principles: it is driven by an emotive concern for the poor. It is notable that Western charities avoid specific commitments to human rights principles, preferring vaguer slogans such as 'H stands for Hunger, Oxfam stands for justice'. To fight famine, especially in war zones, it has become apparent that more specific guidelines are needed. Rather than engage directly with the laws of war, relief agencies have produced a profusion of statements of 'humanitarian principles' – remarkable effort of applied moral philosophy." (de Waal 1997, 134) De Waal's last observation remembers so adequately about the Singerian 'principle.' For the African case, Mark Duffield warns about the complexity and the subtleties of the phenomenon:

> The growth of food insecurity in Africa is a complex phenomenon. […] In general terms, Africa has continued to sustain a high level of population growth at the same time as *per capita* food production has declined. This has resulted in a growing number of countries consuming more than they produce. […] In the case of Africa, however, the situation is different. In the absence of industrialization, Africa has continued to rely on the export of traditional primary products to furnish the hard currency to purchase commercial imports. […] Due to reasons of climate or instability, such situations have often been compounded by the highly erratic nature of African food production. (1991, 5-6)

As Chris Barrett and Dan Maxwell have perceptively showed, food aid, as a primary part in humanitarian aid, constitutes "a real resource which can be used to further development and humanitarian goals [but], [a]lternatively, it can be misused to serve other purposes." (2005, xi) Though interestingly stressing on the apparently negative indirect effects of relief funding (*e.g.*, pressuring domestic food prices, influencing production incentives for local farmers, affecting trade and the labour market, etc.), the two scholars postulate that food aid "can be effective in alleviating acute hunger and malnutrition, in building human capital, and in protecting or building assets." (Barrett and Maxwell 2005, xi) For the study of distributive justice, their book emphasizes an extremely important distinction: (1) food aid as "an integral part of a food security policy," as opposed to (2) food aid as "a disposal mechanism for rich countries' surpluses." At this point, Singerian perspective finds one of its remarkable limitations, in the fact that it tends to favor morally the second understanding of the act of *giving*: as it is suggested by Singer, people in affluent societies seem to be willing to give for relief funds rather as a manner of relocating their surplus, not according to a moral "must." As Michelle Maiese shows in his short recapitulation of the achievements history of though recorded during the 20th century in the specific field of distributive justice, three are the elements that stand as central in any discussion on the topic: (1) the total amount of goods to be distributed (or else, the "quantitative" dimension); (2) the distributing procedure, and (3) the pattern of distribution that results (2003).

Another point is being made in this sense, that of global distributive justice: the fact that affluent nations willing to involve in international aid would enterprise such relief actions on the basis of hidden agenda and economically-attached interests, vested interests. The "great powers"[3] are allegedly willing to help only insofar as they can extract other resources from the regions affected by famine. In this mercantile-like rationale, one can imagine that "privileged" nations would have no stake in dealing with famine crises in Africa, for instance. The scope of this paper is not to detect and analyze the economic and political motivations behind the decision of international actors to react against famine, but the translation of individual acts of *giving* at the global level. Nevertheless, since the topic of so-called "attached" benefits was addressed when discussing about individual *giving* from a rational choice perspective, a brief consideration on the actual motivations of donor-countries should be taken into account. One aspect in this inquiry on motivations is, as in the case of individuals, that of employing donation activities as intermediate means to achieve greater, more significant ends: prominence on the international arena, acquiring a say in other international matters and within certain decision-making

3] Though a totally obsolete phrasing, the collocation "great power" is fashionable and telling, at the same time, when discussing the role of highly developed, consolidated democracies of Western tradition on the international arena, in instances of war prevention and resolution and humanitarian aid. The recurrence of the same, exclusive group of "privileged" nations in such circumstances is instrumental in treating not only its impact, but also the forms of domination it exercises even today – with the colonialist era well gone – on underdeveloped and developing regions.

forums and organizations and even facilitating the exploitation of resources, from natural and human ones, out of the assisted countries. One donor-country can compellingly exercise influence on the governments of assisted countries in exchange of its relief fund. Therefore, the possibility of a state to get involved into relief actions in the expectance of other, perceived as more important benefits is by no means excluded completely. Even so, when the moral dimension of *giving* is complicated by the interests and games on the international arena, the global actions are both similar to the individual ones, in terms of procedure and motivation, and are incommensurably more efficient.

In discussing the issue of famine crisis and humanitarian aid, even morally and philosophically, one initial priority is to adequately define the notions involved. Hence, "famine" constitutes, in international vocabulary, a level of alert that surpasses two other extremely problematic ones: the "Stressed" and the "Emergency" levels. Three conditions have to be met in one country for the international community to employ the "Famine" level of alert (and, fortunately, to take effective and efficient action): (a) more than 30% of children to be suffering from acute malnutrition; (b) more than two adults or four children out of 10,000 people to be dying of hunger on a daily basis, and (c) the population of one country to access to less than 2,100 kilocalories of food and four liters of water per day. Internationally-amended documents employ further differentiations, in which distinctions are made between: (1) "near scarcity," (2) "scarcity," and (3) "famine;"[4] (1) "famine alarm," (2) "famine alert," and (3) "famine emergency;"[5] (1) "non-alert" (near normal level), (2) "alert" (requiring close attention and analysis), (3) "livelihood crisis" (with the basic social structures, *i.e.* family, tribe, group, community, under increasing treat), and (4) "humanitarian emergency" (extended threat of widespread mortality, with the request of immediate, direct humanitarian aid)[6]. Most recently, Paul Howe and Stephen Devereux imagined an intensity and a magnitude scale of famine, in which "intensity scale" was fivefold, measuring the impact of livelihood ("food secure," "food insecure," "food crisis," "famine," "severe famine," "extreme famine") and the "magnitude scale" measured mortality rate ("minor famine," "moderate famine," "major famine," "great famine," "catastrophic famine") (2004, 353-72). Probably the one coding that is commonly employed by the United Nations is the "Integrated Food Security Phase Classification" (IPC), with a fivefold classification: (1) "generally food secure" (green code); (2) "borderline food insecure" (yellow code); (3) "acute food and livelihood crisis"

4] *The Indian Famine Codes* (1880). If "scarcity" meant a period of three successive years of disastrous crop production (*i.e.* a decrease of at least one-third in cereals production), "famine" was defined by a rise in food prices of at least 140%, widespread mortality and even nomad inquiries in search of food and water.

5] *Turkana District Early Warning System* (Kenya). The benefit of the "early warning systems" is the fact that they come with a set of measures in order to ease each of the three levels of famine, particularly in the short run.

6] The *Food Security Assessment Unit' levels for Somalia*. The *Pre-famine Indicators for Ethiopia*, designed in 2002, by the World Food Programme was one of the first such codes that used as a measurement unit the level of nutrition of the population.

(orange code); (4) "humanitarian emergency" (red code); (5) "famine/ humanitarian catastrophe" (brown code)[7]. One would wonder what the utility of such, rather infamous, scaling is. This coding is customarily employed for assuring food security and for further decision-making at the global level. Famine coding and scaling is an efficient instrument in imagining the "distribution of wealth."

In five years, three major famine crises succeeded in Africa. These three food and water crises are central to the present paper, for they represent telling applications of the moral principle of *giving* at the international level, while being instrumental in the discussion concerning the mechanisms and the management that facilitate global distributive justice in circumstances of profound need. This paper argues that the fashion in which these contemporaneous instances of famine are resolved bears the Singerian logic of *giving* as moral act, extended from individual level to global one, but they are problematic, posing diverse and more significant difficulties, from the protection of national sovereignty of the states confronting famine to the forms and management of help that the global community can provide to the said states. Hence, the first *momentum* of food/ water crisis discussed here, as the second one also, affected Niger[8], a country which deepened into one of the most prolonged and serious food shortage in the contemporary era. The initial crisis was triggered in 2005, when broad territories of the country became agriculturally useless; the food shortages affected particularly the Northern region of the country (Maradi, Tahoua, Tillabéri, Zinder). As expected, starvation in these provinces was due to a 2004 lacking rains (reduced rainfall, prolonged dryness), coupled with the increased damage posed by the destruction of pasture lands by the desert locusts; on the top of these, high prices to food could only be pondered by even tougher poverty among the population. Essentially, up to 66% of the total population of Niger was affected by food shortages (approximately 2.4 million people), with a quarter of the population suffering from outright starvation and with 2.5% being children (*i.e.* age under five) confronting acute malnutrition. Although the food crisis was predicted by both the national government and the UN, the point of famine should not have been reached. The incipient attempts of helping the population of Niger were thusly insufficient, exceptionally contingent and scarce. The situation was worsened even further due to locally isolated conflicts between groups of people – particularly nomadic small communities – in their fight for very limited resources. Only after the so-called 'lean season' (*i.e.* the climax in respect to the exceptionally poor harvests and grain stores), the relief programmes were actually implemented. Acute malnutrition especially among children registered exceeding levels in some regions of Niger. While 81 million dollars were requested by humanitarian agencies to improve the situation in Niger, approximately half of the financial amount was eventually gathered. During mid-January, more comprehensive humanitarian assistance was sponsored by the United Nations. In

7] http://www.ipcinfo.org/attachments/ReferenceTableEN.pdf (accessed March 3rd 2012).

8] The evolution of the Food Crisis in Niger in 2005-2006 is detailed in Hall 2007.

spite of the controversy regarding the actual occurrence of famine in Niger in 2005-2006, the subsequent events in 2010 proved the true magnitude of the problem.

The second famine crisis referred to in this study is the 2010 Sahel famine, the second famine crisis in only five years to affect Niger, as well as other neighboring countries of West Africa[9]. The situation leading to acute starvation debuted following the same pattern of 2005-2006 and 2011: chaotic, erratic rainfall and disturbing climatic conditions severely affected the cereal production, generating an absurd increase in food prices and major food deficit for the African households of the region. Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Sudan, Mali and Mauritania, and even northern Nigeria confronted with important deficits in food-stock. Though perceived as less stringent than the ones before and after it, the 2010 Sahel famine bears its significance due especially to the fact that it hit Niger for the second time in five years. In 2009, rains affected the regions, but were soon followed by a more or less unexpected extremely dry period; following this climatic change, the agricultural production decreased in a warring degree. Irrespective of the possible factors causing such natural climatic hazardous succession (either environmental problems following overgrazing, deforestation, poor land usage and administration and global dimming, or the extensive cultivation of "cash crops", cotton, groundnuts, shea nuts, sesame, often put before food production, or, as it was suggested, overpopulation of the region of Sahel), the matter of increased starvation remains. The problem of refugees coming from Sudan in Chad primarily is another strenuous problem, favoring starvation and water shortages for the population. Another specific problem for the famine in Sahel in 2010 is the issue of the kidnappings customary among the humanitarian personnel working on a permanent basis in the region, particularly in the context of the war in Darfur; the kidnappings intensified during 2009, prompting the withdrawal of important international aid agencies and nongovernmental organization from the countries of Sahel. What is important to mention, nonetheless, is the fact that, in this particular case, the supranational agencies were effective in announcing the imminence of famine as early as the 1st of January 2010; the Famine Early Warning System, UN World Food Programme and the International Food Policy Research Institute were anticipatively warning about the probability of starvation in Sahel following unexpected climatic conditions. Already in January, while Ethiopian authorities were vehemently denying any prospects for national emergency situation, Sudan and Kenya received the first supplies from Hunger Organization. By the end of January, UN declared "famine alert" for Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad and northern Nigeria; nevertheless, humanitarian aid was suspended for Niger due to political reasons. While Mauritania and Senegal registered a new negative record for the rainfall volume in February and March, Burkina Faso experienced the first signs of famine in March and Save the Children became one of the first organizations to send financial support in Nigeria. In April and June, Islamic Relief became involved as well, together with Medair, for the relief in various provinces of Sudan. The first UN

9] The 2010 Sahel famine is described comprehensively in Raleigh 2010, 69-86.

operations were initiated in April, through its World Food Programme. The WFP efforts were counterbalanced by the outbreak of a terrible situation in Chad, a country confronted simultaneously with famine, internal conflict and with a massive wave of refugees coming through the border with Sudan from Darfur: 2 million people were severely affected by starvation and water shortage. Casualties were registered in Mauritania in May 2010. Awful conditions were met with continuous warnings and alerts from the international agencies, with humanitarian aid being rather sporadic than consistent and effective. Lacking any serious, committed help, nomadic inquiries soon succeeded, particularly in Niger and Chad, the two most affected countries. Only in June, the UN cared to initiate an appeal towards the developed nations, traditional donors to ease the sufferings in the countries of Sahel. Soon after, France responded by providing food aid and by triggering the financial support of the European Union for Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso and northern Nigeria. The UN dispatched teams of hydrologists and geologists to survey the large areas in search for water and new technological improvements in agriculture for the countries affected by drought. International Fund for Agricultural Development offered humanitarian assistance for regions in Somalia. On the 22nd of June, Chad faced a new record of temperature: 47.6 °C, Sudan matched the same day its own record, 49.7 °C, and Niger recorded 48.2 °C, on the 23rd of June. An estimate of 190.7 million dollars was requested by humanitarian agencies, but little of this amount was initially met, with the significant help of Oxfam. Governments in Niger and Chad appealed to the international community for support in dealing with increased famine. In July, various NGOs (Muslim Hands, the Methodist Relief and Development Fund, responded to this appeal and extended to the neighbouring affected countries. By mid-July, USAID intervened effective in eradicating famine, through its Famine Early Warning Systems Network and through additional funding for the Food and Agriculture Organization. British Red Cross added to this humanitarian undertaking by providing personnel, together with French food support. This support proved insufficient for the numerous problems Niger confronted with: famine and associated diseases (diarrhea, gastroenteritis, respiratory illnesses, etc.), political instability (government replaced by a military *junta*), food riots, etc.; food prices in August registered an increase of 300%. Nevertheless, by mid-August, floods affected the countries of Sahel that were already facing severe starvation and water shortages: Nigeria, Mauritania, Niger, Chad. Cafod, Action Against Hunger and the Prem Rawat Foundation contributed to the financial relief fund, in a context in which many international humanitarian agencies were reluctant in sending personnel due to a new wave of kidnappings. Moreover, the floods in September annulled the effects of severe starvation, but produced new victims, up to 2 million persons, displaced from their homes, particularly in Niger and northern Nigeria, but also in Benin and Ghana.

The most recent unfortunate instance of famine crisis in Africa affected, since mid-July 2011, primarily Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, but also neighbouring countries, being, for that matter, generally referred to as "the 2011 East Africa drought"

or "the 2011 Horn of Africa famine".[10] Climatic conditions during the beginning of the summer season favored the interruption of rains, to the point in which Somalia, the most severely affected country, has not experienced rain for two successive years. As expected, the weather generated poor agricultural production, decreasing considerably the livestock. On the other hand, Al-Shabaab group intensified its activity in the South of Somalia, causing yet other food shortages. Despite the fact that the climatic conditions the region experienced during the summer of 2011 appeared gradually and marked no surprise for the international community[11], the supranational structures with specific competences in the area of humanitarian aid and relief funding did not intervene in an initial phase, not even by issuing an "early warning" for the governments of the countries affected by drought and subsequent famine.[12] Only in late June, the United Nations intervene, together with other NGOs, most notably, Oxfam and Save the Children. The famine state was decreed by the United Nations on the 20th of July, initially in two regions of Somalia. After further expertise analysis, the famine warning was extended as to include the entire territory of Southern Somalia by August 2011. In September, on-the-ground assistance was completed by sporadic airlifts of supplies, conducted effectively by the UN. Nevertheless, the crisis further spread due partly to the incapacity of the humanitarian aid to contain the exceptionality of the situation in Somalia. As for September, the amount of assistance was decided for 2.5 billion dollars, but signs of expended famine were observed in Kenya as well. Malnutrition affected South Sudan also, and the constant activity of the Red Cross proved insufficient in sustaining the relief actions. Therefore, during the first stages of international intervention in Somalia, Kenya and Sudan, the results were largely unsatisfactory, favoring the uncontrollable spread of famine in the eastern part of the continent. Famine was accompanied by the closing of local schools and hospitals and by massive relocations of population towards regions that could hopefully provide food and water for the victims of malnutrition and famine. During the autumn of 2011, it was reported, following UN analyses, that another 1.2 million people were at the verge of famine and water shortages in Uganda. In addition, starting September 2011, a massive wave of refugees coming from the affected areas entered neighbouring countries, especially Kenya and Ethiopia; the refugees were, in their large majority, women and children and were hosted in *ad-hoc* constructed

10] The 2011 Horn of Africa Famine is properly depicted in Dando 2012.

11] Rajiv Shah, Head of the US Agency for International Development, even stated anticipatively: "There's no question that hotter and drier growing conditions in sub-Saharan Africa have reduced the resiliency of these communities." (Shah 2011.)

12] An exception in this sense is the "Famine Early Warning Systems Network" of the USAID, which signaled the imminence of a famine crisis since August 2010. USAID, in fact, was the first organism to actively intervene in relief operations during the 2011 famine crisis of East Africa. The press statement released by USAID in early June 2011, warned that the famine crisis in Eastern Africa is "the most severe food security emergency in the world today, and the current humanitarian response is inadequate to prevent further deterioration." (cited in "*The New York Times*", on the 7th of June 2011, http://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/famine-africa-solutions-aid-foreign, accessed March 20th 2012).

camps and sites under the UN supervision. Even so, the capabilities of the UN High Commission for Refugees were extremely contingent, since the number of people coming on the daily basis from the drought-affected countries exceeded expectation. Medical care was scarce as well, leading to an overall increase of 300% of the infant mortality rate. Conspicuously overwhelmed, the UNHCR and the national governments in Kenya and Ethiopia faced local difficulties as well, with levels of famine being in continuous increase in the two adopting countries. Camps are by no means safe in such situations: sexual violence and numerous diseases associated with malnutrition and starvation (including measles, malaria, cholera, but also HIV/AIDS) raised even further the proportion of deaths. The intervention of *Médecins Sans Frontières* somehow improved the healthcare situation, though their actions were extremely limited in the given circumstances. Only in November, the international community, with the massive support of the United Nations and USAID, managed to direct, in a truly efficient manner, the funds, hence remarkably downgrading the officially established humanitarian situation in Somalia from 'famine' to 'emergency' alerts. Entering within the rebel-controlled areas was another challenged posed to the humanitarian personnel, but some minimum consensus was achieved and help was possible through the intervention of the Red Cross. Improving climatic conditions (rainfalls and increasing humidity levels) also rebalanced the situation. By January 2012, it was reported that, allegedly, the famine crisis was over in East Africa, although continuous assistance was being offered and actions directed against starvation are coordinated by the UN and transnational NGOs presently. The famine alert was nevertheless maintained since March this year and, for some gravely affected regions, the assistance will be secured until September 2012. Favored by abundant rainfall, the overall conditions of the agropastoral households has significantly improved and their herd sizes have been slowly recuperated following the drought that killed large numbers of agriculturally-relevant animals. For South Sudan, the problem of starvation remains a principal issue, particularly due to the never-ending conflict in North Darfur; as a result, in the first half of the 2012, Stressed, Crisis and Emergency levels of humanitarian alert were maintained for the protection of approximately four million persons. The Horn of Africa famine crisis marked the first time since the famine in Ethiopia of 1984-1985 when the UN issued a declaration of famine. Unfortunately, following this type of declaration, no mandated response or action is necessary under the present international law; it is only supposed that the declaration of famine would produce awareness among individuals, but most essentially among states and their capacity to assist the victims of starvation. This feeble mechanism closes the humanitarian aid at the international level to the Singerian 'principle' at the individual level, because it presupposes a moral act from the part of the affluent countries in helping countries in need. It results that, after all, it is an ethical dimension that stays at the core of each county's decision to eradicate famine, exactly like it is in each of those individuals of developed nations to decide in *giving* for a relief fund. In this sense, even the youngest organization regarding humanitarian assistance, the African Union and the African Development Bank contributed significantly, despite some

important delays. Private multinational companies (most famously, IKEA) donated for the cause. However, probably the most efficient in this respect remained the USAID, not only through its financial, material and personnel support in East Africa, but also thanks to its successive campaigns targeted for raising awareness: FWD ("Famine, War and Drought", September 2011), ONE Campaign (October), etc. Using the so-called '*hawala*' system and mobile phone donations, individuals sent small sums of money for the cause, following these campaigns.

It is important to stress that international development agencies have imagined, following the crisis, strategies of reducing the probability of occurrence of such unfortunate – though, in Africa, so recurrent – *phenomena*. This rationale is by no means a novelty: plans for digging irrigation canals and for meaningful and systematic distribution of plant seeds come as no surprise for the entire historical evolution of famine crises in Africa. The same plans are to be encountered in 2010, when the United Kingdom donated extensively for the Sahel famine, especially for the development of an efficient irrigation and water purification systems that would assure food and water for the people in Niger and Chad, the most affect countries of 2010' famine crisis. Very little was done so far. In 2010, an additional plan of agricultural development, aimed at expanding the cultivated land and commonly referred to as the "Community Area-Based Development Approach" ("CABDA"), was envisaged[13]. Non-governmentally supported, "CABDA" was already implemented in Ethiopia, Malawi, Uganda, Eritrea and Kenya; despite the fact that the plan included special mechanisms and procedures of cultivating even drought-resistant cereals, at least Eritrea and Kenya confronted starvation during the last two years, demonstrating once more the contingencies of this development programme. Yet another programme, "The Food Crises Prevention and Management Charter", was implemented in Gambia and was supported by the Permanent Interstate Committee for drought control in the Sahel (CILLS), an organism formed as early as 1973.

II. FINAL REMARKS AND CONCLUSIONS

Reconciling Singer's 'principle' regarding the moral necessity of individual *giving* with the supranational, internationally-led operations of humanitarian aid and relief funding is, as this inquiry has shown, a matter of hermeneutical extension of the conceptual *spectrum* of notion of *giving*. Nevertheless, the theoretical *apparatus* Singer employs in his preaching on the benefits of individual *giving*, though incontestably meritorious, demonstrates its most dangerous contingencies, in the most painful fashion, in the everyday practice of the international or supranational, governmental or nongovernmental, organizations engaged in relief funding and humanitarian aid. It would be wonderful if states acted in the same way in which individuals act in the Singerian scheme, if the actions in the period 2005-2011 in Africa followed the fortunate path indicated so morally correctly

13] See, in this sense, Morgan and Solarz 1994, 57-73.

by the Australian thinker. It is not exclusively a dilemma of applied ethics, since politics intervenes in the case of famine crises in an often brutal way. In all three situations presented above, starvation and water shortage were worsened and sometimes favored by political conflicts between authorities and different rebel groups; this is a current fact for some African countries, whose resolution is yet to be imagined. Rebel and militant groups fighting against the government are constantly blocking the ability of humanitarian teams to provide relief for the people living on the territories under their control. In addition, incapable national governments prove too frequently unwilling and unable to provide minimal security for their citizens. This proves once more the symbiosis between national security and food security, a symbiosis virtually inexistent in East Africa, primarily, and in other developing countries of the globe, generally. But it is not exclusively the incapacity of East African national governments, it is rather the incapacity and unwillingness of the international community to effectively act in these developing regions. Though, as seen above, international and transnational nongovernmental organizations (Oxfam, Save the Children, Red Cross, *Médecins Sans Frontières*, etc.) and the USAID were the most effective organisms in dealing with humanitarian aid in the three cases mentioned, joint actions of affluent countries were limited both in scope and in effect. For one, the United Nations was reluctant and slow in declaring the "famine" level of alert in the countries affected by acute malnutrition and massive hunger, a delay which put a supplementary burden on the national governments of these countries and determine humanitarian aid and relief funding to be late in action. Secondly, the UN supervised organisms (World Health Organization, the UN High Commission for Refugees, Food and Agriculture Organization and UN World Food Programme, Mercy Corps, etc.) lacked the immediacy of action, despite the fact that each of these forums' reports generated awareness of the situation Africa confronted to in the period 2005-2011. However, the efficiency of all these international structures is less relevant to the present study, although it is extremely important for the overall mundane peace and wellbeing of the 'citizens' living in an allegedly 'global village'. It is rather the mechanisms that lie behind what would generally be referred to as the 'distribution of wealth' at the global level that become central in an account about the hermeneutic extension of the Singerian moral 'principle' of individual *giving*. From this perspective, the efficiency of humanitarian aid and relief funding is telling, exactly because they demonstrate how poorly this (re) distribution of resources is done from "affluent" societies to "developing" countries. One initial observation would be that affluent nations are truly unwilling to distribute part of their 'wealth' and that, in practice, distributive justice remains a *desideratum*, a virtual *utopia*. Nevertheless, a second, rather commonsensical, observation would argue that, as opposed to the situation in the 20th century – when the terrible events during the two world conflagrations met with almost no humanitarian assistance, despite the enormous human toll –, efforts are being constantly made to increase aid in humanitarian situations, particularly in the context of a growing interconnectedness and a significant tendency of

falling national sovereignty. International organizations have now much more effective capacity to penetrate the barriers posed by national sovereignty in their mission to help people that are badly treated by their own governments. So, nowadays the international community, led by affluent, highly developed and consolidated democracies, has at its disposal the mechanisms to initiate and sustain the 'distribution of wealth' towards poor countries. Empirically, it was been shown that, generally, humanitarian agencies receive less than half the amount of help they request for conducting relief operations. Therefore, it might be concluded, the affluent nations are unwilling to allocate funds for helping developing nations. Statistically, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) showed that, out of the total amount of assistance requested for overcoming the Eat Africa drought of 2011 (*i.e.* approximately 2,402 million dollars), 71% was met with an affirmative response, mainly from the European Union, the United Kingdom (through the "Disasters Emergency Committee"), Canada, China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Lebanon, Bahrain[14], Turkey. Material and personnel assistance came from Russia, Venezuela, Indonesia and Malaysia, as well. Even if not the entire request was met – which should, in whatever way, constitute a veritable shame for the rich countries of the globe –, the administration of this incipient 'distribution of wealth' is another issue to be considered. Once again, rebel organizations and terrorist cells flourishing in Somalia and in neighbouring parts are constantly hampering international aid; this is the reason why, United States, for instance, restricted its humanitarian contribution in order to avoid the allegation that it sponsors indirectly terrorism. Airlifts of emergency in mid-July in East Africa proved insufficient up to November, and more completed by land operations. In the 2010 Sahel famine, the European Union suspended the humanitarian help for Niger for political reasons: President Mamadou Tandja, on the pretext of exceptional humanitarian situation in his country, extended his term in power, a decision which run counter with the principle of liberal democracy embraced by the European Union. Therefore, as one can easily grasp, political motivations can more often than not hamper humanitarian assistance and the general 'distribution of wealth'. The circumstances in the three cases mentioned above demonstrate, after all, that the hermeneutical extension of Singer's 'principle' of individual *giving* as a moral act is possible: international, supranational, transnational organizations, agencies, groups, governmental or non-governmental, act for the eradication of famine in a similar fashion to that in which every individual of an affluent society engaged in donating would act. Nevertheless, empirically, Singer's moral scheme of *giving* preserves its contingencies at the global level.

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14] The Arab community was particularly eager in contributing to the relief funds, with Jordan, the United Arab Emigrates, Kuwait, Egypt, Algeria, Qatar, even Sudan sending financial and material support for the victims of famine.

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