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Fair Trade and the Fetishization of Levinasian Ethics

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Le commerce équitable et la fétichisation de l'éthique lévinasienne ?

Résumé

Un article récent évalue le commerce équitable à l'aune de l'éthique lévinasienne. Notre article est un critique de cet article. Nous voulons montrer que (1) l'éthique lévinasienne n'est pas nécessairement la meilleure référence normative pour évaluer le commerce équitable. Cela signifie que la fétichisation de l'éthique lévinasienne dans le commerce équitable n'est pas une idée robuste, (2) l'auteur commet une erreur méthodologique lorsqu'il affirme que le commerce équitable doit être évalué par rapport à un critère normatif idéal, et (3) son point de vue sur le commerce équitable ne reflète pas fidèlement le mouvement du commerce équitable, et il commet une autre erreur méthodologique en confondant le commerce équitable avec une pratique unique, alors que le mouvement repose sur une multiplicité de ramifications et de pratiques.

Mots-clés: Commerce équitable, Lévinas, Justice

Fair Trade and the Fetishization of Levinasian Ethics

Abstract

A recent paper in the Journal of business ethics (Staricco 2016) measures fair trade against Levinasian ethics. Our paper is a critic of that paper. We want to show that (1) Levinasian ethics is not necessarily the best normative reference for evaluating fair trade. This means that his fetishisation of Levinasian ethics in fair trade is not a valid idea, (2) the author commits a methodological error when he argues that fair trade should be evaluated with regard to an ideal normative criterion, and (3) his distorted view of fair trade does not accurately reflect the fair trade movement, and he commits another methodological error by confusing fair trade with a sole practice, whereas the movement is based on a multiplicity of ramifications and practices.

Keywords: Fair trade, Levinas, Justice

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Introduction

Staricco (2016) measures fair trade against Levinasian ethics in a very interesting article. The author concludes that Levinasian ethics, as it is currently understood, can and should be reinterpreted, and that fair trade, once it has been thrown under the spotlight of Levinasian ethics, should be considered in a highly critical way. Although the article is well-documented, it seems to be the product of methodological confusion and an inappropriate reliance on Levinasian ethics. We want to show that (1) Levinasian ethics is not necessarily the best normative reference for evaluating fair trade. Staricco's understanding of fair trade appears inadequate as there is no obvious link between fair trade and Levinasian ethics. This means that his fetishisation of Levinasian ethics in fair trade is not a valid idea, (2) the author commits a methodological error when he argues that fair trade should be evaluated with regard to an ideal normative criterion, and (3) his distorted view of fair trade does not accurately reflect the fair trade movement, and he commits another methodological error by confusing fair trade with a sole practice, whereas the movement is based on a multiplicity of ramifications and practices. We are of the opinion that although the article puts forward a stimulating argument, the value of measuring fair trade against Levinasian ethics is questionable.

First we discuss Staricco's views on Levinasian ethics and fair trade. We then point out that an ethics of care or an Aristotelian ethics of virtue would be better suited to evaluating fair trade than Levinasian ethics. We then defend the idea that it is not essential to refer to a normative framework, such as Levinasian ethics, in order to evaluate fair trade. Finally we discuss Staricco's unusual interpretation of fair trade.

Staricco on Levinas and Fair Trade

Staricco offers a reading of fair trade based on Levinasian ethics. To do this, he reviews the literature on the interpretation of the dialectic of justice in Levinas' writings. He clearly highlights the two positions generally taken by researchers on this subject: (1) the relationship with the other is exclusively about justice, and (2) the face-to-face relationship between the other and me is an ethical relationship in which justice has imposed a third other. Justice hence comes down to choosing among the different others with whom we come into contact. Staricco emphasises that these two Levinasian interpretations of justice can be reconciled if we consider them as two key moments in the movement of justice – a dialectic that first refers to the relationship with the other, and second, to a multiplicity of others. Rather than eliminating the first moment, this dialectic places limits on it: it forces us to make choices in line with our infinite responsibility.

On the basis of this interpretation of Levinasian ethics, the author then proceeds to a radical critique of fair trade. To quote:

A superficial analysis of Fair Trade could probably lead to affirm that this system is inspired by Levinasian ethics: at a first glance, the recognition of the radical alterity expressed on the Other's face and its inherent obligation to act seems to take central stage. But a closer look shows precisely the contrary: Fair Trade is responsible for nothing but the fetishization of Levinasian ethics. Levinas' explorations about the ethical implications derived from the face become a fetish for Fair Trade: the face is there, but it has been reified. Materializing the face, taking it as visible and sensible, makes it a target for the gaze, denying its radical otherness. (p. 11)

According to his vision of fair trade, promoting the image of producers on packaging or information flyers, which focuses on the materialisation of the face, is a marketing strategy that causes fair trade to lose its ethical dimension. From this point of view, fair trade organisations are not fundamentally different from transnational trade organisations. This makes a face-to-face relationship impossible because:

In the first place, because the Other's face has been fetishized and objectified. In the second place, because there is an asymmetry: on the one hand, the consumer, as a voyeur, is entitled to sneak into the producers' intimacy and miseries and to weigh the value of their needs. While, on the other hand, the producers not only need to accept this exhibitionism, but will never find out anything about the future of the product of their work once it has left their hands, not to mention about the final consumer. (Ibid, p. 12)

This very stimulating critique of fair trade does not seem to us to be accurate for at least three reasons, which we will now develop.

Is Levinasian ethics the right choice?

Staricco defends the idea that fair trade is implicitly linked (or at least should inevitably be linked) to Levinasian ethics, but he does not prove it, apart from the fact that he sees an omnipresent affirmation of otherness within fair trade. Should we consider that referring to otherness is enough to characterise the fair trade approach as a Levinasian one? Certainly Levinas is a hugely important philosophical figure when it comes to otherness, but he is not the only authority.

We believe that fair trade does indeed rely on the face of the other to promote its discourse, but this discourse is best expressed through compassion. Of course compassion may be at the heart of Levinasian ethics, but it is also at the heart of other forms of ethics, in particular, the ethics of care. Seeing only a pure marketing strategy in the enhancement of the producers' image is a misinterpretation by Staricco. The image of the other is also a means of connecting the consumer to the other through compassion. Beyond the marketing effect, it is above all a sought after vehicle for ethics because with compassion there is a

need for identification and contextualisation. Gilligan (1982) suggests that the ethics of care illustrates a new definition of equity, which recognises differences in individual needs and requires an understanding of the situation of others based on caring. Levinasian ethics is somewhat extreme and difficult to operate, while the ethics of care explicitly refers us to contextualised choices in which compassion is essential. According to Paperman (2004):

Unlike the thought of justice, which calls upon universal and rational moral principles applied impartially, the thought of care emphasizes *responsiveness* to particular situations whose salient moral traits are sharply perceived by a more emotional posture of empathy and benevolence. Care's reasoning does not validate its answers with reference to general principles, but takes the form of a narrative in which concrete, specific details become meaningful and intelligible in people's life contexts. (p. 421)

Indeed, what we unearth in fair trade, and especially in this quote from Van der Hoff (2006), is an insistence on compassion: "It is this *compassion*, this art of heightening awareness that comes with our offer of fair trade. We offer it in defiance of an economic system which has lost its 'heart'. If the heart is no longer associated with the brain, it has no reason to exist." (Van der Hoff, in Blanc et al., 2006, p. 99). Many fair trade researchers have pointed out the link between fair trade and compassion (Goodman, 2004; Bazin, 2006; Carimentrand, 2008; Ballet & Carimentrand, 2010). According to Goodman, fair trade is based on a specific ethic: "[...] an expansive ethics of care that specifically seeks to connect consumers and producers, and more generally the global North and South by overcoming and, in effect, shrinking, physical, psychological, and cultural distances." (2004, p. 906). The fair trade project can therefore be seen as a willingness to place economic transactions within the logic of care.

The ethics of care is partly reflected in Levinasian ethics, but Levinasian ethics tends towards an "extreme" conception of care i.e. care pushed to its logical conclusion, surpassing all its requirements. There is no evidence that fair trade is linked to such a conception. Care is characterised by taking the particularities of each person or situation into account. Commitment to others is always considered from the viewpoint of a particular person and is therefore not interchangeable. This insistence on the non-interchangeability of people brings care and fair trade closer together. From a care perspective, it is the willingness to attend to the needs of others that is decisive. Care forces us to think concretely about the needs of people and how best to meet them. According to Tronto,

If the inhabitants of developed economies do not realize that the activities spawned by a capitalist system cause famine for thousands of other human beings [...], are they being inattentive? Is it a moral shortfall? From the perspective of an ethics of care, which dictates that the utmost task for human beings is to be attentive to needs, the answer must be yes. (2009, p. 175)

Such comments echo those made by fair trade activists. Both care and fair trade struggle to hinder those mechanisms which allow privileged individuals to hide behind a wall of

ignorance. These individuals hence fail to notice the needs of others and they avoid any accountability for these needs remaining unmet. Indifference is the common enemy for care and fair trade. Enhancing the image of producers is a means of combating this ignorance through the identification and contextualisation that it can create.

The fair trade project can therefore be seen as a willingness to renew this attention to the other. Conventional trade for its part is regularly presented as being synonymous with ignorance, indifference, and the suspension of attention to others. Fair trade aims to stop the supposed interchangeability of agents in favour of a recognition of the person. If fair trade is linked to care, it is no longer obvious that Levinasian ethics is a fundamental point of reference. Certainly Levinasian ethics mirrors the ethics of care in many aspects, but this does not mean that the fair trade movement is linked to it implicitly or necessarily. A less demanding ethics of care than Levinasian ethics may be better adapted for evaluating fair trade, for example, Aristotle's reflections, which, if we use Staricco's words, have the advantage of constituting both an "intra" and "extra" systemic reference: "intra" because Aristotle's ideas have been adopted by the actors involved in fair trade, "extra" because he proposes a theory of commutative justice along with a conception of the economy which is particularly relevant to this type of trade.

Moreover, the author mentions praxis, which is a fundamental Aristotelian concept, but unfortunately he makes no real use of it. Aristotle also sees the economy as a *praxis* (πραξις), an action, and not only a *poiesis* (ποιησις), a production¹. In an economy conceived as a praxis, economic agents who exchange (trade) do not do so to maximise their earnings, but to exchange successfully. This therefore demonstrates a desire for a just exchange – a form of trade that will not harm anyone. The agents seek perfection in the act of trading: we exchange to be able to exchange ever more successfully, to constantly improve, like a flute player yearns to play better, whereas the flute manufacturer "only" seeks to produce as much as possible. Hence, with the Aristotelian notion of praxis, Staricco would not only have

¹ Aristotle, in a distinction that has become very famous, sees an opposition between *poiesis* and *praxis*. He explains the terms of this opposition at the beginning of *Nicomachean Ethics*. Some activities have an end in themselves; others have their end in work which is separate from the activity. The first set of activities represents action, *praxis*, the second, production, *poiesis*. As Aristotle explains, in production the artist always acts according to an end: "This indeed is the moving cause of productive activity also, since he who makes something always has some further end in view: the act of making is not an end in itself, it is only a means, and belongs to something else. Whereas a thing done is an end in itself: since doing well (welfare) is the End, and it is at this that desire aims." [Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, 2, 1139-b, 0-5]. *Praxis* is an activity that does not produce any work that can be separated from the agent. Production, *poiesis*, on the contrary, is an activity bound up with transformation; it does not have an end in itself, which means that it is carried out in order to achieve something else. Production or *poiesis* thus has an end other than itself, whereas action or *praxis* is its own end.

acquired an "alternative conception" of justice, but also an alternative conception of the economy. These two dimensions are inseparable, because by introducing a desire for justice and a willingness among economic agents to exchange successfully, a new understanding of the economy becomes evident. Over and above an alternative conception of justice, what fair trade really needs is an alternative conception of the economy which encapsulates a new vision of justice [Pouchain, 2016]. In fair trade, justice is obtained by a fair price derived in the market place. It is therefore a theory of justice in the economy that underpins fair trade and one which should define fair trade and fair prices.

Ultimately, Staricco's objective is to find a parameter (an external reference to fair trade) which can gauge the capacity of fair trade to increase justice. He believes that justice in fair trade can only be evaluated on the basis of an external concept of justice, especially as the concept promoted by fair trade literature is not an arbitrary choice by the actors involved in fair trade. From this perspective, the author puts forwards Levinasian ethics as an "extra-systemic" theory that can be used as a benchmark for fair trade. He thus considers that fair trade does not operate justice according to Levinas; rather it is a "fetishization of Levinasian ethics". Unfortunately, the argument here seems to be going round in circles: how do we know whether fair trade is "insufficiently fair" if it does not operate the principles of a Levinasian justice, or whether it is the principles of a Levinasian justice that are not suited to the fair trade project? First of all, it would have been necessary to demonstrate more convincingly that Levinasian justice is the most appropriate in terms of the aims of fair trade. Certainly, state-centred theories of justice and distributive justice cannot fully embrace the essence of fair trade. However, if the practice of fair trade does not "stick" to Levinas' reflections, then we cannot know if the responsibility for it lies with fair trade and its flaws (whether they are consubstantial to the project or accidental), or if we should be seeking theoretical foundations elsewhere. On this question, Staricco's evidence is too slight: are fair trade and Levinasian ethics suitable bedfellows? The answer is far from self-evident, insofar as Levinas did not analyse fair trade, and fair trade has never been an economic application of Levinas' reflections.

A parallel is often drawn between fair trade and the economy when we consider Aristotle's good economy: an economy whose aim is happiness through moderate consumption and fair prices rather than unlimited accumulation. Aristotle's views are particularly relevant to fair trade in that he proposes a different conception of trade and economy ably represented by fair trade. In this way Aristotle sheds light on the essence of fair trade. Could we say the same about Levinas? The author is unable to demonstrate this. He tells us very little about what a Levinasian fair trade might look like, except for a few lines contained in the conclusion of the article. From this perspective, analysing the contribution of Levinas' reflections to fair trade may perhaps have been more useful than endeavouring to match the principles of fair trade with the philosophy of Levinas.

Fair trade, justice and ethics

Staricco points out that research on fair trade largely refers to the notion of justice without using a definition that is normative and could therefore serve as a point of reference. He justifies measuring fair trade against Levinasian ethics because of the importance of using a normative ethic for the purposes of comparison. We have serious doubts about the validity of Levinasian ethics as this normative ethic. However, the question now is whether a normative, extra-systemic ethics is really necessary.

According to Staricco, the conception of justice evident in studies on fair trade is always obtained in an "intra-systemic" way, inferring that researchers use conceptions of justice that are the same as those claimed by the actors involved in fair trade. Fair trade would therefore be expected to have as its aim the implementation of a single form of justice, which operates as both participant and judge. This implies that a genuine "extra-systemic" understanding of the conception of justice is missing, so we do not have a standard of justice that acts as a benchmark, capable of evaluating the justice inherent to fair trade. Fair trade therefore requires some form of external "parameter" to compensate for having internally set objectives of justice. But how do we determine this "parameter"? What conception of justice should be chosen to evaluate the success of fair trade in terms of justice?

It is true that one of the main interests of Staricco's article is that it highlights how fair trade is problematic for most theories of justice. Taken as a whole, these theories are mainly concerned with *distributive* justice. The economic theories of justice are entirely taken up by or aspire to distributive justice. When economists are interested in social justice, their main ambition is to define the optimum distribution of wealth among individuals, which means that they are looking for principles of distributive justice. The issue is first and foremost the justice of the initial distribution. Reflections then focus on the question of the *distribuenda* (or "focal variables") to be shared and the modalities of sharing. This "focal point" can take the form of utility, freedom, primary goods, rights, resources and capabilities. As Staricco points out, very few researchers in the field of theories of justice and equity have put forward a working analytical framework for the study of fair trade which encourages reflection on commutative justice. Fair trade focuses its attention on the nature of trade relations. By promoting fair *trade* between economic agents who have *a desire for justice*, and who are located *in different countries*, fair trade shows the need for further reflection on issues of justice and equity. Indeed, the vast majority of theories of justice fall under *distributive* justice: they consider economic agents who are *unwilling to be just*, and operate *within a national framework*. Existing studies on justice therefore cannot adequately be applied to trade (commutative *versus* distributive justice), the international framework (global *versus* national justice), and the desire for justice among agents (partial *versus* complete justice).

However, one might wonder what Staricco really means when he refers to the "ethical nature" of fair trade. Is it really this desire for justice among economic agents? Or the desire among consumers to be just regardless of (or even beyond) what institutions impose on them? The author is fairly quick to explain his understanding of the relationship between justice and ethics. Are justice and ethics intrinsically contradictory in his eyes? Can we reconcile them? The Aristotelian notion of partial justice may help clarify this point. Partial justice is an ethical virtue independent of the laws and rules in force. Partial justice requires a "sense of the just," a deliberation by the agent on the just, and above all, a taste for justice. It is through discussion and deliberation that people agree on their conceptions of justice as partial justice. Scrupulous observance of the law does not *de facto* guarantee the realisation of justice. We need partial justice when the law proves to be unjust, or to prevent the law from becoming unjust: being just is not only a matter of constraint or obedience to a law that is imposed on us. With partial justice, the relations between justice and ethics are more easily understood: true justice cannot operate without a form of individual ethics because the justice meted out by institutions does not correspond to all our demands for justice.

Indeed, it is surprising that Staricco only briefly refers to Gerald Cohen, who seems to rehabilitate such a concept of justice and ethics in his reflections (1997, 2001). For Cohen, justice is not about rules that define, for example, the basic structure of a given society; it is first and foremost a matter of personal attitude and choice. Justice has its source in *ethos*: "[...] justice requires an ethos governing daily choice which goes beyond one of obedience to just rules" (2001, p. 136). Cohen thus distances himself from Rawls (1971) in his definition of justice by stating that what he considers to be a matter of justice in personal choice would be *something other than justice* for Rawls. The Rawlsian conception is therefore criticised as being flawed in relation to the need to respect justice in everyday life choices, especially economic choices. As a result, Cohen explains that his criticism of Rawls stems from the belief that "[...] justice in personal choice is necessary for a society to qualify as just" (2001, p. 6). Here he is criticising the fact that Rawls' theory of justice neglects the question of partial justice. Justice primarily refers to the way I choose to conduct my life on a day-to-day basis, especially in the economic sphere. In short, a just society does not require just, coercive rules, but above all, an *ethos* of justice capable of structuring individual choices. To confirm this implicit attachment to partial justice, Cohen specifies that the primary domain of justice must consist of choices that are not regulated by law, but that are allowed by law. This is particularly explicit when he states that "[...] the justice of a society is not exclusively a function of its legislative structure, of its legally imperative rules, but also of the choices people make within those rules" (1997, p. 9). Discussing Cohen's reflections would therefore have made it possible to enrich the arguments used in the article and to better expound the relationship between justice and ethics.

What we particularly want to question is the author's insistence on a normative reference. Is it really a failure if the actors and researchers involved in fair trade do not refer to a partial conception of justice, as Staricco seems to suggest? To quote him at length:

The concept of justice at stake in the literature is always the one put forward by Fair Trade actors: it is either the result of a disputed construction, a taken for granted element or the horizon against which its effects are evaluated. Common to most of the literature is an acritical engagement with Fair Trade's concept of justice. However, if Fair Trade's fairness is to be evaluated by the criteria of justice that the movement itself proposes, then the scope for criticism becomes de facto reduced to those dimensions in which Fair Trade has been unsuccessful in delivering its promises. As a result, a more ambitious discussion of Fair Trade's understanding of what a just economic order consists in becomes impossible. If we are to seriously engage with the issue of justice in the study of Fair Trade and advance the current state of the art, it becomes necessary to provide an extra-systemic understanding of the concept, this is, a normative notion against which we can compare and evaluate Fair Trade's own conception and praxis of justice. (2016, p. 3)

Most theorists of justice share Staricco's idea that a normative reference is essential. Referring to Levinas is only one possibility, and it may well be that the fair trade movement, in contradiction to Staricco and other theorists of justice, advocates a new approach to justice that does not simply require a sole criterion of justice.

Walton (2010) describes fair trade as an attempt to implement "interim global market justice in a non-ideal world". According to Walton, the essential characteristic of fair trade is to offer solutions in a non-ideal world, while theories of justice always seek to define an ideal criterion for an ideal world. However, using an ideal criterion for an ideal world in connection with a practice in a non-ideal world is a questionable methodological leap. To move from a non-ideal world to an ideal world and from a practice to an ideal criterion is a double leap. If measuring a practice against an ideal criterion is conceivable in an ideal world, measuring the same practice with an ideal criterion in a non-ideal world makes no sense, as this type of criterion is only valid in an ideal world. What we need in a non-ideal world is not a benchmark, but an understanding of the criteria on which practices are based. And from this point of view, there is no reason to consider that there should be a sole criterion.

Such a position is similar to Sen (2009) in his *The Idea of Justice*. Sen believes that we do not need to define what a perfectly just society is to be able to analyse how inequalities are reduced by certain actions in certain contexts. He distinguishes between *transcendental* justice, which broadly corresponds to the theories of justice developed since Rawls (1971), and *comparative* justice, which is an approach to the evaluation of alternative states. Comparative justice does not require a normative criterion that defines what is fair in an ideal world. On the contrary, it is based on the comparison of alternative states in a non-ideal world. It therefore analyses what people are doing to reduce inequalities. Reducing injustice is not the same as achieving perfect justice, and we do not need to know what

perfect justice is to be able to evaluate any reduction in injustice. While this approach is not incompatible with a transcendental approach, there is no direct link between them. In short, while transcendental justice defines what constitutes a just society on the basis of an ideal criterion, comparative justice establishes judgements in order to classify concrete situations: it can be carried out on the basis of several alternative, complementary, or even antagonistic criteria. In comparative justice, therefore, the parties involved must be able to express themselves in order to reach a collective decision about what must be done to reduce injustice.

However, fair trade is typically an attempt to reduce injustice in a non-ideal world without the need to define what a just society is (Ballet & Pouchain, 2015). And linking fair trade practices to a criterion in an ideal world would confuse the following normative question: "What type of trade should be considered fair or equitable? (fair trade)" with the fair trade project (Fairtrade). These are two different problems (Walton, 2010), so not only does the link create confusion, it also creates a methodological shortcut (Ballet & Pouchain, 2015). Contrary to the assertion by Staricco (2016), evaluating fair trade practices in terms of reducing injustice does not imply a link to a normative criterion. And yet, if the perspective of care that we have mentioned is appropriate, then fair trade could be evaluated in terms of care practices: in theories of care it is never a question of defining an ideal ultimate criterion, but simply of considering that in a non-ideal world some practices are more consistent with an ethics of care than others. According to Tronto (1993), ethics of care can be broken down into four discrete phases which are 'analytically different, but intricately bound together'. Each phase is associated with a specific moral quality: 'Caring about' refers to a recognition of the necessity of care by identifying people's needs and is associated with attentiveness; 'Taking care of' occurs when people assume responsibility for planning a response to the needs they identify; 'Care-giving' is the actual provision of care in order to meet the needs that exist, and is therefore based on the value of competence; 'Care-receiving' reflects the interconnection between those providing care and those receiving care, and refers to the response made by the care-receiver (which is consequently associated with responsiveness). Fair trade can therefore be evaluated according to these four phases of care.

On Staricco's interpretation of fair trade

We now want to highlight how Staricco uses a shortcut in his description of fair trade. This occurs in his discussion of fair trade practices, which he describes from a particular angle: he tends to homogenise practices that are actually very different. He also relies on a small number of critical references, in particular Reinecke and Ansari (2015), with regard to the debate on fair pricing within FLO. The relevance of these references is not called into question, but narrowing down fair trade practices to such a small number of situations is not feasible. This would be tantamount to making generalisations about fair trade based on

certain practices when the reality is very different. The debate should at least have been counterbalanced by the recent forms of certification, for example, in the CLAC movement, and by the criticisms that are developing in the fair trade movement of the balance between the actors involved in defining the certification process, etc. (Renard & Loconto, 2013). In a full and nuanced article, Dragusanu et al. (2014) show that fair trade works overall and usually keeps its promises, although it could still do better on many levels². The existing abuses, however real, are in no way representative of all fair trade practices.

Starrico therefore accepts a criticism of fair trade at face value when this criticism is in fact the subject of heated debate within the fair trade movement itself. This shows that there are also different visions of the types of practices that should be implemented. Fair trade cannot be reduced to a single point of view and practice. This would deny the very existence of a movement with varied ramifications and practices.

The variety of fair trade and its trends is therefore not taken into account in the article. As Stenn points out (2013), and which Staricco repeats:

The spirit of plural grounding, the acceptance of differences, and the understanding that a single thing can be made up of many different and sometimes conflicting parts, is what makes fair trade work. [...] fair trade organizers are respectful of each other's differences and strive to learn and grow from them by seeking out conversation, debate, attending each other's conferences and meetings, and sharing the same transparency and communication that they require of their members. (2013, p. 492)

This dimension is not considered by the author at all. The fact that the *practices* of fair trade (although still perfectible) are confused with the *concept* of fair trade is even more problematic. Yet in order to find the philosophical foundations of fair trade along with the most appropriate conception(s) of justice, which is indeed the author's aim, it is first necessary to have a working definition of fair trade. As Stenn states, "Fair trade is a model of Sen's idea of a transformational institution. It is realized differently within different societal contexts, and though it is effected by the competition and demands of global capitalism, it

² "The existing empirical evidence, based primarily on conditional correlations, suggests that Fair Trade does achieve many of its intended goals, although on a comparatively modest scale relative to the size of national economies. Fair Trade farmers do on average receive higher prices, have greater access to credit, perceive their economic environment as being more stable, and are more likely to engage in environmentally friendly farming practices. However, some aspects of Fair Trade and its consequences are not yet well understood. There is evidence that farmers in Fair Trade cooperatives may not be fully aware of the details of Fair Trade and can sometimes mistrust those who run the cooperative. Another issue is the trade-off between limiting certification to small-scale disadvantaged producers and allowing larger plantation-style producers to also become certified. By scaling-up Fair Trade and increasing entry into certification, the increased entry may dissipate some of the monetary benefits of certification." (Dragusanu et al., 2014, p. 234).

brings forth justice." (2013, p. 496). It is this aspect of fair trade that unfortunately has been ignored in the article: fair trade is not only a set of practices, albeit always imperfect and amendable, but above all it is a new way of considering both economic exchange and the economic agent.

To conclude: on fair trade and justice

Levinasian ethics seems stimulating for the evaluation of fair trade, but in reality it is inadequate. The mention of alterity is not enough to characterise fair trade as being tied to Levinasian ethics. Moreover, Levinasian ethics could have been used differently as a critique of fair trade.

Of course, fair trade can always be challenged from a normative perspective, but perhaps the most important thing is to evaluate the progress that fair trade has made. Fair trade does not claim perfect justice; it sets out to reduce injustice, and hence comparative justice is more befitting than ideal justice. Dismissing fair trade practices because they cannot meet the demands of ideal justice is a methodological error. If fair trade is to be evaluated, and there is little doubt as to the importance of evaluation, it must be evaluated according to a set of criteria that relate to a non-ideal world. Otherwise, we are in danger of confusing fair trade with the fair trade project. In addition, we should not confuse the fair trade project (based on a certain number of principles and hopes) with the fair trade practices that bring the project to life. Practices are multiple, so encapsulating them in a single vision/single approach represents a second methodological error. Indeed, it is vital that we evaluate the various practices in terms of multiple criteria from a perspective of comparative justice.

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