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AN ETHICS OF CONCRETE OTHERS:
AN ETHICS FOR THE VULNERABLE IN A GLOBALIZING WORLD

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Abstract: This article deals with an ethics of concrete others as an appropriate ethics for the vulnerable in a globalizing world. The concept of concrete others is based on the Levinasian concept of the other in that it accepts the transcendental dimension of others; however, the concept of concrete others is different from the concept of the other because it emphasizes immanent dimensions of human beings and their multiple differences. Because of a globalizing world which makes different vulnerabilities more visible, I contend that the vulnerable need to be framed as concrete others rather than the other. There are different ethics which try to address vulnerabilities of concrete others. An ethics of the multitude betrays its exclusive concern for the economic dimension of the vulnerable while it shows little attention to cultural and political vulnerabilities of others. An ethics of *différance*, although its emphasis is on concrete difference, betrays limitations in recognizing and addressing inequality behind diverse differences of the vulnerable. An ethics of concrete others, which emphasizes both transcendental dimension and immanent dimension of concrete others, promotes both difference and equality of concrete others through equality that is substantially conducive to protection and promotion of difference.

Key Words: Difference, *différance*, equality, the other, others, concrete others, oppression, domination.

A globalizing world is replete with vulnerable people who are experiencing oppression and domination¹. Oppression is the situation in which persons are unable to have basic goods necessary for the development of their human capabilities; while domination is the situation in which differences of individuals are not recognized as being equal.² The vulnerable suffer from economic disadvantages such as shortage of food, jobs, medical services, and/or education; they also bear the brunt of political and cultural alienation such as tyranny of the majority, oligarchy, ostracism, or cultural discrimination. Put differently, the vulnerable live through inequality and misrecognition. This article deals with a concept of the vulnerable in such a way as to be appropriately sensitive to both their equality and difference and it presents a proper ethics that promotes both their equality and difference. I propose the concept of concrete others as an appropriate concept of the vulnerable and an ethics of concrete others that is best for promoting their difference and equality.

The first part of this article deals with the concept of concrete others. Critically engaging in the Levinasian idea of the other, I lay the foundation for the concept of concrete others based on his idea of the other. I also identify the limitations of his idea of the other: Levinasian the other could be equated with an angelic being; his idea of the other could negate concrete differences of the other; and his idea of the other could justify negative understanding of the immanent dimensions of the other. Thus, emphasizing the immanent dimension of the vulnerable, consideration of concrete differences, and positive engagement of the immanent, I find the idea of concrete others to be better to encompass diverse situations of the vulnerable with relation to a globalizing world.

The second part of this article deals with an ethics of concrete others based on a Levinasian ethics of the other. I agree with the Levinasian emphasis on the transcendental dimension of the other because it provides a basis for ensuring complete protection to the vulnerable. However, I am concerned about the limitations in protecting the vulnerable as he puts exclusive emphasis on the transcendental dimension of the other paired with a reluctance to recognize the immanent dimensions of the other. Whereas the ethics of the other addresses vulnerability in light of transcendence, an ethics of concrete others addresses concrete vulnerabilities of others. In establishing an ethics of concrete others, I discuss the work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Jacques Derrida, Walter Dignolo, and Boaventura de Sousa Santos, showing that vulnerability of concrete others cannot be addressed by either achieving economic equality or respecting differences. An ethics of concrete others is an attempt to address their vulnerability by promoting both their equality and difference. Promoting both equality and difference means not balancing equality against difference, but working toward equality that substantially promotes differences of concrete others.

The concept of concrete others

The concept of concrete others is based on the Levinasian concept of the other. The other has been a critical issue in the tradition of philosophy since Plato. Until Levinas's articulation of the other that stands beyond and prior to the same, the other has been recognized, represented, and manipulated by the same. While the Levinasian concept of the other fundamentally challenges the exploitation of the other by the same, its challenge is severely limited by its definition of the other. In order to overcome the limitation of the concept of the other, I propose the concept of concrete others. Let me first delve into the concept of the other.

Levinas's idea of the Other

Experiencing tragedies of humanity in the twentieth century in which millions of vulnerable people were killed through the logic of the same for whom it is natural to exclude or eliminate the other who is innately unable to be the same, Emmanuel Levinas establishes the idea of the other that sets up the fundamental way to afford complete protection to vulnerable people. He contrasts absolute difference between the other and the same. The same has a totalitarian tendency. John Wild puts it as follows:

[Totalitarian thinking] aims to gain an all-inclusive, panoramic view of all things, including the other, in a neutral, impersonal light like the Hegelian Geist (Spirit), or the Heideggerian Being. It sees the dangers of an uncontrolled, individual freedom, and puts itself forth as the only rational answer to anarchy. To be free is the same as to be rational, and to be rational is to give oneself over to the total system that is developing in world history. Since the essential self is also rational, the development of this system will coincide with the interests of the self. All otherness will be absorbed in this total system of harmony and order.³

With the totalitarian tendency, the same gives no room for the existence of the other. Everything other than the same is grasped and subsumed by the same as instruments. Levinas rejects such imperialistic understanding of the other by the same. He instead emphasizes the transcendence of the other, which is inaccessible to the same. Based on the idea of the other who is infinitely higher than the I and the same, he asserts the priority of ethics over ontology.

The priority allows him to question the oppressive relationship of the same or the I to the other and reject subsuming the other under the

horizon of the same. The infinite asymmetry or dissymmetry of the other to the same commands the infinite responsibility of the same to the other. Levinas thus makes it absolutely impossible for the same to override the other. It is his great achievement to establish the dissymmetry of the other to the same in such a way as to command the same to be infinitely responsible for the other. In order to figure out how he establishes the dissymmetry of the other to the same, I will first trace his idea of the other.

The other for Levinas is first of all “absolutely other.”⁴ The Levinasian view of the other is based on the contention that “the exteriority of a being is inscribed in its essence.”⁵ The exteriority of a being means “a surplus always exterior to the totality.”⁶ Because of its exteriority, “beings have an identity ‘before’ eternity, before the accomplishment of history, before the fullness of time, while there is still time.”⁷ Levinas, thus, further asserts, “Being is exteriority.”⁸ When defining being as exteriority, he emphasizes that it is impossible for a subject to have an objective form of being because she is unable to epistemologically contain being as exteriority: “the very exercise of its being consists in exteriority, and no thought could better obey being than by allowing itself to be dominated by this exteriority.”⁹ A subject needs to give up the possibility and effort to objectify being in order for being to be being. As a subject is unable to objectify the other as being, the other is beyond the realm of objectification, that is, the horizon of the same. The other for Levinas is thus essentially different and separated from the same.¹⁰

The other is the absolutely other since she has a different time that the same cannot subsume. Dwight Furrow explains that in Levinas, the other has her own past, present, and future, which the same cannot possess or share: “when we encounter another person, we do not meet as contemporaries. The time of the other is outside the domain of my temporality.”¹¹ In terms of the past, the other has the immemorial, “the alterity of an unrepresentable past.”¹² The future also reveals the alterity of the other through *eros*¹³ and fecundity.¹⁴ Death is another dimension of time, which points to the alterity of the other.¹⁵ Using different dimensions of time, such as the past, the future, and death, Levinas shows the absolute alterity of the other. The past of the other is immemorial past; the future of the other is infinite future; and death denotes pure passivity of the same to the other. Immemorial past, infinite future, and death as pure passivity indicate the absolute alterity of the other.

The other, which has such absolute alterity, exposes herself through her face. Different faces display differences but such differences are not mere differences that can be compared or paralleled to others. Revealed through time of the other, the other has alterity that is far from difference in degree, quality, or quantity.¹⁶ Without regard to facial difference or exterior divergence the other has her alterity which secures her transcendence and infinity: “The Other remains infinitely transcendent,

infinitely foreign”¹⁷ through her epiphany visible in her face. The Other is infinite because “infinity overflows the thought that thinks it. Its very infinitude is produced precisely in this overflowing.”¹⁸ Since the other is infinite, the I cannot contain the other in his thought. The overflowing is apprehended not by pure abstraction, that is, by negation of experience; rather, it is by very experience of the face of the other: “The relation with infinity will have to be stated in terms other than those of objective experience; but if experience precisely means a relation with the absolutely other, that is, with what always overflows thought, the relation with infinity accomplishes experience in the fullest sense of the word.”¹⁹ Experience of the face of the other indicates infinity that overflows the thought of a subject without being fully grasped.²⁰ By overflowing, the other is transcendent and infinite. But overflowing is not the last word for the transcendence and infinity of the other. The other has a more ultimate dimension: “The face of the other human – the stranger, the widow and the orphan – exceeds its corporeal destitution by ‘referring’ to the divine Other.”²¹ The face of the other indicates infinity that overflows the thought of a subject not only because of her alterity, but also because of her divinity. God is accessible through the face of the other.²² In Levinas, the other is enhanced to the height of the divine Other.

Enhancing the other to the height of divine Other, Levinas denies an incarnational understanding of the other. He contends that “[t]he Other is not the incarnation of God, but precisely his face, in which he is disincarnate, is the manifestation of the height in which God is revealed.”²³ While the other is recognized by her face of destitution, what is revealed through the face is God, not an impoverished person. Thus, the other is not the concrete, impoverished person, since she “does not play the role of a mediator.”²⁴ Her concreteness disappears; but, she manifests divine heights. When he denies that the other is an incarnation of God and accordingly her immanent dimension, Levinas implicitly identifies the other with divine Other. However, the identification of the other and divine Other is evident when Levinas says that the religion is the bond between the same and the other: “We propose to call ‘religion’ the bond that is established between the same and the other without constituting a totality.”²⁵ For Levinas, in religion the same cannot constitute a totality with the divine Other. In the same way, the same has a religious relationship with the other. In the bond between the same and the other, the other is equated with divine Other. The other, therefore, by being identified with divine Other, absolutely affirms her transcendental and infinite alterity.

The Levinasian idea of the other acquires her transcendence and infinity through his view of being as exteriority, time as immemorable past, infinite future, and pure passive death, and destitution of face as reference to divine Other. The other who has the height of divine Other thus establishes an asymmetrical relationship to the same. Based on the

asymmetrical relationship with the same, Levinas opens a way to provide complete protection to the other, who has transcendental and infinite alterity.

Limitations of Levinas's idea of the Other

While the idea of the other establishes a fundamental ground for the complete protection of the other, it has intrinsic limitations in protecting the vulnerable. Though Levinas emphasizes transcendental and infinite dissymmetry between the other and a subject, the infinity and transcendence of the other is the very limitation of protecting her concrete vulnerability.

First of all, the Levinasian idea of the other appears to make the other an angelic being. The other is a transcendent and infinite being who has absolute alterity. It is unmediated by totality. Though Levinas specifically refers to the stranger, the widow, and the orphan as epiphany of the other, they have importance not as historical beings but as infinite and transcendent beings. Anselm Min says, "At best, Levinas reduces the stranger, the widow, and the orphan to *abstract* symbols of human vulnerability *in general*, with nothing historically concrete and specific about them."²⁶ As an angelic being, the other loses her concrete vulnerability. While a stranger, a widow, or an orphan has the concrete political, economic, medical, or cultural vulnerability, an angelic being does not have such vulnerabilities. That is to say, an angelic being does not have to worry about her political persecution, economic distress, medical disadvantages, or cultural ignorance. But, a stranger, a widow, or an orphan is overwhelmed by worries. She needs her shelter, employment, education, medical treatment, cultural recognition, and so on. Without addressing those concerns, a stranger, a widow, or an orphan is unable to overcome her vulnerability. Whereas being transcendently secured, the other for Levinas then remains concretely vulnerable.

Such limitation is caused by Levinas's rejection of an incarnational understanding of human beings. "The Other is not the incarnation of God, but precisely his face, in which he is disincarnate, is the manifestation of the height in which God is revealed."²⁷ Levinas denies the immanence of human beings in history while accepting their transcendence in history. Levinas's contribution is that he places special emphasis on the transcendental dimension of the other. However, if the transcendental dimension negates the immanent dimension of the other, the other is exposed to the aforementioned concrete vulnerability. While the other without the transcendental dimension has experienced the imperialism of the same, the other without immanence will experience indifference and isolation from the same. Diane Perpich puts it in this way:

"Justice requires representation – and recognition, too, we might add. Levinas may well

have been thinking of representation in this passage only in the sense of the presentation of an object in consciousness, that is, as the representation of persons in the abstract. But political representation, as the right and actuality of having an effective voice in the civil society and government, clearly is equally necessary for justice. The other whose identity is rendered unintelligible or unrepresentable is thus done an injustice: an ethical as well as a political injustice”²⁸

As immanence of the other is ignored, the unintelligible and unrepresentable other is unrecognizable in civil society and accordingly aggravates her vulnerability. In order to address the vulnerability of the other, not only her transcendence but also her immanence should be taken into consideration: “The ethical dignity of the other may ‘trace’ its origin to her transcendent relation to the infinite, but that dignity is effectively destroyed or honored only in her immanent relations to history and society, and both the transcendent and the immanent relations are inseparably connected in the unity of the one person.”²⁹ With clear separation between transcendence and immanence, the other is not able to address the concrete vulnerability of the other.

In *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Levinas shows a quite different relationship between transcendence and immanence of the other when he talks about justice. In justice, the transcendence no longer means total separation from the immanence. Justice needs to be under “the control of the responsibility of the one for the other.”³⁰ That is to say, the transcendence of the other becomes the criterion in judging immanent matters of the other. Put differently, the political relationship of the I to the immanent other should be based on the ethical relationship of the I to the transcendent other. While he seems to bridge the gap between the transcendence and the immanence of the other, his view of justice still reveals a refusal of representation of the other, that is, a refusal of the immanent dimension of the other: “justice remains justice only, in a society where there is no distinction between those close and those far off.”³¹ Levinas puts forward his hesitation to accept immanent dimensions of the other as she is, because the face is unable to fully represent the other.³² The immanent dimension of the face cannot fully cover the transcendental dimension of the other. Every representation of the other is limited in expressing the other. Nonetheless the immanent dimension of the other is the very place to reveal and address her vulnerability with which justice should be concerned while we retain the paradox that we are representing the unrepresentable. Without identifying vulnerability through her immanent dimension, the paradox might lead to regarding the other as an angelic being. Even when understanding the paradox as a request for the

subject to pay more attention to her representation of the other, the paradox leads to another question of who the other is.

Encountering the face of the other, we are to decide whether every human being is the other or only a certain being is the other: that is, whether all human beings are vulnerable or some of them are vulnerable. Since Levinas contends that the face itself is the revelation of the vulnerability of the other, all human beings are vulnerable. Though Levinas mentions a stranger, a widow, and an orphan in referring to the other, considering that the face itself reveals vulnerability, every human being whether an oppressor or a victim is the other. In principle, I agree that every human being without her political, economic, and cultural status is the other who deserves my ultimate responsibility not to kill her. This is because she has the dimension of transcendence. In this vein, if I only count the transcendent dimension of an oppressor, she deserves my welcome. But, an oppressor has an immanent dimension as every human being has both immanent and transcendental dimensions. In light of an immanent dimension, an oppressor is totally different from the oppressed. It is ambiguous whether Levinas differentiates the oppressed from oppressors; he is hesitant to judge the other. In dealing with immanent matters, for instance, Levinas emphasizes inadequacy of objective judgment: "There exists a tyranny of the universal and of the impersonal, an order that is inhuman though distinct from the brutish. Against it man affirms himself as an irreducible singularity, exterior to the totality into which he enters, and aspiring to the religious order where the recognition of the individual concerns him in his singularity ... The judgment of history is always pronounced in absentia."³³ Put differently, to properly judge an individual as a singularity, Levinas contends that every individual should be treated as the transcendent and infinite other no matter who she is. If every individual is a transcendent and infinite other, it is difficult to distinguish between oppressors and the oppressed, the exploiting and the exploited, ostracizers and the ostracized, to name a few. If the victims are not differentiated from victimizers, the idea of the other is unable to address the wrongs of the victimizers and accordingly the vulnerability of the victims remains the same. While Levinas protects transcendental vulnerability of the other in her face, he ends up ignoring different vulnerabilities between a victim and a victimizer.

Levinas's rejection of immanent dimension of the other is not without reason. In order to have ethical primacy of the other over the same, Levinas has to deny immanent dimension of the other. If considering only immanent dimensions, he is not able to establish dissymmetry of the other to the same. But, it is not easy to observe transcendental dimension of the other in real life. Alain Badiou puts it in this way:

The ethical primacy of the Other over the Same requires that the experience of alterity be ontologically 'guaranteed' as the experience of a distance, or

of an essential non-identity, the traversal of which is the ethical experience itself. But nothing in the simple phenomenon of the other contains such a guarantee. And this simply because the finitude of the other's appearing certainly can be conceived as resemblance, or as imitation, and thus lead back to the logic of the Same. The other always resembles me too much for the hypothesis of an originary exposure to his alterity to be necessarily true.³⁴

Because of the difficulty to overcome the finite appearance of the other, Levinas exalts the other to divine Other, which has infinite distance and difference from the same.³⁵ Levinas avoids the difficulty overcoming resemblance of the other with his view of the other as divine Other. Levinasian identification of the other with divine Other is helpful to unearth transcendental dimension of the other and accordingly prevents the other from being subsumed by the same.

However, Levinasian identification of the other with divine Other reveals another problem: ignorance of concrete differences of the other. Badiou points out that Levinasian ethics which is a pious discourse identifying the Other with the One, divine Other, is inadequate "in the context of a system of thought that is both a-religious and genuinely contemporary with the truths of our time."³⁶ He cannot accept Levinasian ethics of the other as the One, since "[t]he only genuine ethics is of truths in the plural – or more precisely, the only ethics is of processes of truth, of the labour that brings some truths into the world."³⁷ Thus, abandoning the Levinasian transcendental dimension of the other, Badiou emphasizes exclusively the immanent dimension of the other, which is not one but multiple, because what exists is "the infinite multiplicity of differences."³⁸ Badiou contends multiple differences of others replacing the other as the One with the many. While I agree that in the realm of the same there is the infinite multiplicity of differences, Badiou's view exposes two problems. On the one hand, I disagree that "the infinite multiplicity of differences" can peacefully co-exist with one another without the idea of the other which has a dissymmetrical relationship with a subject. It is because Badiou's view goes back to the unavoidable subsumption of the other by the same as differences of others are juxtaposed with one another: denying transcendence of the other makes untenable his view of peaceful coexistence among the infinitely multiple differences. On the other hand, the infinite multiplicity of differences can make ambiguous the distinction between oppressors and the oppressed. Allowing every difference as having a truth, an oppressive difference can have legitimacy as one truth. While Levinas has this problem as he focuses on the transcendental dimension of the other, Badiou has it as he focuses on the immanent dimension of the other. Although his way of recognizing multiple differences reveals impotence in addressing subsumption of the other by the

same and inability to differentiate oppressive differences from oppressed differences, Badiou correctly points out the limitation of Levinas' identification of the other with divine Other, which is ignorance of immanent multiple differences of the other.

Phillip Blond discusses the danger of the identification of the other as divine Other.³⁹ Blond criticizes Levinas's view of the other focusing on Levinas's Manichaeian tinge of the Other as divine Other who negatively engages in the world. That is to say, Blond criticizes the radical dualism which can be witnessed in gnostic thought. Referring to the unavoidably opposite relationship between God and phenomenology, Blond says,

For if the deepest of these atheistic and in the end essentially Manichaeian prejudices is that God and phenomena, in order to preserve their true natures, must occur apart from and in contra-distinction to each other, then Levinas can only be seen as fulfilling to an extreme degree this deeply ingrained and deeply idolatrous opposition. However, what is remarkable and what is new in respect of this tradition is that Levinas has taken the side of God against phenomena rather than the side of phenomena against God, such that it is the phenomenal world that is erased in the name of God, instead of the more common erasure of God in the name of phenomena.⁴⁰

Put differently, while totality infringes on the other as it negates or dominates the other, according to Blond, Levinas nihilates totality for the other. Though Levinas proposes the idea of the other to prevent the other from being infringed upon by totality, he ends up allowing destruction of totality by the other. Blond says that "this situation is starting to look perilously like what Levinas has described as 'the same.'"⁴¹ In the realm of the same, a subject, by negating otherness of the other, identifies the other as the same. In the same vein, the other as divine Other, by nihilating the same, identifies the same as the other. The same has no choice but to nihilate herself, since negating herself "is a sacrifice without reserve, without holding back, and in this non-voluntary – the sacrifice of a hostage designated who has not chosen himself to be hostage, but possibly elected by the Good, in an involuntary election not assumed by the elected one."⁴² Such total negation of the same is possible because in the Levinasian concept of the other the same is evil and the other is good. In light of the Manichaeian scheme, Blond contends that Levinasian idea of the other is "obviously and necessarily violent."⁴³

Whereas there is a truth in Blond's criticism that the Levinasian idea of the other has a Manichaeian scheme, it needs to be mentioned that the other as divine Other does not have a compulsory power. Levinas

differentiates between authority and force in that regard. The other as divine Other has authority but it does not have force:

The face is not a force. It is an authority. Authority is often without force. Your question seems to be based on the idea that God commands and demands. He is extremely powerful. If you try not doing what he tells you, he will punish you. That is a very recent notion. On the contrary, the first form, the unforgettable form, in my opinion, is that, in the last analysis, he cannot do anything at all. He is not a force but an authority."⁴⁴

Responsibility for the other is far from compulsory or mandatory. Contrary to what Blond contends, the Levinasian idea of the other is neither violent nor brutal unlike the realm of the same. Blond went too far in this regard. What is important in Blond's points is that like the Manichaeian understanding of the world the realm of the same, the immanent is described negatively in Levinasian idea of the other. The negative understanding of the immanent can lead to indifference to real vulnerability of the other and make impotent the works for addressing real vulnerability of the other.

From the other to concrete others

The criticism on the Levinasian idea of the other shows the critical limitations in addressing the vulnerability of a stranger, a widow, or an orphan. To overcome critical limitations such as the other as an angelic being, the other as one unifying other, and the Manichaeian dualism tendency, I propose an idea of concrete others. The idea of concrete others emphasizes the immanent dimension of the other while keeping the transcendental dimension of the other, and the multiplicity of differences in an immanent dimension not in a transcendent dimension. The idea of concrete others also takes into account a globalizing world that produces more vulnerable others. I will, by way of an illustration, enlist others who are concretely vulnerable in a globalizing world.

The idea of concrete others attaches special importance to an immanent dimension of the vulnerable. While accepting the importance of the transcendental dimension of the vulnerable, the idea of concrete others is more concerned about the immanent dimension of the vulnerable. Whereas Levinas refuses an incarnational understanding of human beings, I contend that human beings should be understood in light of incarnation. That is to say, human beings have both the transcendental dimension and the immanent dimension without the one negating the other. Without the transcendence the immanence leads a human being to violence of the same; conversely, without the immanence the

transcendence makes a human being an indifferent angelic being. Thus, ignoring the immanent dimension of a human being is tantamount to negating her concrete existence. Without her concrete existence, her transcendental dimension becomes meaningless. In terms of Manichaeism, an incarnational understanding of human beings gives positive meaning to immanence: The world is not a place to avoid but the very place where a transcendental being exists. In light of the creation story, the world is created for human beings and human beings are called to enjoy the created world. The created world is not a place for preparing for the other world; it is the very place where human beings were created and called to live. Thus the immanent dimension is not a secondary one for a human being; rather, it is her primary dimension.

The idea of concrete others is better than the idea of the other in encompassing diverse immanent differences of the vulnerable. In light of the immanent dimension, the idea of other is incapable of covering the vulnerable, since the idea of the other is impossible to express the immanent differences of the vulnerable. The vulnerable have finite characteristics. They belong to a certain family, community, state, ethnicity, economic class, and race, to name a few. Such finite characteristics have no one common denominator; rather, there can be overlapping similarities. These finite characteristics, which are multiple identities, are important to them because their vulnerability is closely connected with their multiple identities. She is vulnerable because of her race or her family, while he is vulnerable because of his ethnicity or his national identity. These group identities are inseparable identities, some of which are given by birth. Group identity is not something that can be easily changed or replaced. An individual is characterized as, for instance, Tutsi in Rwanda, but there are others who identify themselves as Tutsi. They can be categorized as the other as Tutsi, but they have other identities such as an economic class or a political affiliation: Some of them are poor while a few of them are rich; some of them are in a group requesting radical retaliation for genocide while others prefer peaceful settlements. They have different group identities according to their political, economic, or cultural differences. Considering that there are many identities that make people vulnerable, the idea of concrete others seems to be more appropriate than the idea of the other, in designating diverse groups of the vulnerable. Concrete others are the vulnerable who have immanent different identities as well as transcendence.

Our globalizing world is another reason why the idea of concrete others rather than the other is appropriate for representing the vulnerable. A globalizing world has brought about many changes in this world. While there are various opinions on the changes, Manfred Steger points out some thematic overlap in diverse scholarly explanations on changes in a globalizing world:

First, globalization involves the creation of new and the multiplication of existing social networks and activities that increasingly overcome traditional political, economic, cultural, and geographical boundaries...The second quality of globalization is reflected in the expansion and the stretching of social relations, activities, and interdependencies...Third, globalization involves the intensification and acceleration of social exchanges and activities...Fourth, the creation, expansion, and intensification of social interconnections and interdependencies do not occur merely on an objective, material level...[P]eople [become] increasingly conscious of growing manifestations of social interdependence and the enormous acceleration of social interactions.⁴⁵

Steger asserts that an overlapping theme of globalization is social relations and activities that are being created, multiplied, expanded, stretched, intensified, and accelerated. Such lively social interaction increases and intensifies social interconnections and interdependencies among human beings. Because of increased interconnections, on the one hand, more differences are exposed than before as different races and different ethnicities are brought together beyond national and continental boundaries. Increased interconnections make visible dire situations of the vulnerable. Intensified interdependencies, on the other hand, may worsen the situation of the vulnerable, because intensified interdependencies could exacerbate a given unequal relationship between the powerless and the powerful. Both cases make diverse differences more prominent and emboss the immanent dimension of the vulnerable. Thus, the idea of the other, transcendence oriented and unifying concept is inadequate; the idea of concrete others, immanence and difference oriented concept, is adequate to designate the vulnerable in a globalizing world. A globalizing world produces the many concrete vulnerable. I broadly categorize them as economic others and political others, because economic and political dimensions of human life are crucial factors that make humans vulnerable. In the current global system, in addition, human vulnerability is evident in medical dimension and cultural dimension. Thus, I deal with economic others, medical others, cultural others, and political others.

First, there are economic others who are alienated and exploited by a global economy that is based on neoliberalism which espouses the belief that "human well-being can best be advanced" with "strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade."⁴⁶ Based on this belief, its basic doctrines are "deregulation, privatization, economic liberalization, labor flexibilization and diminished state-supported social provisions."⁴⁷

Deregulation allows foreign capital to flow without state regulations; economic liberalization with deregulation “dismantles restrictions on the flow of goods, services, and foreign investment”; privatization “puts public productive and service enterprises into the private sector, reducing state-subsidized social services and reducing public sector corporations”; and labor flexibilization provides “an abundant supply of cheap, controllable and disposable labor force.”⁴⁸

While neoliberal globalization has exacerbated the situation of the vulnerable, it does not unilaterally deteriorate the lives of the vulnerable from the beginning. For instance, poor countries need investment. Foreign direct investment (FDI) is of help to the poor countries, since with its money FDI creates jobs in those countries. The problem with FDI is that it is concerned about profits, not about workers. When FDI enters poor countries, wage premiums grow and working conditions improve; when “FDI declines, employment shares and wage differentials fall.”⁴⁹ What is worse is that when FDI withdraws from a country, it causes mass layoffs as is evident in the 1997 Asian financial crisis. Neoliberal globalization has brought some benefit to poor countries; but it is agreed among scholars that it “has increased inequality both within and between societies.”⁵⁰ In South Asia about half-a-billion people have experienced a decrease in their incomes, whereas only a few educated urbanites have made more money.⁵¹ Overseas migrations as well as regional migrations are increasing in number because of the economic deprivation caused by globalization.⁵² For instance, local Mexican farmers abandoned their land and headed cities and 44% of Mexican migrants to the U.S. are those who live in the countryside.⁵³ The migrant workers are located “mostly in the lower rank of the occupational ladder.”⁵⁴ Not only countries of the South (poor countries) but also Northern countries are experiencing intensified inequalities. The top 5 percent of the U.S. population had more than 55 percent of the total wealth of the U.S. while its bottom 50 percent had 2.8 percent of the wealth.⁵⁵ For more than 10 years, the number of people in poverty in the United States has increased continuously: In 2010, the official poverty rate was 15.1 percent and the number of people in poverty reached 46.2 million.⁵⁶ Using sub-national studies of five countries, Uganda, Peru, Kenya, India, and the United States, Anirudh Krishna concludes that “the risk of impoverishment has increased in recent years” and “vulnerability is consistently on the rise.”⁵⁷ The poor are vulnerable in terms of security and the insecurity perpetuates their poverty.⁵⁸ Insecurity and poverty create a vicious cycle.

Second, medical others are produced as economic others are unable to pay and follow medical treatment. The six million deaths of the Holocaust are remembered as a should-not-be-repeated tragedy in human history. Still, the public has no interest in the fact that more than twelve million people die every year because of insufficient medical treatment.

Among the victims are half a million women who die in childbirth, almost exclusively poor women.⁵⁹

An absolute majority of these premature deaths occur in Africa, with the poorer regions of Asia not far behind. Most of these deaths occur because the world's poorest do not have access to the fruits of science. They include deaths from vaccine preventable illness; deaths during childbirth; deaths from infectious diseases that might be cured with access to antibiotics and other essential medicines; death from malaria that would have been prevented by bed nets and access to therapy; and deaths from water-borne illnesses.⁶⁰

Even though science achieved over 95 percent cure rates of tuberculosis, for instance, millions of tuberculosis deaths “occur almost exclusively among the poor.”⁶¹ Paul Farmer finds that economic factors strongly affect “initial exposure to infection, reactivation of quiescent tuberculosis, transmission to household members, access to diagnosis and therapy, length of convalescence, development of drug resistance, degree of lung destruction, and most of all, mortality.”⁶² He thus concludes that diseases such as HIV and tuberculosis have displayed a “preferential option for the poor.”⁶³

While the poor are the medical others, because of medical expenses people become poor and impoverished. Based on a 2005 statistic in the United States, “every thirty seconds, someone files a bankruptcy in the aftermath of a serious health problem.”⁶⁴ One out of five bankrupt families went without food and a third of them had their utilities shut off.⁶⁵ In 2005 half of bankruptcy was caused by medical expenses but it went up to 62.1 percent in 2007.⁶⁶ In developing countries, on the other hand, the poor become unhealthier and poorer as they use drugs without proper prescriptions because they are unable to pay for professional health services. They use drugs sold by private drug vendors who “are often unqualified, frequently do not follow prescribing regulations” and thereby “waste scarce financial resources” using drugs unhealthily and irrationally.⁶⁷

While the economic others are innately the medical others, neoliberal globalization has exacerbated their medical vulnerability. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have pushed poor countries to reduce social expenditures in health in order to induce foreign capital, believing that more development brings health improvement. Contrary to their expectation, the poor become more vulnerable as “health-sector spending in many poor countries channeled a majority of resources toward city hospitals that served mostly elites who were able to pay.”⁶⁸ In addition, there are medical “brain drains” in poor

countries. In Ghana, for instance, “72 percent of all clinics and hospitals were unable to provide the full range of expected services due to lack of sufficient personnel.”⁶⁹ What exacerbates the problem is the phenomenon that “health professionals from poor countries worldwide are increasingly abandoning their homes and their professions to take menial jobs in wealthy countries.”⁷⁰ Because of medical brain drains coupled with the absence of medicines and tools, health-care workers regard them as “hospice and mortuary workers [rather] than healers.”⁷¹ A globalizing world makes medical others more vulnerable.

Third, cultural others are evident in a globalizing world. A globalizing world is equated with multiculturalism. The world becomes multicultural “as a result of the mobility of people or by growing political recognition of groups hitherto marginalized.”⁷² In a multicultural world, there are two ways that make people cultural others. On the one hand, while cultural others are recognized and represented by global media and global corporations, they have no substantial representation or recognition. That is to say, their economic status has not been improved. There are fewer opportunities for minority groups and community groups.⁷³ In addition, cultural others who are poor have limited access to information owing to lack of electricity and communication technologies, and have limited amounts of available information as global media corporations gather, select, and distribute information for their benefit, not for the poor.⁷⁴ In this light, images of cultural others are accepted but cultural others themselves are ignored. On the other hand, their very cultural identities are ignored and negated. Their languages, religions, or appearances are challenged by mainstream cultures. It is said that “[a]bout 513 million people face restrictions on religion, language, ceremonies, and appearance.”⁷⁵ While there are more than 6000 languages spoken today, 90 percent of them are going to disappear in 100 years: “in sub-Saharan Africa, only 13 percent of children in primary school receive instruction in their mother tongue.”⁷⁶ Considering the intimate relationship between languages and cultures, forgotten languages are tantamount to forgetting cultural differences. In a multicultural world, in addition, cultural and racial conflicts abound in both rich countries and poor countries. Among rich countries, England and France, well-established multicultural states, on the one hand, reveal discrimination against immigrants from different cultures as they are emphasizing either Britishness or Republicanism, respectively.⁷⁷ On the other hand, acute racial and cultural conflicts in poor countries are evident: for instance, out of eighty two armed conflicts seventy nine conflicts are inter-ethnic and inter-communal conflicts in the world between 1989 through 1992.⁷⁸

Fourth, political others are notable with the widening inequality of political power between poor countries and rich countries, and between the poor and the rich within each country. Powerful countries such as the United States exert undue influence on global affairs.⁷⁹ In the United

Nations Security Council, some powerful countries have the right to veto, which the majority of nation-states in the U.N. do not have. They oligopolize the power to make life-or-death decisions for the powerless countries. In the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, for example, the U.S. did not allow military intervention by the U.N. even when the intervention was urgently needed.⁸⁰ As another example, the U.S. declared to veto Palestine's bid for state, asking for a peace agreement between Israel and Palestine although knowing that they have never achieved any agreement.⁸¹ The present structure of the Security Council is unable to address political others, Peter Singer asserts, since "the institutions of global governance are dominated by the wealthiest and most powerful states."⁸²

In the case of the IMF whose decisions "affect the lives and livelihoods of billions throughout the developing world," there is no place for workers in the decision making process: "The workers who are thrown out of jobs as a result of the IMF programs have no seat at the table; while the bankers, who insist on getting repaid, are well represented through the finance ministers and central bank governors. The consequences for policy have been predictable: bailout packages which pay more attention to getting creditors repaid than to maintaining the economy at full employment."⁸³ Within individual nations, the rich have more political power than the poor. In the globalizing world, private interests are inserted in public policymaking in such a way as to strengthen "its representation as neutral and technical" and "the market as a superior ordering from that of governments."⁸⁴ Considering that the domain of the public is "a buffer against the vagaries of the market and the inequalities of the class system,"⁸⁵ the superiority of private interests over the governments is tantamount to a political death sentence for the poor. One example of demonstrating the political power of the rich is the tax reduction for the wealthy by silently legislating "the massive estate-tax break."⁸⁶ Another example is the policy "privileging low inflation over job growth."⁸⁷ With the policy, the wealthy can prevent their capital from devaluation but unemployment is unavoidable to the poor. Similar to the poor, immigrants are unauthorized people who are present "without power and a politics that claims rights."⁸⁸ Immigrants, specifically, undocumented immigrants, are working under harsh conditions. But, they do not have political rights to redress their dire situation.

In a nutshell, the vulnerable in a globalizing world exist as economic others, medical others, cultural others, and political others, to name a few. Concrete others "do not have a right to the resources that make life possible; in other words, they do not have the right to exist."⁸⁹ In a globalizing world, "the traditional distinctions between the economic, the political, the social, and the cultural become increasingly blurred."⁹⁰ Basically, concrete others are economic others who suffer medical, cultural, and political destitution. However, it does not mean that the

vulnerable are equated exclusively with the economic others. A globalizing world produces others whose vulnerability is related mainly-but-not-exclusively to economic destitution and partly-but-still-seriously to cultural and political destitution.

An ethics of concrete others

In order to address such diverse vulnerabilities of concrete others, I propose an ethics of concrete others. Though based on Levinasian ethics of the other, an ethics of concrete others is different in important ways. While Levinasian ethics has trouble in considering concrete differences of others, an ethics of concrete others takes the concrete differences into consideration. That is, an ethics of concrete others pays special attention to economic, medical, cultural, and political vulnerabilities. In developing an ethics of equality that substantially promotes difference, I will engage in discussion with ethics of the multitude, ethics of *différance*, and ethics of equality and difference.

When it comes to concrete others who are economically, medically, culturally, and politically alienated and exploited, the question is raised whether they are just collective individuals or undifferentiated unity. This question is important in that how to frame concrete others determines how to address the vulnerability. Hardt and Negri propose the concept of the multitude to frame the vulnerable. I call their way an ethics of the multitude. Since their ethics is closely related to their definition of the multitude, I am going to delve into the concept of the multitude.

An ethics of the multitude

In defining the multitude, Hardt and Negri reject choosing an alternative between unity and multiplicity. They contend that the multitude is not an undifferentiated unity, comparing it with people and the working class. On the one hand, the multitude is different from people. While being “composed of numerous different individuals and classes,” the people as a group converts “social differences into one identity.”⁹¹ The people has unity. Quite contrarily, the multitude “is composed of a set of singularities” “whose difference cannot be reduced to sameness, a difference that remains different.”⁹² While the concept of the people denotes the undifferentiated unity, the multitude signifies the plural singularities. According to Hardt and Negri, the concept of the multitude refuses undifferentiated sameness among different individuals and classes. Its basis is not unity or identity but “what the singularities share in common.”⁹³ The multitude is socio-economically “the common subject of labor, that is, the real flesh of postmodern production, and at the same time the object from which collective capital tries to make the body of its global development.”⁹⁴ What they have in common is that they are “all

those who work under the rule of capital and potentially as the class of those who refuse the rule of capital.”⁹⁵ On the other hand, the multitude is different from the working class. The working class “excludes the various unwaged classes” pointing out differences between “male industrial labor and female reproductive labor, between industrial labor and peasant labor, between the employed and the unemployed, between workers and the poor.”⁹⁶ Unlike the concept of the working class which denies the importance of other classes of labor, the multitude implies that “all forms of labor are today socially productive, they produce in common.”⁹⁷ Compared to the concept of the working class, the multitude is an inclusive and expansive concept—that includes all who engage in all forms of labor. Thus the multitude is neither an undifferentiated unity like the people nor a specific class like the working class. It is a set of singularities sharing in common.

What is “the common” which the multitude shares? Hardt and Negri contend that what the multitude produces is the common, since the multitude—whether they are the poor, the unemployed, the partially employed, or the migrants—participates in social production, “cooperating in the networks of the multitude, that is, the common.”⁹⁸ At a glance, it is difficult to understand the difference between producing the common and sharing the common. They explain such a complicated relation of the common to the multitude in this way:

What it produces, in fact, is common, and the common we share serves as the basis for future production, in a spiral, expansive relationship. This is perhaps most easily understood in terms of the example of communication as production: we can communicate only on the basis of languages, symbols, ideas, and relationships we share in common, and in turn the results of our communication are new common languages, symbols, ideas, and relationships. Today this dual relationship between production and the common—the common is produced and it is also productive—is key to understanding all social and economic activity.⁹⁹

The common which the multitude produces and shares is the basis of social and economic activity. The common as social and economic activity is connected to the pragmatic notion of habit. According to the pragmatic notion of habit, it “is the common in practice: the common that we continually produce and the common that serves as the basis for our actions.”¹⁰⁰ In this way, habits “are produced and reproduced in interaction and communication with others. Habits are thus never really individual or personal. Individual habits, conduct, and subjectivity only

arise on the basis of social conduct, communication, acting in common. Habits constitute our social nature."¹⁰¹ The common shaped by habit is the core factor that shapes the multitude. Based on the produced and shared common, the multitude is different from a mere gathering of people, a unified people, or the working class.

Considering the concept of the multitude anchored in the common, however, it is unclear whether Hardt and Negri contend that the multitude is neither an undifferentiated unity nor plural collectivities. The common as social nature shaped by habit is the crucial factor that differentiates race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. Put differently, the common as social nature is the dividing line among race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. The common thus separates the multitude into diverse social groups rather than incorporates diverse groups into the multitude. This is a challenge to the concept of the multitude since at first Hardt and Negri included in their concept of the multitude not just economic class but also social classes of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. If the common cannot be a foundation for the multitude to include different races, ethnicities, genders, and sexualities, the multitude becomes a mere gathering of people such as the crowd and the mass. The multitude is then just plural collectivities. On the other hand, they frame human beings as workers, or at least, producers. All human beings are characterized as workers whether they are reproductive workers, the unemployed, or the poor. In this case, the common seems to be the fact that they are all workers. In this sense, the multitude is an extended and expanded working class. If the multitude is an extended working class, it becomes an undifferentiated unity. The common thus shows that Hardt and Negri are still leaning toward an economic dimension of human beings and they pay secondary attention to the political, social and cultural differences.

An ethics of the multitude shows that it is based thoroughly on the economic dimension of vulnerability. But, others are not just poor. While political, social, medical, cultural alienation can be caused by destitution, it does not mean that poverty is its only cause or its removal is its unique solution. Alleviating poverty can address much of the existing political, cultural, and social alienation; but some political, social, and cultural dimensions are beyond economic destitution: some differences of others such as ethnic or religious identities are more important than their economic destitution or even their life itself. That is to say, some try to keep their ethnic or religious identities at the expense of their economic well-being or their very lives. Such differences are not considered in the ethics of the multitude.

An ethics of différence

Unlike the ethics of the multitude, another ethics is seriously concerned about differences. I call it an ethics of *différance*, which is based on Jacques Derrida's view on differences. Derrida considers seriously the differences of others. When he criticizes Levinas, Derrida points out the Levinasian ignorance of alter ego as the other. "The other as alter ego signifies the other as other, irreducible to my ego, precisely because it is an ego, because it has the form of the ego. The egoity of the other permits him to say 'ego' as I do; and this is why he is Other, and not a stone, or a being without speech in my real economy. This is why, if you will, he is face, can speak to me, understand me, and eventually command me."¹⁰² Difference of the other as alter ego is the point of protection for Derrida.

Derrida's dilemma begins with his exclusive emphasis on the uniqueness of the immanent alterity of the other. When one respects the immanent alterity of the other, he is faced with two problems. On the one hand, when he emphasizes exclusively the immanent alterity saying that the other is radically foreign thus enhancing the alterity to transcendental one, he comes to ignore the concrete other as alter ego. On the other hand, at the very moment when the alterity of the other is identified as a knowledge, the alterity loses its radical foreignness: "we are also unable to encounter the other as radically foreign. The other is always to some extent understood by my horizon of expectation."¹⁰³ Encountering the dilemma, he proposes the concept of *différance*, with which he can delay the process of respecting differences of others while taking differences of others seriously into consideration.¹⁰⁴ His concept of undecidability emerges from *différance*, oscillation between postponement in identification of alterity and command of alterity. Undecidability does not mean that one is unable to decide whether to respect differences of others. It rather shows that respecting the differences of others is fundamental to him.

While his concern for respecting differences of others is acknowledgeable, his concept of *différance* is criticized by some scholars. Two extreme cases are David Hirsch and Somer Brodribb. David Hirsch criticizes that with the concept of undecidability Derrida and his deconstructionists "carried the self-deceptions and the moral ambiguities and duplicities of the Nazi occupation over into the post-war period and misled their readers by insisting that their nihilism was the result of rigorous philosophical deliberation instead of the residue of historical exhausting and moral shame."¹⁰⁵ Hirsch's criticism is understandable if the focus of discussion is on the practicality of respecting differences. Especially, when talking about others rather than the other, the issue is more evident:

There are also others, an infinite number of them, the innumerable generality of others to whom I should be bound by the same responsibility, a general and universal responsibility (what

Kierkegaard calls the ethical order). I cannot respond to the call, the request, the obligation, or even the love of another without sacrificing the other other, the other others. Every other (one) is every (bit) other [tout autre est tout autre], every one else is completely or wholly other. The simple concepts of alterity and of singularity constitute the concept of duty as much as that of responsibility. As a result, the concepts of responsibility, of decision, or of duty, are condemned a priori to paradox, scandal, and aporia.¹⁰⁶

Paradox, scandal, and aporia are unavoidable in respecting the differences of others. That is why *différance* and undecidability are required in respecting differences of others. While admitting the unavoidable paradox, scandal, and aporia in respecting differences of others, Derridean discourse such as *différance* and undecidability reveals ambiguity and obscurity. Such ambiguity and obscurity might justify injustice done to the Jews in Germany as Hirsch mentioned above. Somber Brodribb, from a feminist perspective, criticizes harshly Derridean undecidability. Referring to a Derrida's remark, "I am not against feminism, but I am not simply for feminism," she asserts that deconstruction and undecidability mean "never having to say you're wrong. Or a feminist....Deconstruction hopes to endlessly defer feminism."¹⁰⁷ Her criticism is acceptable if Derrida's undecidability and deconstruction are unrelated to protecting differences. But Derrida insists, "Deconstruction is justice."¹⁰⁸ He also clarifies that incalculable and unrepresentable justice, which is the experience of absolute alterity, commands calculation.¹⁰⁹ Further, he says, "this overflowing of the unrepresentable over the determinable, cannot and should not serve as an alibi for staying out of juridico-political battles."¹¹⁰ In addition, ambiguity and obscurity resulting from the fact that justice is unrepresentable are crucial for protecting the differences of others.

Robert Manning emphasizes the importance of ambiguity and obscurity of *différance* in working toward protecting the differences of others.¹¹¹ Undecidability does not mean taking no position. Rather, undecidability accentuates carefulness in taking a position. In *Positions*, Derrida says, "Deconstruction...is not neutral. It intervenes...there is no effective and efficient position, no veritable force of rupture without a minute, rigorous and extended analysis."¹¹² Before taking a position, Derrida is careful in designating the best decision for a given issue, analyzing "the greatest number of possible givens, and of the most diverse givens."¹¹³ Considering Derrida's emphasis on maximum analysis of a given issue, Manning persuasively suggests that Derridean undecidability is for a "continual opening and deepening of thought":

What Derrida's text produces is not simply agreement or disagreement but thought, thought extremely careful, respectful, and concerned about what it might mean to do justice to the issues and the people involved. "the way Derrida takes stands is by opening thought up rather than closing it down. Derrida's better way of taking a position involves keeping the conversation going and continually enriching it with thoughtful possibilities rather than bringing it to an end."¹¹⁴

As a better and different way of protecting differences, Derrida proposes undecidability which is far from negating justice or conniving at injustice; instead, it invites people to working together toward protecting and promoting differences. In this vein, there is no doubt that an ethics of *différance* is a careful and respectful way of protecting and promoting differences.

While an ethics of *différance* can do better in protecting and promoting the differences of others than an ethics of the other and an ethics of the multitude, it has limitations. Walter Mignolo criticizes Derridean *différance* in that it is impossible to reveal colonial differences. Mignolo points out that "a knowing subject was possible beyond the subject of knowledge postulated by the very concept of rationality put in place by modern epistemology."¹¹⁵ Differences are at best abstract differences recognized by rational subjects. This criticism might advocate Derrida's position of *différance* and undecidability as he is very careful in deciding what difference is. But, when Mignolo identifies modernity with colonialism, Derrida's limitation is visible: he reveals insensitivity to a given colonial difference.¹¹⁶ On the one hand, the limitation comes from a dissymmetric relationship between a country of colonizing history and one of colonized history. For instance, between French and Arabic, there is a risk of regarding "translating French into Arabic as importation of knowledge and Arabic into French as exportation of an 'Oriental' exotic community."¹¹⁷ In this case, two different knowledges are juxtaposed as if there is no dissymmetry since the two different knowledges are translated. In reality, however, the Arabic knowledge has a dissymmetric relationship with the French knowledge. Such a dissymmetric relationship can be easily ignored when every difference has the same importance.

On the other hand, the limitation of Derridean *différance* arises from Derrida's view that "[a]ll culture is originally colonial"¹¹⁸ or that "I resist this movement that tends towards a narcissism of minorities that is developing everywhere."¹¹⁹ Based on this view, Derridean difference is not concrete enough in that he does not differentiate the culture of colonies from European culture and the survival of minorities from their narcissism. Derrida is correct in saying that every culture has coloniality but he fails to notice the coloniality of the modern/colonial world system,

the history of colonialism. Every culture is prone to be colonial, but it neither justifies nor hides the history of Western colonialism which has silenced or trivialized the differences of the colonized. In the same vein, every minority is apt to express narcissistic or egoistic tendencies, but it neither nihilates nor negates the history of discrimination and ostracism of minorities. Derrida is successful in accentuating irreducible differences, but in so doing he is unable to accept colonial differences that have been ignored, neglected, or negated. Without acknowledging, respecting, and promoting colonial differences, others are not able to be themselves where they are present. Only when acknowledging colonial differences and discriminated differences is one “always able to be where one belongs.”¹²⁰

While an ethics of *différance* tries to respect and protect differences of others, it has limitations in that it deals with differences abstractly and accordingly it shows hesitation in acknowledging and promoting concrete differences such as colonial differences.

An ethics of equality and difference

To overcome limitations of the ethics of *différance*; that is, in order for one to be able to be where one belongs, colonial differences should have priority over hegemonic differences. However, the priority of colonial differences over hegemonic differences has a problem. Since every culture is originally colonial, the priority of colonial differences over hegemonic differences will end up replacing old colonial structures: it is just the reverse of the oppressive structure of the other and the same. This dilemma requests a criterion which prevents the endless violent cycle between the same and the other. Mignolo introduces a double critique to prevent such an endless violent cycle: the double critique is “(1) a decolonizing deconstruction...of Western logo- and ethnocentrism that has been exported all over the planet, and that will complement a postmodern deconstruction à la Derrida or in the form of Foucault’s archaeology or Nietzsche’s genealogy; and (2) a criticism...of the knowledges and discourses produced by the different societies of the [Third] world.”¹²¹ That is, the double critique criticizes both hegemonic and colonial differences. Using the double critique one can deconstruct hegemonic differences and also prevent colonial differences from becoming hegemonic. The priority of colonial over hegemonic differences based on the double critique is an ethics of equality and differences.

In the ethics of equality and differences, there is a question of the criterion with which one distinguishes colonial from hegemonic differences. At what point does a colonial difference become hegemonic? To what extent is a colonial difference protected and promoted? Mignolo’s criterion is that “people and communities have the right to be different precisely because we are all equals.”¹²² Because all human beings are equal,

everyone has the right to be different; that is, the right to be herself where she is. Considering his view that the colonized were not able to be themselves where they were, his dictum criticizes both the inequality and ignorance of differences. Differences were not recognized because they were thought to be unequal. For one to be able to be oneself where one is, thus, both difference and equality need to be considered together. A more concrete form of a criterion, presented by Boaventura de Sousa Santos, is the equal priority between “the principle of equality and the principle of respect for difference.”¹²³ In the equal priority, the principle of respect for difference should not override the principle of equality; the principle of equality should not overrule the principle of respect for difference. It means that “people have the right to be equal whenever difference makes them inferior, but they also have the right to be different whenever equality jeopardizes their identity.”¹²⁴ The equal priority of two principles means that one principle must “open space for the other principle”¹²⁵ rather than both principles being strictly observed equally.

An ethics of equality substantially promoting difference

While an ethics of equality and difference provides a boundary within which we can promote both equality and difference of concrete others, it provides only an adumbrative criterion. It is correct that an ethics of equality and difference excludes two cases of interaction between difference and equality: One is the case in which promoting difference leads to inequality; the other is the case in which promoting equality results in negating difference. Within the adumbrative boundary of promoting equality and difference, I propose an ethics of equality substantially promoting difference. It rejects both maximization of difference that leads to inequality and maximization of equality that causes negating difference. Instead, it attempts to find ways in which equality can substantially promote difference of concrete others.

An ethics of equality substantially promoting difference emphasizes the importance of equality in promoting difference. Though acknowledging that there are cases in which promoting equality is detrimental to protecting difference, I contend that equality is essential in promoting difference, specifically, difference of concrete others. For instance, major impediments to the promotion of individual difference are economic destitution, deprivation of equal educational opportunity, and/or a shortage of appropriate medical service. Those who are suffering from economic destitution have no time to spend developing their differences. Those who are without educational opportunity have difficulties in recognizing and developing their differences. Those who are ill tend to squander their fortune on recovering their health to the extent that even their family members sink into desperate poverty, which makes promoting difference

impossible. For concrete others, equality is essential for promoting difference.

Conclusion

In this article, I have developed the concept of concrete others and an ethics of concrete others with relation to globalization. The concept of concrete others is based on the Levinasian concept of the other in that it accepts the transcendental dimension of others; however, the concept of concrete others is different from the concept of the other because it emphasizes immanent dimensions of human beings and their multiple differences. Because of such emphasis on immanent dimensions of human beings and a globalizing world which makes different vulnerabilities more visible, I contend that the vulnerable need to be framed as concrete others rather than the other. There are different ethics which try to address vulnerabilities of concrete others. An ethics of the multitude betrays its exclusive concern for the economic dimension of the vulnerable while it shows little attention to cultural and political vulnerabilities of others. An ethics of *différance*, although its emphasis is on concrete difference, reveals its limitation in respecting differences of concrete others as it hesitates to acknowledge colonial differences. It also betrays limitations in recognizing and addressing inequality behind diverse differences of the vulnerable. Both ethical approaches can address vulnerabilities of concrete others partially. An ethics of equality and difference, equal priority of equality and difference, can address the limitations of an ethics of the multitude and an ethics of *différance*. An ethics of equality and difference, attempts to address the vulnerabilities of others by promoting their differences and equality together. I slightly revise it and propose an ethics of equality substantially promoting difference. I emphasize the importance of equality in promoting difference of concrete others. An ethics of concrete others, which emphasizes both transcendental dimension and immanent dimension of concrete others, promotes both difference and equality of concrete others through equality that is substantially conducive to protection and promotion of difference.

Notes

¹ This article is a significantly edited version of a portion of my doctoral dissertation, "Rights of Concrete Others: Ethics of Concrete Others, Social Individuality, and Social Multiculturalism" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate University, 2012).

² David Ingram, *Group Rights: Reconciling Equality and Difference* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 36.

³ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 15.

⁴ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 40.

- ⁵ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 196.
- ⁶ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 22.
- ⁷ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 23.
- ⁸ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 290.
- ⁹ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 290.
- ¹⁰ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Time and the Other and Additional Essays* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1987), 87-88.: "the other bears alterity as an essence."
- ¹¹ Dwight Furrow, *Against Theory: Continental and Analytic Challenges in Moral Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 146.
- ¹² Furrow, *Against Theory*, 148.
- ¹³ Lévinas, *Time and the Other and Additional Essays*, 88, 90.
- ¹⁴ Emmanuel Lévinas and Philippe Nemo, *Ethics and Infinity*, 1st ed. (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 70.
- ¹⁵ Lévinas, *Time and the Other and Additional Essays*, 70, 71.
- ¹⁶ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 170.
- ¹⁷ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 194.
- ¹⁸ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 25.
- ¹⁹ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 25.
- ²⁰ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 195-96.
- ²¹ Howard Caygill, *Levinas and the Political* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 123.
- ²² Lévinas and Nemo, *Ethics and Infinity*, 92.
- ²³ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 79.
- ²⁴ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 78-79.
- ²⁵ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 40.
- ²⁶ Anselm Kyongsuk Min, *The Solidarity of Others in a Divided World: A Postmodern Theology after Postmodernism* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 13-14.
- ²⁷ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 79.
- ²⁸ Diane Perpich, "Levinas, Feminism, and Identity Politics," in *Radicalizing Levinas*, ed. Peter Atterton and Matthew Calarco (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 34.
- ²⁹ Min, *The Solidarity of Others in a Divided World*, 14.
- ³⁰ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Otherwise Than Being, or, Beyond Essence* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 159.
- ³¹ Lévinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 159.
- ³² Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2006), 144.
- ³³ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 242.
- ³⁴ Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (New York: Verso, 2001), 21-22.
- ³⁵ Badiou, 22.
- ³⁶ Badiou, 25.
- ³⁷ Badiou, 28.
- ³⁸ Badiou, 27.
- ³⁹ In his book, *The Gift of Death*, Jacques Derrida refers to an ethical impasse when the other is identified with the Other through the example of Abraham's attempt to kill his son. See Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 53-81. The ethical impasse will be dealt with later. Here, I focus on the issue of dualism that identification of the other with divine invokes.

⁴⁰ Phillip Blond, "Emmanuel Levinas: God and Phenomenology," in *Post-Secular Philosophy: Between Philosophy and Theology*, ed. Phillip Blond (New York: Routledge, 1998), 215-16..

⁴¹ Blond, 217.

⁴² Lévinas, *Otherwise Than Being, or, Beyond Essence*, 15.

⁴³ Blond, "Emmanuel Levinas," 217.

⁴⁴ Robert Bernasconi and David Wood, *The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 169.

⁴⁵ Manfred B. Steger, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 9-12.

⁴⁶ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.

⁴⁷ Ligaya Lindio-McGovern and Isidor Wallimann, "Neoliberal Globalization and Third World Women: Exploitation, Coping and Resistance," in *Globalization and Third World Women : Exploitation, Coping and Resistance*, ed. Ligaya Lindio-McGovern and Isidor Wallimann (Farnham, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub., 2009), 2.

⁴⁸ Lindio-McGovern and Wallimann, "Neoliberal Globalization and Third World Women," 2.

⁴⁹ Raymond Robertson and World Bank., *Globalization, Wages, and the Quality of Jobs : Five Country Studies* (Washington D.C.: World Bank, 2009), 8.

⁵⁰ David Held, *A Globalizing World?: Culture, Economics, Politics*, 2nd ed. ed. (London: Routledge in association with the Open University, 2004), 98-99; Bryan S. Turner and Habibul Haque Khondker, *Globalization: East and West* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2010), 10.

⁵¹ Held, 99.

⁵² Held, 101. Hardt and Negri shows how global economy mass-produces migrant workers. See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2005), 133-34. There are in 2005 about 200 million international migrants, roughly the equivalent of the population of Brazil, the fifth largest country of the world, up from 150 million in 2000, 120 million in 1990, 105 million in 1985, 84 million in 1975, and 75 million in 1965.

⁵³ Elisabeth Malkin, "After 15 Years, Nafta's Promise Still Unfulfilled in Mexico," *New York Times on the Web* (March 23, 2009).

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/24/business/worldbusiness/24peso.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed October 31, 2016).

⁵⁴ Lindio-McGovern and Wallimann, "Neoliberal Globalization and Third World Women," 4.

⁵⁵ See table 10 in Arthur B. Kennickell, "A Rolling Tide: Changes in the Distribution of Wealth in the U.S., 1989-2001," (2003).

<http://www.federalreserve.gov/pubs/oss/oss2/papers/concentration.2001.10.pdf> (accessed November 5, 2016). See also table 15, "Inequality in income or expenditure": United Nations Development Programme., *Human Development Report 2006* (Basingstoke ; New York,: Palgrave Macmillan, Published for the United Nations Development Programme, 2006), 335-338. The richest 10% took 29.9% of total U.S. income while the poorest 10% took 1.9% of the total income in 2000.

⁵⁶ Carmen DeNavas-Walt, Bernadette D. Prctor, and Jessica C. Smith, "Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2010," *Current Population Reports*, P60-239 (2011). <http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/p60-239.pdf> (accessed October 31, 2016).

⁵⁷ Anirudh Krishna, "Are More People Becoming Vulnerable to Poverty? Evidence from Grassroots Investigations in Five Counties," in *Globalization and Emerging Societies: Development and Inequality*, ed. Jan Nederveen Pieterse and Boike Rehbein (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 77.

⁵⁸ "Poor neighbourhoods suffer from high rates of violent crime. Poor people often lack legal security in relation to their home, possessions and livelihood, and social security that would promise some minimal protection in the event of illness, crop failure, or unemployment." Irene Khan, *The Unheard Truth: Poverty and Human Rights*, ed. David Petrasek (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009), 9.

⁵⁹ Paul Farmer, "Challenging Orthodoxies: The Road Ahead for Health and Human Rights," *Health and Human Rights* 10, no. 1 (2008): 9.

⁶⁰ Jim Young Kim and Paul Farmer, "Global Issues in Medicine," in *Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine*, ed. Anthony S. Fauci (New York: McGraw-Hill Medical, 2008), 15.

⁶¹ Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 147.

⁶² Farmer, *Pathologies of Power*, 151.

⁶³ Farmer, *Pathologies of Power*, 140.

⁶⁴ Elizabeth Warren, "Sick and Broke," *Washington Post on the Web* (February 9, 2005). <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A9447-2005Feb8.html> (accessed October 31, 2016).

⁶⁵ Warren, "Sick and Broke."

⁶⁶ David U. Himmelstein et al., "Medical Bankruptcy in the United States, 2007: Results of a National Study," *The American Journal of Medicine* 122, no. 8 (2009): 742.

⁶⁷ Margaret Whitehead, Göran Dahlgren, and Timothy Evans, "Equity and Health Sector Reforms: Can Low-Income Countries Escape the Medical Poverty Trap?," *Lancet* 358, no. 9284 (2001): 833-35.

⁶⁸ Kim and Farmer, "Global Issues in Medicine," 8.

⁶⁹ Laurie Garrett, "The Challenge of Global Health," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 1 (2007): 26.

⁷⁰ Garrett, 28.

⁷¹ Garrett, 28.

⁷² Turner and Khondker, *Globalization: East and West*, 175.

⁷³ Naomi Klein, *No Logo: No Space, No Choice, No Jobs*, 10th anniversary ed. (New York: Picador, 2010), 122.

⁷⁴ Held, *A Globalizing World?*, 57, 61; Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 2002), x-xi. Stiglitz calls it "asymmetries of information."

⁷⁵ Peter M. Haas, John A. Hird, and Beth McBratney, *Controversies in Globalization: Contending Approaches to International Relations* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2010), 338.

⁷⁶ Haas, Hird, and McBratney, 338.

⁷⁷ Rose Capdevila and Jane Callaghan, "It's Not Racist, It's Common Sense: A Critical Analysis of Political Discourse around Asylum and Immigration in the UK," *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology* 18, no. 1 (2008): 1-16; Susan Ossman and Susan Terrio, "The French Riots: Questioning Spaces of Surveillance and Sovereignty," *International Migration* 44, no. 2 (2006): 5-21.

⁷⁸ UNESCO, "The Twenty-First Century: Towards the Identification of Some Main Trends" www.unesco.org/webworld/taskforce21/documents/binde_en.rtf

(accessed October 31, 2016).: “we have seen a rise in the number of infra-State confrontations and inter-ethnic or inter-communal conflicts, which now represent the type of conflict *par excellence* at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Thus, out of the 82 armed conflicts recorded between 1989 and 1992, only three were between States.”

⁷⁹ Held, 153.

⁸⁰ Michael N. Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 130-152.

⁸¹ Helene Cooper, “Obama Explains Opposition to Palestinian Statehood Bid,” *New York Times on the Web* (September 21, 2011).

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/22/world/obama-united-nations-speech.html?_r=1&scp=3&sq=palestine%20statehood&st=cse (accessed October 31, 2016).

⁸² Peter Singer, *One World: The Ethics of Globalization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 146.

⁸³ Stiglitz, 225.

⁸⁴ Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006), 186.

⁸⁵ Sassen, 285.

⁸⁶ Karen Hube, “The Tax Law That Could Make Your Grandchildren Super-Rich,” *The Washington Post on the Web* (June 25 2011).

http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/the-tax-law-that-could-make-your-kids-super-rich/2011/06/20/AG2DosKH_story.html (accessed October 31, 2016).

⁸⁷ Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights*, 233.

⁸⁸ Sassen, 294, 315.

⁸⁹ Néstor Míguez, Joerg Rieger, and Jung Mo Sung, *Beyond the Spirit of Empire: Theology and Politics in a New Key* (London: SCM, 2009), 12.

⁹⁰ Hardt and Negri, 109.

⁹¹ Hardt and Negri, 99.

⁹² Hardt and Negri, 99.

⁹³ Hardt and Negri, 100.

⁹⁴ Hardt and Negri, 101.

⁹⁵ Hardt and Negri, 106.

⁹⁶ Hardt and Negri, 106.

⁹⁷ Hardt and Negri, 106-7.

⁹⁸ Hardt and Negri, 135.

⁹⁹ Hardt and Negri, 197.

¹⁰⁰ Hardt and Negri, 197.

¹⁰¹ Hardt and Negri, 197.

¹⁰² Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 125-126.

¹⁰³ Penelope Deutscher, *How to Read Derrida*, 1st American ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 73.

¹⁰⁴ Jacques Derrida, “Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility: A Dialogue with Jacques Derrida,” in *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, ed. Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley (London: Routledge, 1999), 77.

¹⁰⁵ David Hirsch, *The Deconstruction of Literature* (Hanover, NH: Brown University Press, 1991), 129.

¹⁰⁶ Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 68.

- ¹⁰⁷ Somer Brodribb, *Nothing Matters* (North Melbourne, Australia: Spinfex Press, 1992), 9. Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit, Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 228.
- ¹⁰⁸ Derrida, "Force of Law," in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002), 243.
- ¹⁰⁹ Derrida, "Force of Law," 257.
- ¹¹⁰ Derrida, "Force of Law," 257.
- ¹¹¹ Robert J. S. Manning, "Openings: Derrida, Différance, and the Production of Justice," *Philosophy Today* 40. no. 3 (1996): 405.
- ¹¹² Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 93-94.
- ¹¹³ Derrida, *Positions*, 94.
- ¹¹⁴ Manning, "Openings," 416, 415.
- ¹¹⁵ Walter Dignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 60.
- ¹¹⁶ Dignolo, 50.
- ¹¹⁷ Dignolo, 74.
- ¹¹⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other, or, the Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 39.
- ¹¹⁹ Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Roudinesco, *For What Tomorrow: A Dialogue*, trans. Jeff Fort (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004), 21.
- ¹²⁰ Dignolo, 334.
- ¹²¹ Dignolo, 70.
- ¹²² Dignolo, 311.
- ¹²³ Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *The Rise of the Global Left: The World Social Forum and Beyond* (New York: Zed Books, 2006), 119.
- ¹²⁴ Boaventura de Sousa Santos, "Human Rights as an Emancipatory Script? Cultural and Political Conditions," in *Another Knowledge Is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies*, ed. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (New York: Verso, 2007), 28.
- ¹²⁵ Santos, *The Rise of the Global Left*, 119.

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