Deuteronomic Redistribution and Confucian Well-Field Theory (井田論):
An Interreligious Reflection on Food Justice and the People's Grocery Community Garden in Oakland, California

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide an interreligious perspective on the moral values of community gardens, in particular the People's Grocery located in West Oakland, California, regarding the validity of community gardens as a promotable contribution to food justice. The People's Grocery states, "The garden is founded in 2003 with the mission of improving West Oakland's health and economy through the local food system by offering holistic programs which encourage a diversified, local and sustainable community while facilitating conversations about racial equity and its impact on the community."[1] Hence, its mission is threefold: to improve the health and economic situation of the poor, to support a sustainable local community, and to promote racial equity and social justice. The People's Grocery shares its fresh produce with about 150 people in its community, low-income residents of the California Hotel. Moreover, they manage various programs to give residents the opportunity not only to build a sustainable community through participating in a local food system but also to learn about cooking, nutrition, healthy eating, food justice, art, trauma, the power of spirit, and so on. It is intriguing to us that a community garden may function not only to provide food for the poor but also to encourage ethical eating and promote social justice for the participants.

Therefore, we will discuss three aspects and relevant ethical issues of community gardens from an interreligious perspective. First, one aspect of community gardens that attracts religious scholars' attention today is the fact that they often function as a social program to provide care

[1] People's Grocery, "Mission & History," accessed September 27, 2017, http://www.peoplesgrocery.org/mission_history.

for the poor in our society. Currently, food insecurity is prevalent even in food-rich nations like the United States. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, *food deserts* are defined as "parts of the country vapid of fresh fruit, vegetables, and other healthful whole foods, usually found in impoverished areas."[2] In this regard, West Oakland can be seen as a food desert due to lack of grocery stores, farmers' markets, and healthy food providers. Given this situation, the People's Grocery is functioning as an alternative provider of fresh and healthy food for the poor.

However, many scholars wonder whether local food can be a real solution to current injustices in the food system. It should be noted that some ethicists suggest that locavorism in developed countries tends to be a movement embraced primarily by white upper-middle-class individuals and tends to reflect white culture and values.[3] Also, J. M. Dieterle rightly points out that "the nostalgia for agricultures of the past is not welcomed by all because local food narratives tend to erase the histories of those who were ostracized, marginalized and disenfranchised."[4] Those who benefit from the People's Grocery are mostly poor and people of color. Can we celebrate a community garden as a successful solution to food injustice, one that helps those who would never be nostalgic about agricultural systems of the past since they were the victims of slavery in America? Should we promote locavorism as an ethical and effective solution in the fight against food injustice?

The second aspect is about ethical eating. Today, community gardens in the United States are not just for the poor. Nowadays, many people are interested in community gardens, urban farming, and weekend farming in suburban areas. According to the American Community

[2] American Nutrition Association, "USDA Defines Food Deserts," accessed February 10, 2017, http://americannutritionassociation.org/newsletter/usda-defines-food-deserts.

[3] J. M. Dieterle, ed., *Just Food: Philosophy, Justice and Food* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015), xv.

[4] Ibid., xv.

Garden Association, in 2013 there were 19,483 community gardens in the United States and eight of the ten Canadian provinces.[5] Many cities encourage residents to join community gardens and engage in weekend farming in suburban areas for reasons such as to protect the environment and promote environmental restoration, to rebuild the local food system, and to empower sustainable agriculture. We acknowledge all these possible benefits for the environment and for those who can afford to garden or farm as a form of recreation, but we are primarily interested in exploring whether or not a community garden promotes ethical eating by the participants. Eating is not just a personal matter but an ethical act that requires the attention not only of those who are working in the food industry but also of every moral agent, including religious scholars. "Eating is an ecological act and a political act," insists Michael Pollan, the author of *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*.[6] He argues that no matter how much industrial eating has obscured the relationships and connections between humans and what we eat, it is a simple fact that "how and what we eat determines to a great extent the use we make of the world—and what is to become of it."[7] Therefore, although we often forget the significance of this matter when we sit around the dinner table, the question of "what should I eat for dinner?" requires ecological, political, ethical, and often, particularly for practitioners of religion, religious reflection. Can we say it is an ethically better act to consume foods from a community garden than to consume industrialized foods? Based on what standards? From a perspective of religious ethics, to what extent does a community garden promote or not promote ethical eating? Here, we

[5] Laura Lawson and Luke Drake, "Community Gardening Organization Survey 2011-2012," *The American Community Gardening Association* 18 (2013): 23, accessed September 27, 2017, http://agriurban.rutgers.edu/Documents/Lawson%20and%20Drake%20community%20garden%20survey%20report.pdf.

[6] See Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006).

[7] Ibid, 5.

are not interested in discussing religious mandates for food restrictions. Instead, we are interested in exploring moral standards for ethical eating. More specifically, we focus on the question of what standards should be used to examine the validity of community gardens in relation to ethical eating.

Third, the communal aspect of a community garden is an intriguing subject for religious scholars. The American Community Garden Association states that "community gardening improves people's quality of life by providing a catalyst for neighborhood and community development, stimulating social interaction, encouraging self-reliance, beautifying neighborhoods, producing nutritious food, reducing family food budgets, conserving resources and creating opportunities for recreation, exercise, therapy and education."[8] We are interested in examining whether a community garden may function beyond merely meeting the needs of the poor and nurture a kind of communal ethics, which Christians might express in terms of *agape* and Confucians might describe as "benevolence" (*ren*, 仁). Can a community garden offer a truly effective and promotable contribution to food justice?

The above questions can be summarized by the following three questions: (1) Is a community garden an ethical solution to the need to take care of the poor in our society? (2) Does a community garden encourage ethical eating? (3) Does a community garden promote communal ethics and social justice beyond merely meeting the needs of the poor? We will explore these questions through interreligious reflection. By studying and making comparisons between the two religious models of Deuteronomic redistribution in the Jewish/biblical tradition

[8] American Community Gardening Association, "Mission," accessed September 27, 2017, https://communitygarden.org/mission.

and the well-field theory in the Confucian tradition, we attempt to provide fresh insights and meaningful reflections on the validity of a community garden for food justice today.

In doing so, we will first discuss the redistribution laws in Deuteronomy 24:19-22. Our contention will be that, different from some modern almsgiving-based humanitarian aid, the biblical model is more concerned with sustainable support of the poor, encourages communal bonds through providing land for cultivation, and emphasizes the moral and religious obligation for people to take care of each other. Second, we will explicate how the Confucian well-field theory emphasizes the importance of "constant livelihood" to ensure that no one suffers from hunger, stresses the moral obligation of rulers to practice "benevolent governance," and promotes a peaceful and harmonious society through the suggested socio-economic structure.

In conclusion, we will discuss the moral values of the People's Grocery by discussing its diverse programs based on the ethical principles we identify based on our interreligious study. We will discuss the three questions we raised in the introduction and will make two concrete suggestions. We will suggest that government involvement and public education are essential to the success of a community garden as a contributor to food justice.

Modern Implications of Deuteronomic Redistribution for Food Justice

In this section, we discuss the Deuteronomic redistribution model found in Deuteronomy 24:19-22. In so doing, we first identify the limitations of the modern almsgiving models for the poor. Then, we discuss ethical principles that can be found in the biblical model. Our contention is that the biblical mandates for the poor not only remind us of the ongoing need to provide for the poor but also encourage us to create communal bonds of respect and concern.

There has been much effort put into solving the problems of food injustice near and far. For example, international Christian organizations such as Food for the Poor and Food for the Hungry have been providing aid and relief to mostly underdeveloped countries through sponsorship and fundraising.[9] But hunger also exists in American neighborhoods. Thus, for example, the Berkeley Food Pantry has been providing Berkeley and Albany residents in need with monthly grocery bags since 1969.[10] Local government-driven projects such as community food banks, also raise awareness of the needs of the poor in local communities.[11] These aid organizations and local food markets are mainly driven by the almsgiving model, which refers to the sharing of the surplus with the needy and the awareness of the needs in the community.

Yet, well-intended actions do not always bring about positive outcomes. Despite these efforts, the living conditions of the poor in the United States as well as elsewhere in the world seem unchanged. Why is this the case? We need to face two inconvenient truths. First, *humanitarian aid ironically ensnares rather than frees the poor from poverty* by making them dependent upon the aid from which they benefit. Nuruddin Farah's monumental novel *Gift* eloquently unmasked the devastating consequences of Western humanitarian aid to Somalia and how Westerners' efforts to reconstruct Somalian agriculture and industry instead destroyed them. Somalian farmers simply could not compete in the market with the free food provided by aid

[9] Food for the Poor (http://www.foodforthepoor.org) focuses its aid on the Caribbean and Latin America. Food for the Hungry (https://www.fh.org) provides aid to children in more than twenty countries around the globe.

[10] The Berkeley Food Pantry (https://www.berkeleyfoodpantry.org) was founded by a member of Berkeley Friends Church in 1969.

[11] For example, the Alameda County Community Food Bank (ACCFB) connects various constituencies who work together in order to receive and redistribute food to the community. According to ACCFB, one in three children in Alameda County faces the threat of hunger and ACCFB serves one in five Alameda County residents. See their website at http://www.accfb.org.

programs.[12] The dilemma faced by Somalian workers might be as follows: "Why should we toil in our fields and work in the factories if we can get food and other goods for free?"

Second, *humanitarian aid degrades respect for the poor* by placing them in an inferior position. Once the giver and receiver relationship is solidified, this hierarchical relationship replaces mutual respect, as is implied in the following conversation between Ingrid, an old white woman, and Yussur, a Somali woman.

> "We receive," Yussur said very clearly, "and you give." "In a general sort of way, yes. That's right." "Why give, Ingrid?" . . . "Because we have certain things that you *Africans* need." Yussur said, "But that's ridiculous . . . Surely you don't give something of value to yourself simply because someone else does not have it or is in need of it."[13]

We need a different model to guide our effort to overcome poverty and provide food for those in need. We suggest that Deuteronomy 24:19-22 provides a new way of thinking about the issue at stake. Deuteronomy 24:19-22 states,

> 19 When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all your undertakings. 20 When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. 21 When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. 22 Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this. (NRSV)

This text promotes two kinds of efforts for the poor. First, *food should be provided to the poor on an ongoing basis*. Scholars argue that originally the gleanings of the fields were left either as an offering to "the deity or the spirits of the fields"[14] or to maintain "the spirit of the

[12] Nuruddin Farah, *Gifts* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 19.

[13] Farah, *Gifts*, 48.

[14] Gerhard Von Rad, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 152.

crop" and thus "ensure the renewal of the crop the following year."[15] Deuteronomy changes the focus of practice to the needy in the community, the "marginal triad"— the alien, the orphan, and the widow (v. 19; cf. vv. 17-18).[16] What remains behind of grain crops, olives, and grapes should be left untouched so the marginal can meet their basic needs. Literary connections between the present text and the Book of Ruth are noteworthy. Ruth was an alien, an orphan, and a widow because she left her country, Moab, broke her old family links, and came to Bethlehem after her husband passed away. She "gleaned in the field behind the reapers" (Ruth 2:3). Boaz's blessing to the reapers—"The Lord be with you" —seems to be encouraging them to leave the gleaners alone as they worked. They also bless him back—"The Lord bless you"—for his generosity and obedience to the law (Ruth 2:4). Deuteronomy 24:19-22 reminds us, first and foremost, that there will be always the needy, even in a community that God blesses.[17] The remainder of the harvest *is* their portion because the poorest also deserve life. Their needs should be met every year, as the whole community is in need of God's blessing in each harvest season (Deut. 24:19).

Second, *the help for the needy should aim to increase the communal bonds of respect and concern.* In this respect, (1) Deuteronomy 24:19-22 promotes labor rather than charity and thus respect for the poor. The remainder "shall be" theirs (vv. 19-21). It *belongs to* the poor.[18] In other words, it is their right to take the remainder because the ultimate owner of the land is God: "The land is mine" (Lev. 25:23). A parallel passage, Leviticus 19:9, even requires landowners not to

[15] Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 229.

[16] Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 292.

[17] Deuteronomy 15:4-11 presents a vision of a community governed by the law where there are no needy because they receive sufficient help and their debts are forgiven every seventh year.

[18] "'It shall be for' could be translated to 'it belongs to.' This is not voluntary almsgiving: the poor have a legal right to access the three most important products of the land: grain, oil, and wine." Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 293.

reap the edges of their fields and leave them for the poor and the alien.[19] The alien, the orphan, and the widow should labor themselves to acquire what they need. This is essential because in this way they become not mere receivers of charity but laborers in the production of the food they eat. Biddle argues that in so doing they gain a "sense of accomplishment" and "preserve their honor."[20] Landowners should not feel superior because leaving the gleanings and the unharvested olives and grapes is not "an act of charity" but "a *mitzvah*—an obligation," as Rabbi Jacobs puts it.[21] The text, therefore, demands respect for the poor. They work with their own hands and function as a channel through which God's blessing is bestowed upon the whole community (v. 19).

(2) Deuteronomy 24:19-22 also promotes the integrity of the community and ultimately concern for the weakest members of society. The text makes clear that the well-being—"blessing" (v. 19)—of haves is inextricably connected to the welling of have-nots.[22] The wealthy help the needy not just for economic reasons but for communal reasons. The poor and the hungry are also

[19] It is noteworthy that the mandate to leave the edges of the field unreaped, preserved in the parallel passages Leviticus 19:9 and 23:22, is not found in Deuteronomy 24:19. From this difference, "Halakhic exegesis inferred that there are four categories of what must be left for the poor: *pe'ah* (the edges of fields, vineyards, and groves, to be left unreaped), *shikhehah* (what is forgotten in fields, vineyards, and groves), *leket* and *peret* (grain and grapes that fall to the ground during reaping), and *'olelot* (small, immature clusters of grapes)" Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 229. The omission does not diminish Deuteronomy's emphasis on human rights. Weinfeld states that "many of Deuteronomy's ethical and social laws find no parallel elsewhere in the Pentateuch.' Moreover, even those laws which have parallels are characterized in Deuteronomy by their different and more humanist tone." M. Weinfeld, "The Origin of the Humanism in Deuteronomy," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80, no. 3 (Sept. 1961): 241.

[20] Mark E. Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2003), 363.

[21] Jill Jacobs, *There Shall Be No Needy* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2009), 18.

[22] Verse 19b—"so that the Lord your God may bless you in all your undertakings"—is at the center of the chiastic structure in vv. 24:17-22. Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10-34:12*, World Biblical Commentary, vol. 6B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2002), 596.

created in the image of God and should be treated as such, as our *siblings*.[23] Such behavior aims to create not a perfect body without scars and blemishes but an integral body working together to heal the wounds so that today's receivers may also help today's givers in the future. This is to fulfill the spirit of Torah that aims to create "communal bonds of respect and concern (*re'ut*), whose model is friendship, reverence—ultimately love," as Goodman points out.[24]

What, then, are the implications of Deuteronomy 24:19-22? First, local communities should provide a constant food supply to meet the needs of the hungry and the poor. Help should be year-in and year-out rather than a short-term project or a one-time event. Second, there should be physical spaces where needy people can go and work to gain what they need. By working in the field, they are participating in the production of food, and they also can gain a sense of dignity and accomplishment. Third, the project should promote respect and concern as well as responsibility for the poor. Hunger and poverty are not simply caused by the laziness of individuals. There could be systemic injustice that prevents the poor from having easy access to food and the labor market. The effort should be geared toward a fight against these issues in the long run.[25]

Confucian Well-Field Theory in Dialogue with Deuteronomic Redistribution

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[23] Jacobs, *There Shall Be No Needy*, 12.

[24] L. E. Goodman, *On Justice: An Essay in Jewish Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 42.

[25] In the Berkeley area, Urban Adamah (https://urbanadamah.org), an educational farm and community center, provides opportunities for community members to come and work in the fields. Its produce is given back to the community members for free. Fighting against structural evil and injustice is Urban Adamah's ultimate goal. To do this, Urban Adamah sends its intern once a week to a larger organization to learn from and at the same time to influence them. The issue Urban Adamah faces, however, is that its participants are middle class (if not wealthy) and educated people rather than poor and less well-educated people.

In the former section, based on our study of the Deuteronomic redistribution model in the biblical tradition, we discussed what is needed for the poor as well as what we as a society should provide for the poor. We suggested that for the poor there is a need for a constant supply of food, not a short-term project, as well as for physical spaces where they can cultivate not just food but also a sense of dignity and accomplishment through their labor. Also, we suggested that a just food project should promote the creation of communal bonds of respect and of a just social system that ensures that the poor have sufficient access to food and the labor market.

Now, we turn to the Confucian well-field theory. What is known as the "well-field theory" (井田論) is Mengzi's detailed treatise on tax policy. In the Confucian tradition, Mengzi (孟子, 372–289 BCE) is known as the second-greatest Confucian sage after Confucius himself. There are at least three reasons why we suggest that this ancient taxation theory offers quite a few intriguing insights to the issue at stake. First, it emphasizes the necessity of a communal garden. For Mengzi, to build a community garden is not just a good idea; it is the *ideal* social structure. Second, Mengzi's idea of the well-field is not just about providing food for the poor; it is based on the conviction that poverty is not supposed to exist. Third, Mengzi believed that the community garden cultivates a deep ethical sense of the obligation to take care of all in the village. We will elaborate on these three points as we discuss the theory in more detail.

Mengzi believed that "benevolent governance" (仁政) begins with ensuring the "constant livelihood" of the common people so that they are "well fed" enough to be ready for moral instruction (Mengzi, 3A 3.1-3.6.).[26] When Duke Wen of Teng asked him about governing the state, Mengzi offered the following advice:

[26] Mengzi believed that the benevolent moral power (人德) should go along with benevolent governance (仁政) to make it possible to pacify the world. See Book 4A 1.1 and 1.3. Mengzi., *Mengzi:*

> "This is the Way of the people: those who have a constant livelihood have a constant heart; those who lack a constant livelihood lack a constant heart. No one who fails to have a constant heart will avoid dissipation and evil. When they thereupon sink into crime, to go and punish them is to trap the people. When there are benevolent people in positions of authority, how is it possible for them to trap the people?" (3A 3.3)[27]

Here, Mengzi suggests that no one will fall into dissipation, evil, or crime if all have a "constant livelihood" (恒産), which will ensure that they have a "constant mind" (恒心). It should be noted that Mengzi believed that human nature is good; hence, the "constant mind" refers to the original state of mind that is peaceful and harmonious.[28] In this respect, poverty is a cause of evil in society not in the sense that the poor tend to rebel against authorities but in the sense that people cannot maintain their original good state of mind when they suffer from hunger. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the rulers to make sure everyone in the society has a stable occupation. If the rulers punish the evildoers in the society without providing a constant livelihood for everyone, it is similar to trapping people and punishing those who have fallen into the trap. No one will honor these "tricksters" in authority as benevolent rulers.

In order to ensure a "constant livelihood," therefore, Mengzi suggests implementing what is known as the "well-field theory" in the Confucian tradition. The idea is based on the "tic-tac-toe" structure of the character 井 (*ching*, well). In Chinese history, the well-field system was invoked as an ideal because (1) it gave each family a plot of land for their support and (2) it provided a localized system of self-help in lieu of central government taxation.[29] When Duke

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With Selections from Traditional Commentaries, trans. Bryan W. Van Norden (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 2008), 88.

[27] Ibid, 66.

[28] Mengzi believed that human nature is good because the Heaven endowed the "four sprouts" (四端) in every human being. For Mengzi's philosophical discussions on this matter, see Book 6A.

[29] Judith A. Berling, *A Pilgrim in Chinese Culture: Negotiating Religious Diversity*, reprint ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 46.

Wen sends his minister Bi Zhan to Mengzi to ask about the well-fields in order to put them into effect, Mengzi explains the details, saying,

> ". . . The fields of the village share the same well. They go out and return from the fields together. They keep watch against thieves and assist each other. When ill, they support each other. In this way, commoners are affectionate toward one another. A square league is divided into a pattern like the character for 'well' (井). The well fields are nine hundred acres. In their middle is the public field. Eight families each have a private one hundred acres and cultivate the public field in common. Only after the public work is completed do they dare to manage their private work. This is the manner in which one manages the uncultivated people. This is the general outline. As for filling it in, this lies with your ruler and yourself." (3A 3.18-20)[30]

Here, we identify at least three intriguing aspects of this taxation system in conversation with the Deuteronomic redistribution model. First of all, this system is not about how to take care of the poor in society. It is about making sure no one suffers from poverty. As we discussed earlier, the basic idea is to provide a constant livelihood for every family so that everyone can maintain a "constant mind," and thus it promotes a peaceful and harmonious society. Whereas the Deuteronomic redistribution model focuses on the need to take care of the most vulnerable people in the society, those who are not allowed to own land or property, Mengzi's taxation system emphasizes that it is the responsibility of the ruler to provide everyone with an ongoing means of living. This does not necessarily mean that the Mengzian model is more concerned with taking care of the orphans, widows, and foreigners in society than the Deuteronomic redistribution model. Rather, Mengzi seems to be more concerned with making sure that the ruler gets the tax than he is with providing a means of survival for the poor; the communal garden is meant to pay the tax to the ruler, not to take care of the poor. However, we still find it captivating that the primary responsibility of rulers is not just to provide care and support for the vulnerable;

[30] Mengzi, *Mengzi*, 68.

it is also to make sure no one suffers from hunger. A ruler who fails to do so is not qualified to be a ruler.

Second, Mengzi's taxation system emphasizes that the public field is always more important than the individual profit of its cultivators. Mengzi insists that the commoners are supposed to work in the common field first. Only after the public work is completed can they work for their own profit. When someone is ill, someone else in the village is supposed to help. It should be noted that Mengzi was speaking to a clan-based agrarian society in China in the third century BCE. This kind of taxation system has little applicability to our complicated modern society. However, it is still intriguing to us that the communal garden must have functioned as a constant reminder to people that everyone is mutually interdependent and morally obliged to take care of each other. The bottom line is that they cannot survive if they do not work together. This idea is very different from letting the poor take the forgotten sheaf or left-behind olives or grapes after the harvest. In Mengzi's model, from the sowing to the harvest, everyone in the village is supposed to work together.

Third, the goal of the well-field system is to manage "uncultivated people" in order to learn how to be affectionate with each other and hence to build a peaceful and harmonious society. It is interesting that Mengzi thought of the taxation system as a means for the moral cultivation of commoners. The goal is neither to suppress conflict among greedy citizens over profits nor to control the potentially rebellious crowd by forcing them to pay the tax to the ruler. Ideally, the whole system is designed to educate the "uncultivated people" to be "civilized." In the Deuteronomic redistribution model, what the moral agents are supposed to learn from their almsgiving practice is the historical memory that they once were the oppressed and that God saved them, and hence they are now called to do the same for others. An ethical principle in this

model is that the privileged are supposed to help the underprivileged. Because they were saved, they have to save others. Through grace and mercy, everyone can be saved from poverty. Meanwhile, in the Mengzian taxation system a primary moral obligation of the rulers is not to show benevolence in the form of almsgiving but to "manage" the people so that they learn how to care for each other. Therefore, the moral obligation of the privileged does not end with providing food to the poor. Their duty is to engage in constant management to make sure that everyone in the society has the basic means of life so that they can maintain a constant mind, which is the basis for their constant moral cultivation and will lead to a peaceful and harmonious society.

In summary, we have identified several similarities and differences between the Deuteronomic redistribution model and the Confucian well-field theory. We discovered that, first, although the two models encourage the formation of communal bonds, the motivation for taking care of the poor is different between the two models. The biblical model appears to be deontological in the sense that it emphasizes the moral and religious obligations of individuals, whereas the Confucian model seems to be teleological in the sense that it focuses on the desired end result: a harmonious society. Second, whereas both traditions acknowledge the importance of sharing produce, the way in which the food is produced differs. The beneficiary of the aid has no part in the production of the food under the Deuteronomic law. Yet, every village member needs to work in the common field and pay the tax under the well-field theory. Third, whereas both traditions promote affection among community members, how this is manifested is dissimilar. When it comes to the moral obligation of rulers, Deuteronomy instructs landowners to give what is left after the harvest. In contrast, Mengzi teaches rulers to provide the basic means of life in order to maintain a constant mind among the people.

We suggest that this kind of interreligious study is beneficial in the sense that it provides two different perspectives for examining the moral values of a community garden. The implications we find from the two traditions are complementary rather than contradictory when ethical principles are applied to assess the moral values of community gardens. For example, the motivation of taking care of the poor based on the deontological mandate given by God does not necessarily contradict the teleological goal of building a peaceful and harmonious society of Mengzi. In the following section, we discuss the validity of the People's Grocery Community Garden based on what we have learned from our interreligious study.

Community Garden as a Solution for Food Injustice?

In this final section, we discuss the three aspects of the People's Grocery Community Garden in Oakland that have come to the fore: its ability to provide care for the poor, its efficacy in fostering ethical eating, and its ability to promote communal ethics and social justice. Specifically, we review the five programs of the People's Grocery that encourage and provide opportunities to think about and find ways to contribute to food justice: Food as Medicine, Hands in the Garden, Flavas in the Garden, Friday Movie Night, and Food Warriers. First, we will briefly describe these programs based on our study, interviews, and empirical experiences at the People's Grocery. Then, we will attempt to evaluate these programs based on the ethical principles we found in our interreligious study.

People's Grocery's Programs

Food as Medicine

Food as Medicine is designed to offer healthy produce for community members with high blood pressure that will improve their health. The participants receive weekly fresh vegetables and eggs from the garden. In addition, they receive recipes and nutritional information that help them manage their high blood pressure. Furthermore, trained staff check their blood pressure weekly, discuss issues regarding food justice with them, and provide an opportunity for the participants to share their successes and challenges.[31] This program helps the low-income community at California Hotel by increasing their "access to fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs as food and medicine."[32] Most of the California Hotel residents are low income and/or used to be homeless. Since the California Hotel is located in the food desert of West Oakland, their families are exposed to and/or suffer from diet-related diseases: hypertension, obesity, and diabetes. We are told that the more those who have diet-related diseases participate in the program, the healthier they become.

Hands in the Garden

Every Saturday, the People's Grocery invites residents of the California Hotel to the Hands in the Garden program, which enables them to harvest produce from the garden. Participants get to share food produced from the garden and work with community members. Working in the garden and harvesting produce is designed not only to gain food but also to help reorient the participants. By allowing residents to (re)define their relationships with other people, the land,

[31] People's Grocery, "Food as Medicine," accessed September 21, 2017, http://www.peoplesgrocery.org/food_as_medicine.

[32] People's Grocery, "Food as Medicine."

and nature via food and the production of food, the program asks them to rethink their beliefs about health, nutrition inequality, food security, and the earth.

Flavas of the Garden

The weekly community party called Flavas of the Garden helps California Hotel residences have access to fresh food and offers them educational opportunities. First, participants share fresh products from the garden. Second, they learn why healthy cooking is important and how to prepare and eat food responsibly. Third, they discuss the meaning of sharing fresh food. In other words, this gathering encourages a communal spirit by providing the residents with the chance to see each other regularly and build relationships.[33]

During the workshops, facilitators bring the issues of food security and accessibility to the discussion table. Since low-income families often purchase highly processed and packaged food, there is a separation between the food products and their production that leaves people wondering where their food comes from. In contrast, the People's Grocery tries to bridge that gap and provide not only food accessibility but also food security. The residents see in person the process of sowing, growing, and harvesting of garden products. The People's Grocery garden also has a greenhouse and a chicken coop with a pasture where the food is produced. They also encourage a communal spirit with nature as well as with fellow human beings. They have an aquaponics system in the garden and intentionally use less fuels and pesticides than most commercial growers. In sum, Flavas of the Garden provides the poor with healthy food and promotes communal ethics, which includes the practice of living and eating together harmoniously.

[33] People's Grocery, "Flavas," accessed September 21, 2017, http://www.peoplesgrocery.org/flavas.

Friday Movie Night and Food Warriors: Promoting Social Justice

Every Friday, the People's Grocery holds a movie night. The residents watch movies together as well as share sample foods from their garden. The goal of Friday Movie Night is not only to have fun but also to show educational movies on racial justice, food justice, and so on. Most of the residents of the California Hotel are African Americans. The movie night teaches them their own history and culture, particularly Black History Movie Night.

The Food Warriors program is designed to educate youth. This six-month program "seeks to engage youth at the intersection of food access and social justice."[34] The participants are asked to think about "food systems through a social justice lens and participate in food related activities that foster self-determination."[35] This program is offered intermittently when schools request it.

Assessments and Suggestions

The first question we explore is this: *Is a community garden an ethical response to the need to take care of the poor in society?* We suggest that this kind of community program, which is designed to aid low-income families, is ethically better than other national food assistance programs such as WIC, food stamps, or SNAP. Some of the limitations of the food assistance programs and anti-hunger programs at the federal level are well known. Marion Nestle states, "SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits . . . typically run out after two or three weeks, leading recipients to depend on the cheapest sources of calories—the snack, fast

[34] People's Grocery, "Food Warriors," accessed September 21, 2017, http://www.peoplesgrocery.org/food_warriors.

[35] People's Grocery, "Food Warriors."

food, and sugar-sweetened soda."[36] In other words, a very serious problem of the federal food assistance programs is not only that they are not sufficient but also that they leave the beneficiaries no choice but to be dependent on junk foods. In contrast, the programs at the People's Grocery provide (1) a constant, although not always sufficient, supply of produce to meet the needs of the hungry, (2) a physical space where people can go and work to cultivate not just food but a sense of dignity, and (3) a community where people take care of each other. Hence, in this regard, we suggest that a community garden is an ethically better solution than federal food assistance programs.

However, "we" cannot easily conclude that a community garden is the best solution to provide care for "them," the poor, in our society. "They" should determine what is best for "them." A more complicated issue regarding the validity of the community garden as a contributor to food justice is that not all the residents have nostalgia about the agricultural methods of the past.[37] The label of "low-income community" attached to a community garden might function as leverage to make them want to get out of it as soon as they can, no matter how much they appreciate the community in the present.[38] The time-consuming effort and hard labor in the garden should not be camouflaged by a somewhat romanticized benefit like "fresh food," from the perspective of residents who have a limited choice of food due to limited financial

[36] Marion Nestle, *Eat, Drink, Vote* (New York: Rodale, 2013), 23.

[37] We are not denying the nostalgia that some African American community members in Oakland have for the "black farming" as practiced in the Southern states of the United States. They definitely grieve the fact that most of the food available to them commercially is the "mono style" of food. Yet, the majority of those who benefit from the People's Grocery comes to the community garden to meet their present need for *food*, not to reminisce about the past.

[38] More research needs to be done to determine whether it is the general tendency of low-income families to want to *stay in*, rather than *get out of*, the community garden. Some city gardens improve the conditions of low-income neighborhoods in cities like Detroit, and their members are proud to be a part of them. A more extensive exploration of this topic is beyond the scope of this paper.

resources. A community garden, no matter how beneficial it is for its members, should not be forced upon the poor if it is not the most desired solution for them. A more fundamental and ideal solution might be providing a consistent means of living for every family in our society, just as Mengzi suggested a long time ago. Mengzi's suggestion helps us to rethink the moral obligation of the government. The government is obliged not just to feed the hungry but also to build a harmonious society, starting with providing a ongoing livelihood. In this regard, regardless of its limits, we might still suggest that the community garden is an ethically better option for the government than federal food assistance programs.

Now we turn to the second question, *Does a community garden encourage ethical eating for all?* The programs at the People's Grocery educate people about healthier eating and at least provide them with the opportunity to be not just "recipients" but also moral agents who fully participate in the decision-making process regarding the question "what should I eat for dinner?" Of course, it should not be overlooked that their freedom to choose what to eat is limited to the extent that their financial resources are limited. However, a serious problem of federal food assistance programs is that they actually deprive the beneficiaries of the opportunity to make healthy choices. In *Rebuilding the Foodshed*, Philip Ackerman-Leist states, "Food choice for them [the poor] is not about 'local,' 'organic,' or 'animal-welfare approved,' but whether they can feed the kids even just one meal a day . . . and how."[39] Those who ask "what *can* I eat for dinner" cannot afford the question "what *should* I eat for dinner." Nevertheless, when the choice is limited to relying on food assistance programs vs. a community garden, we suggest that the latter is an ethically better choice in the sense that it at least provides more opportunities for the

[39] Philip Ackerman-Leist, *Rebuilding the Foodshed: How to Create Local, Sustainable and Secure Food Systems* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green, 2013), 139.

agents to fully participate in making choices about their eating, from sowing to harvesting. They are encouraged to ponder the issues of ethical eating through education and communal activities.

Last but not least, we explore this question: *Does a community garden promote communal ethics and social justice beyond merely meeting the needs of the poor?* A problem that we have seen in the People's Grocery is that its beneficiaries do not always act responsibly; for example, they take more than they need. Signs are posted all over the People's Grocery that read "Do not reap the fruit until it is ripe," "Please let me grow this big," "Stop being selfish," "This garden is for everyone, not just you," "Greed is not pretty," and so on. We are neither arguing for the elimination of the community garden in the private sector nor exposing its ineffectiveness. The bottom line would be that the People's Grocery does not guarantee the solution to a fundamental human problem such as greed. Perhaps, Mengzi's vision that a community garden may function to ensure moral cultivation of all is too idealistic. However, it should not be overlooked that programs such as Flavas of the Garden, Hands in the Garden, and Friday Movie Night are designed not only for the sharing of fresh food but also to help residents to reconnect with others without any unjust power dynamics or distorted religious beliefs. The organizers make it clear that *all* are welcome in the garden. They believe that "movement toward increased love, light, and joy will happen through creating access to healthy food and information about the consumption of healthy foods."[40] Although it is impossible for us to assess the extent to which the People's Grocery programs are effective in promoting communal ethics, we would suggest that these programs share the same kind of belief as the two religious traditions we discussed

[40] People's Grocery, "About People's Grocery," accessed September 21, 2017, http://www.peoplesgrocery.org/about.

above—that making sure everyone has access to good food is the key toward increased love and benevolence.

What are the implications of this interreligious dialogue on food justice? The implications of our study are twofold. We argue that government involvement and public education are both essential to the success of a community garden as a solution to food injustice. First, we suggest that *the government should provide more funding for community gardens than for food assistance programs*. There have been two streams of effort in the fight against food injustice: the government providing monetary support for the poor (e.g., food stamps) and the private sector supplying food for the needy. Yet, since both methods often make people dependent on rather than independent of such assistance, a permanent solution requires a new way of thinking. The local government, most likely the city or state government, needs to take the initiative in implementing and maintaining new community gardens.

A blueprint for the project might be as follows. Government-led gardens hire employees and provide hourly pay for them. The workers can also buy produce at a discounted price. The food produced in the community gardens needs to be organic in order to demonstrate that it is qualitatively different from the GMO food available in groceries. If the revenue is less than the expenditure, the government provides a subsidy to make up the difference.[41] The government not only monitors the program but also purchases the produce in order to sell it in local groceries or

[41] According to Mary E. McGann of the Jesuit Theological Seminary, "In the United States, through the Farm Bill, the federal government is providing massive farm subsidies, but these are being given to wealthy corporate agribusiness, and not to small farmers who are creating food availability for their local communities. . . . A longer exploration of this topic would need to include some look at US government support for agriculture and a questioning of the rationale and ethical justice of such support for those who already have more than they need economically." Mary E. McGann, personal communication, September 27, 2017.

at markets connected to the community gardens. Furthermore, the community garden provides produce at a low cost at an annual community fair.[42]

The benefits of this model are manifold. First, it would provide opportunities for low-income people to work with their own hands, maintain their dignity, and give something back to the community. Second, it would not only create income revenue but also would provide resources for healthy food for the poor. Third, it would foster ethical eating by allowing people to have ownership of the food they produce.

Second, we suggest that *public education is essential for the success of a community garden as a solution to food injustice*. We should build more community gardens in elementary schools and provide students with field education.[43] We suggest community gardens for primary schools because children at that age are in a formative period in their development. Allowing these children to have a first-hand experience of gardening and farming can have a long-lasting effect.

Our vision is this. First, schools allot a certain plot of land for a community garden. Second, children spend at least two periods each week working in the garden. Third, they share their excitement, learning, and aspirations with one another while they also learn from teachers about the benefits of the community garden. Fourth, schools hold an annual community fair that

[42] Although not the same as our proposal, in 2014 the City of Berkeley made a similar proposal, "The Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone Act." The Bill states, "The Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone Act (Assembly Bill 551; 2013, Ting) allows cities and counties to establish "urban agriculture incentive zones" by offering reduced property taxes to landowners who use vacant parcels exclusively for agriculture." Planning and Development Department Land Use Planning Division, https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Planning_and_Development/Level_3_-_Commissions/Commission_for_Planning/2014-10-15_Item%2011-UAIZs-Combined.pdf, accessed September 27, 2017.

[43] Note that some elementary schools, such as the Berkeley Arts Magnet elementary school in Berkeley, California, have a community garden at their facility.

the children attend with their parents, where they can taste what they produced, and later they see the fruits of their labor served for dinner at home. This farming experience at school would create a communal bond between the students as they work together in the garden. It would also bring children closer to the production of food as well as to the food itself. Lastly, it would promote communal ethics and foster ethical eating since the children would learn to share the produce from the garden.

Then, we suggest that secondary school curricula need to offer more classes on social justice, including food justice. Promoting social justice is sometimes a racially segregated endeavor. We have seen that the community gardens are often led mainly by middle-class people who are white or by lower-class people of color.[44] In order to avoid this dilemma, broader and more in-depth education needs to be implemented in our school system. We suggest that, first, secondary schools offer classes on topics such as "Social Justice: Race, Food, and Community" that can be taken as AP courses. Second, schools should hold essay contests and host presentations followed by question-and-answer discussions. Third, schools should include gardening in the community garden as an extracurricular activity as well as community service. By participating in these activities, students participate in holistic learning as they think about, write on, and act upon issues related to social justice. Food justice could then become one of the key subjects that students would continue to explore in college since they have already had the experience of working in the community garden at their primary school and learning about food justice in secondary school. These educational activities would cultivate communal bonds and a

[44] The Urban Adamah is an example of the former and the People's Grocery is an example of the latter.

sense of moral obligation to one another in the minds of the students. Ultimately, it would equip them to be responsible citizens of our society.

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