

From Concepción Arenal's *ethica misericordis* to Adela Cortina's *ethica cordis*: The origin and current state of Social Work ethics in Spain

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Abstract. Recently, Concepción Arenal has been identified as Spain's first social worker, and her ethics of compassion has also been highlighted (Idareta, 2020a, 2020b). This paper aims to explain the similarities and differences between her *ethica misericordis* and Adela Cortina's *ethica cordis*. The first section briefly describes Concepción Arenal's contribution. The second describes that of Adela Cortina. In the third section, I assess the differences and similarities between the two. I employ a historical-systematic methodology to do so. The novelty of this article is that it is the first work to compare these two sets of ethical proposals. I conclude that Adela Cortina's *ethica cordis* updates and broadens the scope of Concepción Arenal's *ethica misericordis* and, therefore, that the virtue of cordial reason is one of the elements that should be integrated in Social Work ethics in Spain.

Keywords: social work; Adela Cortina; Concepción Arenal; ethics of virtues; ethics of duty

[es] De la *ethica misericordis* de Concepción Arenal a la *ethica cordis* de Adela Cortina: origen y actualidad de la ética del Trabajo Social en España

Resumen. Recientemente, se ha identificado a Concepción Arenal como la primera trabajadora de la historia del Trabajo Social en España, así como su ética de la compasión (Idareta, 2020a, 2020b). Este trabajo tiene por objetivo explicar las similitudes y diferencias entre esta *ethica misericordis* y la *ethica cordis* de Adela Cortina. Por ello, en una primera parte, describiremos brevemente la aportación de Concepción Arenal, en la segunda parte, la de Adela Cortina y, en la tercera parte, compararemos las diferencias y las similitudes de ambas contribuciones. Se ha utilizado una metodología histórico-sistemática. La novedad de esta aportación radica en que es la primera vez que se comparan ambas propuestas éticas. Se concluye que la *ethica cordis* de Adela Cortina amplía el alcance y actualiza la *ethica misericordis* de Concepción Arenal, siendo por ello la virtud de la cordura uno de los elementos que debería integrarse en la ética del Trabajo Social en España.

Palabras clave: Trabajo Social; Adela Cortina; Concepción Arenal; ética de las virtudes; ética del deber

"Let us have (...) this blessed and reasonable hope; let us bequeath it to our children as a divine legacy; let us not fear that they will call our conviction a dream, because a day will come when it will be realized, and a century that will say: 'Those persevering dreamers were right'" (Arenal, 1880a, Letter 14)

"Humanity has a duty to offer reasons for hope, which is not a mere state of mind, but a moral virtue of the first order" (Cortina, 2021: 172)

Introduction

It is highly likely that Adela Cortina is, perhaps unintentionally, one of those sincere and intelligent friends whom Concepción Arenal described as hearing her voice crying out in the desert. The two women's proposals, one set made in the modern era and the other in the postmodern, are so well attuned that those of Cortina come across as a continuation of those of Arenal. Despite the many years separating the two women, ethical activism unites them. And theirs is an ethical activism that, for so many centuries, has been adopting different forms according to the historical moment that it has passed through and the heart that has welcomed it. This ethical activism has attained its ultimate expression when it has been embodied in these two women, for their contributions have not only awoken consciences but also synchronized citizens' heartbeats so that they work

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to the rhythm of the common good and social justice. In both women's proposals, reason and emotion as well as thought and sentiment go hand in hand, allowing a more complete response to humankind.

Social Work needs to be inspired by ethical proposals such as those of Concepción Arenal and Adela Cortina, because even though we have some solutions, it is rare for any of these to prove completely effective or permanent. Expanding our ethical perspective enables us to better understand the social reality we face, and it also gives us a greater repertoire of possible responses to that reality. In this respect, both Arenal and Cortina propose a combination of an ethics of virtues and an ethics of duty that is surely fundamental for Social Work. The two emphasize both the importance of forging a good character and respect for mandatory moral minimums. And they see the daily cultivation of virtues as something that makes the fulfilment of duties spontaneous. Therefore, Arenal's compassion and Cortina's cordial reason are more than moral motivations alone; they also allow people to act based on conviction in defence of human dignity and social justice.

1. Concepción Arenal's Ethics of Compassion

Concepción Arenal (1820-1893) was the first woman to obtain a position as a prison visitor in Spain, which she held between 1864 and 1865. From 1865, she fought for the abolition of slavery. As head of the Red Cross in Miranda de Ebro between 1872 and 1876, she came to the aid of soldiers who had been wounded in the Third Carlist War. She was an inspector of the Women's House of Correction between 1868 and 1873. She denounced social problems in the periodical *La voz de la Caridad* (*The Voice of Charity*), which she herself ran between 1870 and 1884. She tried to transform the reality of her time by giving marginalized people—the helpless, workers, women, and so on—a place and the means for inclusion within an international path towards social reform that was proving to be effective in Europe (Lacalzada, 1994, 2012).

The main purpose of her manual *El visitador del pobre* (*The Visitor to the Poor*; 1863), following on the heels of European reformist liberalism, was to mobilize humanitarian civil society through charitable associations so as to improve inclusion of the most disadvantaged people. She wrote it in a way that meant it could be read through both liberal and Catholic prisms, her aim being to bring their respective positions closer together. To this end, she used charity as a meeting point, since “true charity (...) is ultimately the basis of all religions, which, according to the etymology of that word, serve to unite men, not separate them” (Arenal, 1896: 202). This is why both Catholics and liberals came to identify Arenal's proposals within the parameters of their own worldviews.

In her early works, when she was confident that the Catholic Church would engage in dialogue with the liberal worldview, she conceived of charity as both a sentiment and a moral duty that puts us on the path to justice. But later, and probably as she lost hope in reconciliation between anti-liberal Catholics and Christian liberals (or Christian-reformist liberals), she placed greater emphasis on compassion's being what activates and encourages charity and justice. Having fostered acceptance of the notion that charity was a duty, she undertook the task of clarifying that charity is triggered by compassion for other people (Idareta, 2020a, 2020b). Arenal not only suggested how different functions could be divided up between the State, charitable associations and civil society, but also, from an ethical perspective, stressed that compassion was a fundamental element in her normative theory of good and that it was more than a sentiment. This position set her apart from worldviews such as that of the day's anti-liberal Catholics.

According to Arenal, we pity those whose material, intellectual and moral needs are not met and who cannot by themselves solve or control the problem that causes their suffering. Arenal also understands that, whether or not they are responsible for their misfortune, we feel pity for those who are in a situation of material, intellectual or moral misery, and also that we feel compassion if the person is valuable to us, or we feel it as an end in itself. Ultimately, in Arenal's view, we feel compassion when we recognize similarities between ourselves and the other, since their vulnerability awakens our own. According to Arenal, sympathy is what brings different positions closer together; it brings us closer to people who are different from ourselves and allows us to feel compassion for them (Idareta, 2020a, 2020b).

After Arenal had finished *El visitador del pobre* (1863), and as she was expanding on aspects of her proposal, compassion took on much greater prominence in her thought, to the point where charity became relegated to the background. But when Arenal did this, she attributed the characteristics of charity to compassion: first it is instinct, then sentiment and, finally, rationality. It is likely that, having realized the difficulty of neutralizing the understanding, typical among anti-liberal Catholics, of charity as alms, she decided to attribute all its virtues to compassion. Once she had ceased giving charity prominence in her subsequent works, she mainly referred to it as “duty” and “justice” (Idareta, 2020a, 2020b).

Concepción Arenal revolutionized consciences from within, but she also reformed attitudes and habits through empathy for others. In addition to considering, based on her view that people are vulnerable and therefore social, that it was necessary to preserve dignity and promote the perfectibility of human capacities, she also held that people's capacities for intellect, morality and sensitivity could be improved and raised up

through reforming attitudes and habits, speaking out against bad practices, improving laws and so on. For her, dignity is an insurmountable limit, and her proposals aim to guarantee it in all areas of public and private life.

In this regard, it must be clarified that Concepción Arenal understands morality as “the knowledge and practice of duty, undertaken out of pure love of good” (1880b, Letter 4). Her moral proposal is not heteronomous, since it arises from within, from cultivation of the qualities and capacities of each person’s conscience. For her, morality arises from the inner discovery of one’s own human vulnerability and that of others, meaning it leaves its imprint on the type of social relations, as well as on society’s type of economic and political system. Critical reflection on citizens’ moral behaviours—that is, ethics—therefore runs through what she proposes. An ethical focus is one of the hallmarks of Concepción Arenal’s work.

Her proposals for tackling different social issues are not made from ideological or political positions but from an exhaustive knowledge of them and from weighing up the repercussions and consequences that they all have on human dignity and perfectibility. She sees science, understood in an integral sense and within the dynamics of human progress, as being responsible for society’s ability to progress (Lacalzada, 2006).

2. Adela Cortina’s ethics of cordial reason

Adela Cortina, the greatest exponent of the Valencia School, is one of the most renowned, distinguished and appreciated philosophers on the Spanish philosophical scene. She is emeritus professor of moral and political philosophy at the University of Valencia, academic director of the ÉTNOR Foundation, a fellow of Spain’s Royal Academy of Moral and Political Sciences and the recipient of honorary degrees from several universities within and outside of Spain.

For Cortina, ethics cannot be reduced to the fulfilment of duty; it must allow people’s day-to-day problems to be addressed. In the midst of the current health crisis, we can see that claiming rights is not enough; it is necessary to accept responsibilities. Following Aranguren, Cortina points out that applying thought about morality to lived morality is key. Accordingly, Cortina founds her proposal on human beings’ ability to set rules for themselves through dialogue and cordial reason. She establishes an ethics of minimums based on shared values, the cordial reason that complements those values’ initial ethical foundation and citizens’ involvement in the rules to which they are subject. Ultimately, her main contribution lies in distinguishing between the ethics of minimums and the ethics of maximums and in offering up cordial reason, which combines with communicative reason. This contribution is guided by Hegel’s mutual recognition, Apel’s and Habermas’s discourse ethics and Ricoeur’s and Honnet’s positions on otherness (Sánchez, 2014).

Cordial reason (2007, 2021) completes and complements her ethics of minimums (1986). She initially proposes the achievement of ethical minimums based on dialogue and mutual recognition. But Cortina finds reason insufficient for the purpose of convincing us that we must act morally: reason needs to connect with our emotions and our sentiments to make us act with the necessary conviction. Emotional and moral education is essential for the cultivation of our values. There will be no conviction if we do not feel an attraction to values such as compassion, justice or kindness. We will become convinced by developing our capacity to prefer, to appreciate, to savour, to assess what cordial reason establishes in us. For this reason, “cultivating cordial reason, which has its roots in compassion, is one of the tasks that ethical education must take on to form citizens of a cosmopolitan world” (Cortina, 2021: 171). Thus, cordial reason is built on the values that make us opt for some realities and reject others, that make us feel attracted to some things and repelled by others. As we will see, the embodiment of these values forges our character through each of our choices.

Cortina’s departure point is her recognizing that human beings are vulnerable and that, precisely for this reason, they need help from others to live with dignity: “a vulnerable person is therefore someone who cannot stand on their own, who is not self-sufficient and, therefore, who depends on others and on internal and external luck throughout their life” (2021: 29). She thus takes the view that we are linked to all other human beings since before our birth and that this *ligatio* is the origin of *ob-ligatio*. In fact, it is a fraternity that demands responsibility from one another. And, therefore, it is a source of obligation whose origin Cortina situates (2001) in God’s covenant with His people. As we are already linked to everyone else before we have decided whether this is what we want, unlinking ourselves from others would mean explicitly breaking off from that initially contracted commitment. Each time we unlink ourselves, we are required to reject our obligation to other people.

Moreover, Cortina understands that compassion is what manages to humanize justice, since the cold calculation of justice is challenged and questioned by our feeling pain on others’ behalf: “compassion is what leads us to be concerned about justice. But rather than being obligingness, compassion is the ability to sympathize with the joy and suffering of those who recognize that they are autonomous and at the same time vulnerable” (Cortina, 2021: 40). Compassion makes justice adapt to and fit each situation in a more human way and to make people feel and understand that they are linked to others and, therefore, required to be answerable to them: “that *ligatio* leads to an *ob-ligatio*, which is more primary than duty; it leads to compassion in joy and suffering” (Cortina, 2021: 40). Hence, for Cortina, otherness is crucial for understanding people’s moral be-

haviour. From her perspective, moral obligation arises out of respect for the dignity of the other, as well as out of our compassion for their misfortune. This is how a person feels linked to themselves and to others: they discover that they can require themselves to comply with humanity's universalizable and expressive laws. This ability to give themselves laws and to require themselves to comply with them is achieved via reason, which is what links the person with themselves and with others.

The person thereby recognizes themselves by recognizing the other and, consequently, realizes that their duties are directly related to the rights of others. Thus, when the person recognizes others, they feel responsible for them and tend to act from the heart. For Cortina, compassion is a moral sentiment that drives people's responsibility. This compassion also comes about because we feel and recognize that we are linked to others through dialogue and that we belong to the same brotherhood.

But what can be done when these moral motivations cease to be effective? Cortina proposes to forge good character for us. In the face of moral illiteracy and emotional blindness, she proposes to educate our character, since without the requisite moral and emotional education, an ethical life is unfeasible (Cortina, 2007, 2021). When people are educated in values, they exhibit a preference for some things and push other things aside; they are attracted to some aspects of reality and repelled by others. These values that each person savours are qualities of reality that they must discover for themselves. This, then, is a non-transferable activity that requires daily training.

We must know how to identify which qualities of reality we will choose in order to give the world a more humane shape and construct ourselves and society with dignity. For it is these values that move us and, indeed, lead us to act. Thus, in order to achieve the aims that we have set for ourselves, we have to orient our behaviour via these values and integrate these ways of acting into our own behavioural repertoire. Once they are part of this repertoire, such values will manifest spontaneously.

3. Similarities and differences

Concepción Arenal's ethics of compassion or *ethica misericordis* has much in common with Adela Cortina's ethics of cordial reason or *ethica cordis*. Arenal was influenced by and can be identified within an international-humanist, progressive-liberal and Christian-reformist current that, over time, would come close to the humanist socialism of Fernando de los Ríos (Lacalzada, 2012). Cortina's approach, meanwhile, assumes "a certain 'logical socialism' or, rather, a 'pragmatic socialism'" (Cortina, 2007: 212), from which "it is a matter of universalizing a *liberal-social democracy*, built on a (...) *democratic ethos*" (Cortina, 2021: 14). In terms of the specific problems that they identify, Arenal highlights three flaws (ignorance, selfishness and insensitivity) and denounces the more affluent classes' hypocrisy towards and rejection of those most in need: "if gentlemen want people to change but do not first change themselves, they are attempting something impossible" (Arenal, 1880b, Letter 3). Cortina, on the other hand, refers to aporophobia (2017), gerontophobia (2021) and a myopic individualism "typical of neoliberalism" (2021: 38), as well as to a moral illiteracy and an emotional blindness that can be remedied through the moral and emotional education of citizens (2007). She thus concurs with Arenal's (1861, 1863, 1880a, 1880b, 1891, 1897) views that selfishness engenders a "*radical evil*" (2021: 151) and that poverty, hunger and social inequalities must be done away with (2007, 2010, 2017, 2021). The moral and emotional insensitivity that Arenal and Cortina detect leads them to ensure that reason is harmonized with sentiment and to back education as the way for people to develop a good character and for citizens to cultivate their virtues, in order for there to be no incoherence between words and deeds.

Both harmonize reason and emotion in their proposals. Arenal does so through her compassionate reason, considering that thought affects sentiment and vice versa: "what we think has such an influence on what we must do, and what we have done has such an influence on what we must think and feel" (Arenal, 1863: 107). In Arenal's proposal, "the heart is moved, becomes outraged and battles to get rid of the burden placed on it by the weight of social injustices" (Salillas, Azcárate and Sánchez, 1893: 21). Cortina, based on cordial reason, points out that it is not only reasons of reason that are necessary when acting with a desire for justice; reasons of the heart are required as well. For Arenal, cultivating intelligence and heart is crucial; according to Cortina, doing so consists in "knowing how to prioritize what is most valuable" (2021: 20). For Cortina, "according to Aristotle's splendid characterization, man is not reason alone but a conjunction of desirous intelligence and intelligent desire. The two have to work in harmony to achieve a good life" (2021: 32). According to Cortina, democratic society should seek to cultivate positive emotions and create emotional attachments to its rational principles. Otherwise, it will be easy for "strongly emotivist" (2021: 129) totalitarian or authoritarian proposals to erode or destroy them.

If we stop to reflect on the rationale for this link that each of the two thinkers establishes between reason and emotion, we will realize that both take a Kantian worldview as their starting point. For Arenal, sentiment is not only a source of moral obligation but also a mechanism to root any type of behaviour in people's hearts. And she takes the view that without the ability to become outraged, we will not be able to identify injustices either. In the same vein, Cortina, following Kant, points out that in order for a person to feel that they have obligations, a few

aesthetic preconditions must arise, sympathy being one of the virtues that must be cultivated. For her, emotions are antennae that connect a person with others, and so education in emotions and sentiments is essential in moral life. Indeed, she revisits Marcuse's conversation with Habermas in which the former acknowledges to the latter that compassion is the source of evaluative judgments—that is, feeling for others' pain. For this reason, she emphasizes that although sentiments are insufficient, they are still necessary for the ideals of humanity to take root in our hearts, since without the capacity to be outraged, we will not be able to identify injustices either.

In any case, we must understand that the paradigms that serve as their starting points are very different. Two centuries separate them. Arenal was inspired by the values of modernity, so in her understanding people, though vulnerable, constitute themselves from their own consciences. Each person's conscience plays a fundamental role in Arenal's work, since "we all have a conscience and a propensity to recognize our faults" (1863: 46). For Arenal, "the voice of conscience" (Arenal, 1869: 11-12) is very powerful, both for the subject (individual conscience) and for society as a whole (public conscience) (Arenal, 1880b, 1897). For this reason, Arenal constructs her proposal on the subjectivity of the subject, on their independence, although she understands that human beings are vulnerable and need to come together to achieve their goals. And this is also why Arenal proposes that people put themselves in the place of the other, though always in their conscience and without the involvement of reciprocity. Standing in contrast to this modern approach is Cortina's postmodern sentiment, which places emphasis on sensitivity towards differences and diversity and, consequently, on intersubjectivity, on interdependence and on our need, as dignified and vulnerable beings, for one other.

Conscience is similarly crucial for Arenal; it allows people to become aware of their dignity and consequently identify it in others within their imagination. According to Arenal, having complied with the law, we must "do what is demanded by that justice that comprises the conscience, which is written in the heart and cannot be captured in the articles of any code" (Arenal, 1868: 8). Cortina, coming from another perspective, points out when discussing the conscience that a conscience as to duties is universally and necessarily preeminent, since duties of this kind are precisely what humanity as such attains. Hence, for Arenal, morality is what is "rooted in the depths of the conscience and illuminated by the light of understanding. It is loving reason or reasoned love that thinks and all at once feels imperative duty, austere virtue, sublime self-denial" (1881: 94). For Cortina, by contrast, ethics seeks to clarify what a moral life comprises; according to her, the latter is sustained by the religious or secular traditions of everyday life.

In any case, both thinkers manage to harmonize ethical virtues and moral duties in their proposals. Arenal considers each person to be capable of voluntary self-improvement (virtue), compassion being what that places the person on the path of moral improvement. By contrast, correction of people must entail obligation (duty). Cortina, on the other hand, indicates that when moral obligation (duty) is not triggered through respect for dignity or through compassion in the face of others' misfortune, we have to forge good character (virtue).

In her *ethica misericordis*, Arenal (1863, 1891) highlights the importance of intellectual and moral virtues, probably following in the footsteps of Aristotle (2014), who differentiated between dianoetic virtues (those taught via and derived from experience: wisdom, contemplation and prudence) and ethical virtues (those acquired out of habit: justice, fortitude and temperance). For Arenal, virtues are fundamental insofar as they allow us to intellectually and morally cultivate ourselves, improve our capacities and, in so doing, be as worthy as we can be. Cortina (2021: 128) explains that her *ethica cordis* is a question of "returning to Aristotle and his concept of the end, of *telos*, but no less, in fact, to Hegel, who demanded that norms be incorporated into habits. (...) This is the triumph of the idea of freedom: embodiment in habits". For her, the important thing is "to set oneself a *good goal*, the wisdom of cultivating the *excellent qualities* that allow that goal to be achieved, the need to embody the *positive values* that condition that social sphere, making it habitable, and *moral norms* (not just legal ones)" (Cortina, 2021: 46).

Within Arenal's *ethica misericordis*, the fundamental virtue is compassion, although in its recommendations to visitors, it also highlights gentleness, firmness, exactness, circumspection, zeal, perseverance and humility (Arenal, 1863), as well as modesty (Arenal, 1891). In Cortina's *ethica cordis*, the primordial virtue is cordial reason, which Cortina defines as the "implanting of prudence into justice's heart" (Cortina, 2021: 26). Cortina criticizes prudence, pointing out that it is an individual virtue that does not demand intersubjectivity, that its basis is not recognition of the other as an indispensable and valid interlocutor who must also be taken into account in the questions that affect oneself. In fact, according to Cortina, what is prudent may not be what is fairest.

Regarding duty, Arenal considers it according to the person's social situation: wealthy people must do good (positive duty), while the most disadvantaged people must not do evil (negative duty). It should be kept in mind that for Arenal, duty arises in the heart and moves up to the head—that is, "the tendency to good (...) goes from the heart to the head" (1861: 78-79), based on an awareness that the head needs the heart and the heart needs the head (Arenal, 1863). This is therefore the direction followed by the practice of good and the foundation on which Arenal's normative theory of good is built. According to Arenal, moral law—that is, "do not do unto others what you do not want others to do unto you"—is written in all hearts (Arenal, 1869) and has a negative formulation (negative duty) as well as a positive one (positive duty). From this perspective, it is not only poor people who have duties but rich people as well, since she understands that if something *can* be done, it *must* be done. In short, to paraphrase Descartes, "I can, therefore I must". Furthermore, Arenal conceives of each person's duty as other people's right: "the right of one man supposes a duty for another" (1869: 18).

For Cortina, we recognize ourselves as bearers of rights when we recognize the obligations that we have to fulfil vis-à-vis others. She thus takes the view that duty arises from fraternity—that is, from reciprocal recognition—since that recognition ensures that there is a connection between self-reflection, one’s conscience and orientation towards the other. According to Cortina, human reason gives laws, which is why these are the laws of humanity and why people are linked to themselves as well as to humanity. From her perspective, “humanity supposes obligation” (Cortina, 2007: 119) because we are tied to ourselves and to the humanity of everyone else. In her case too, sensitivity is the condition for making perception of duty possible.

With regard to the source of moral obligation, Arenal considers compassion to be the moral sentiment that articulates the person’s duty and humanizes their desire for justice, while Cortina understands obligation as arising because a person is linked to others before they even know they are, and therefore they have a commitment to others that they would have to actively reject if they decide to unlink themselves from them. Being linked to others is an obligation that is expressed through respect for the dignity or greatness of human beings, as well as through the compassion that a person experiences in the face of others’ suffering. In any case, Cortina points out that people also act without any moral motives, out of love for their fellow people and in return for nothing. Both women think that it is better if a person is convinced rather than obligated. Arenal considered it essential for visitors to be ethically convinced (internally, in their heads and hearts) rather than morally obliged (externally coerced in the fulfilment of a duty whose meaning and significance they do not sense or understand): “it is necessary to convince individuals. The days of blind faith are over or ending” (1881: 24). Cortina agrees that it is “better not to mention obligation, because it is counterproductive; it is better to convince people” (2007: 46).

In both women’s proposals, brotherhood between human beings is fundamental. For Arenal, fraternity entails “treating the poor as brothers” (1880b, Letter 3), since one must be willing “to see a brother in every man” (1879: 260). From her perspective, a person is worthy because people have been created in God’s image and likeness (Genesis 1: 26-27), and, precisely for this reason, they are free as well as responsible when it comes to the life given to them. Being God’s children supposes the brotherhood of all human beings, who, owing to their dignity, are alike and are endowed with a conscience, a love of good, an aversion to evil and resignation. That is, for Arenal, dignity creates brotherhood. For Cortina, the link that we have with others and that is the source of our moral obligation is also established by Genesis and the equal dignity of every human being (2001), and she emphasizes that “nothing can replace the personal encounter in life’s different aspects; we are in dialogue and we cannot renounce cordial relations without losing our human quality” (2021: 88). As we will see, for both thinkers, fraternity or solidarity are what connect equality and freedom, since when the two are not considered, unpleasant consequences come about. That fraternity is always a requirement that commits us, a link or a *ligatio* that *ob-liges*.

The virtue of compassion also takes centre stage in the two women’s works. Both seek to rehabilitate the meaning and significance attributed to it, trying to rescue it from the clutches of the moral emotivism of their respective times. In understanding compassion as instinct, sentiment and reason, Arenal (1861: 76) distanced herself from the conception, promoted by the Catholicism of her era, of it as passive obligingness. For Arenal, compassion is “an impulse that springs from the heart and conscience” (Arenal, 1897: 300), but she also held that “the holy blindness of compassion (...) is a duty at the side of the suffering underprivileged” (Arenal, 1863: 209). Compassion “becomes obligatory among cultured peoples under the name of public charity” (1880b, Letter 11).

Along the same lines, following MacIntyre, Cortina explains that liberals “had forgotten the tradition of virtues, replacing them with norms and principles, and moral language had lost all rationality, coming to be an emotivist language (...) incapable of leading to rational agreements” (2021: 128). As a consequence, the disadvantage of the liberal model is that it “barely engages in solving common problems” (2021: 131). For this reason, Cortina argues that true compassion “is an active, transforming sentiment, and not a passive obligingness towards those whose circumstances are the worst; it brings us to the recognition of suffering that leads to the seeking of relief, and hopefully it also includes the ability to rejoice over good that is remote from ourselves” (2021: 25). Thus, whereas Arenal understands compassion as recognition of others’ suffering, Cortina goes further, understanding it as “the capacity to share the joy and suffering of the (...) vulnerable” (2021: 40).

For Arenal, pain is “character building” (1863: 292) and is forged when this pain is pitied. As she points out, “corresponding to each series of pains is a series of consolations” (1861: 92). Therefore, when pain is pitied, compassion prompts moral duty and humanizes social reforms. When pain is not pitied, a spiral of selfishness, isolation, demoralization, insensitivity, ignorance, and so forth begins. For Arenal, compassion articulates moral duty and social reform and allows the creation of the moral atmosphere for promoting the appropriate moral conditions to ensure the dignity of each human being and bring together people of different classes in cooperation. For Cortina (2007, 2021), compassion is also important as a source of people’s moral obligation, since she holds that anyone who lacks compassion will be unable to grasp others’ suffering. Along with respect for human dignity, compassion is a source of moral obligation and, along with cordial reason, one of the most important virtues. Therefore, reciprocal recognition is cordial recognition as well as compassionate recognition.

Both authors also attach importance to sympathy as a moral sentiment. Arenal understands that the closer people are, the less inequality there will be. Sympathy brings different categories of people (poor, rich, learned, ignorant) closer together, and through the “imagination of virtue” (Arenal, 1863: 75-76) we manage to sympathize with others, better and more frequently likening ourselves to our fellow people. Cortina reminds us that it was Kant who indicated that there is a duty to cultivate sympathy, since “this is still one of the impulses that nature has implanted in us to do what the representation of duty alone might not accomplish” (Kant, 1996: 205). Sympathy leads us to be outraged about evil and take pleasure in good—that is, it leads us to show solidarity with the stricken, to reject harmful behaviours and to defend the common interest. However, according to Cortina, sympathy is a sentiment that goes in only one direction—that is, it does not require reciprocity. Hence, the procedure to determine what is fair consists in trying to assume the place of an impartial observer capable of putting themselves in the place of any other, and not in trying to establish a dialogue with those who are already exist part of the communicative link.

Their respective conceptions of justice are very similar. Both Arenal and Cortina refer to compassionate justice, although they each see different nuances in it. In Arenal’s case, compassion is the driving force of the desire for justice. Justice, which consists in giving each person what they are due, must from this perspective guarantee and safeguard dignified treatment and the improvement thereof vis-à-vis any human being, so all people are treated with dignity and can aspire to be the best version of themselves. Concepción Arenal takes these positions because in her view “morality always retains its levelling trait, in the good sense of the word, the trait of equalizing by raising” (1898: 81). In this sense, morality is the foundation of social justice, “since it powerfully influences [people] to react against unjust inequality” (1898: 81). For her, the treatment of people ceases to be fair when they are exploited, when they are treated as things, as a result of which “there is an enormous risk of going astray if justice is sought through utility instead of utility’s being reached by means of justice” (1877: 25).

For Cortina, there is no true justice without solidarity with the weakest, or authentic solidarity without a basis of justice. Therefore, it is necessary to have reasons of reason and reasons of the heart to speak of justice. Just as Arenal does, she understands compassion to be the driving force of justice and sentiment to be what creates an urgency to be concerned about justice. Taking Gilligan’s ethics of care as a starting point, she argues that there are two moral voices: first, that of justice, which consists in judging what is good or bad from a universal perspective, and second, that of compassion for those who need help (Cortina, 2007, 2010). For her, compassionate justice consists in giving each person their due according to reciprocal recognition among people who are equally dignified. Both Arenal and Cortina therefore defend equal dignity, arguing that dignity makes us equal and that we must commit to equal opportunities.

On the other hand, both Arenal (1879) and Cortina (2021) are committed to a humanitarian moral sensitivity and the establishment of local and global ethical minimums. For Arenal, the force of international law flows “not from bayonets, but from the human conscience (...). It is difficult to establish, because it has to be voluntarily accepted [even if it is] easy to enforce once it is proclaimed” (1879: 305). The global as well as local compassionate justice advocated by Arenal (1879: 301) leads her to submit that since “man’s character is the essential bond that should unite everyone, a sentiment of humanity facilitates a change of nationality (...) and so the foreigner becomes a compatriot. (...) Because justice is universal, everyone must do it and receive it”. This humanitarian morality is what inspires obligations that, according to Cortina, “transcend the limits of States” (2021: 159). Therefore, for both thinkers—though Arenal does not explicitly state it—an ethic of global and local minimums that defends and protects the dignity of any human being is paramount. Even though Arenal does not to the same extent develop the idea of deep-rooted cosmopolitanism referred to by Cortina (2021: 146), she does point to a similar idea: “the idea that human beings belong to a single community, in which everyone must be included and which must be cultivated. (...) All human beings (...) belong, or should belong, to a single community”. All this is so because a cosmopolitan society is a society that “makes it possible to guarantee peace” and because “global challenges require cosmopolitan responses” (Cortina, 2021: 152, 167).

On the other hand, they have different views on freedom. Arenal, in tune with modern approaches, understands freedom as responsibility—that is, “I can, therefore I must”. The important thing for a person is to have sufficient independence to choose—that is, to be able to act without interference. Cortina, belonging to postmodernism, understands freedom as the capacity to create for oneself laws that express humanity (laws that one would like for all humanity) and to oblige oneself to comply with them. In any case, both Arenal and Cortina agree that resources and means must serve the capacities required to lead a life worth living. For both women, a distinguishing trait of humans is their ability to give themselves laws and act according to them. Furthermore, however, both understand that people have a need to establish links. Arenal considers it essential for people to come together to achieve common interests. She also sees coming together as something that creates brotherhood among human beings (1880a, Letter 14), though if we do not come together, it is also helpful to consider all people to be beings with equal dignity (1880a, Letter 15). For Cortina, to carry out plans, it is necessary to create links with those who can help us to achieve them. Therefore, we need to link ourselves with others. In addition, as we have already seen, there is a link that demands recognition and creates obligation. If

we are already linked, undoing that link requires us to adopt an active position of rejection vis-à-vis the obligation to others. In both cases, linkage generates obligations in the form of duty and gift.

For Arenal, the means for tackling social catastrophes are coming together, work and instruction. With respect to the last of these, her proposal of compulsory primary education, within which she specified the importance of people's knowing how to read and write in order to receive an education, should be highlighted (Arenal, 1880b). For Cortina (2007, 2021), a crucial part of education is educating desire as a process of savouring a life worth living. According to her, citizens must be educated as moral subjects who are willing to do good and share action and thought with others, since educating in relation to justice always requires going beyond prudence. It is about educating people with heart, with a sense of justice and gratuitousness: "what is essential in the political community (...) is a mature citizenship, a vigorous society, capable of thinking and loving for itself, reticent towards polarization" (2021: 80). Arenal and Cortina agree that morally and emotionally educated people not only will possess tools to deal with emotional blindness and moral illiteracy but will also be highly moral. Arenal herself pointed out that people's corrupted habits cannot be purified "if the moral and intellectual level is not raised (...), if alongside instruction they are not given more dignity and more means of procuring sustenance and living honestly" (1881: 23).

Finally, both consider the economy as an essential element of social progress. For Arenal, a person is "a moral and material being" (1880a, Letter 3) and, therefore, the "economy is an element of well-being" (1880a, Letter 27). Consequently, in her understanding, "if you do not have morality, all in all you gain nothing by having a higher salary" (1880a, Letter 3). For Arenal, people need a material minimum to live with dignity (1869, 1880a, 1880b, 1881, 1897). She only accepts "alms in the form of work" (1880a, Letter 7) and when, occasionally, people find themselves "with a choice between stealing or starving" (1868: 8). According to Arenal, "living off alms (...) is demoralizing" (1897: 383) since "it ceaselessly humiliates the person receiving it" (1897: 83). For Cortina, meanwhile, "economics is the science that tries to overcome scarcity, but also *the science that tries to eliminate poverty*" (2021: 69). She holds that "there is no good life without an economy" (Cortina, 2021: 67 et seq.) and that there is a need for "a minimum income, but as a temporary measure, because what matters is to empower, to promote employability and to avoid the need for people to live off subsidies" (2021: 82).

Conclusions

In Arenal's approach, which is based on the independence of the subject, the most important things are the ability to put oneself in the place of the other and prudent behaviours. A path to the other is thus opened up, but the answer that the other might give is not considered. The moral subject is moral because of their conscience and, thanks to that conscience, they are able to sympathize with the other or be prudent so as to not be harmed, even if their behaviour is detrimental to the other. Cortina has the same view on cooperation, which does not take into account the other but each person's contribution. For all these reasons, the ethics of cordial reason are built on consideration of the other, on the importance of intersubjectivity in the face of independence, on emphasizing solidarity rather than cooperation, and on cordial reason rather than on prudence, since the prudent person "pursues a quality life for themselves and their loved ones, [but] they are not always willing to meet the demands of justice" (2007: 260). The moral subject is constructed based on otherness, by responding to what the other demands, and not based on one's own conscience if our starting point is to consider Kantian autonomy.

The two thinkers' proposals are built on different paradigms (modern and postmodern). Nevertheless, the similarities between them are surprising. Arenal's proposals are situated within the modern paradigm, and she founded her *ethica misericordis* on subjectivity. The genius of her work has led to her being considered a pioneer of different disciplines long before their founding. Social Work should be included among those disciplines, since through her proposals Arenal contributed to laying the ethical and epistemological foundations of modern Social Work in Spain long before it was founded and became a professional activity in this country. She was the first person in Spain to make proposals in which we find the ethical and epistemological seeds of what later, having been systematized and professionalized, would be known as modern Social Work. What she proposed was based on European values, unlike other, better-known proposals that were built on Anglo-Saxon values. In fact, her contribution is attuned with subsequently created Social Work intervention models such as the existential-humanist model of Carl Rogers and Donald F. Krill or the consciousness-raising model of Paulo Freire (Viscarret, 2007), at all times within the radical humanism of the consciousness-raising paradigm (Howe, 1999). Therefore, it is necessary for the field of Social Work to take a serious and exhaustive approach to Arenal's intellectual and moral legacy as a historical precedent in which the essence of our ethical code is rooted (Consejo General del Trabajo Social, 2015), as well as in terms of the European virtues and values that differentiate us from other specific forms of proto-Social Work from the Anglo-Saxon world.

Cortina's *ethica cordis*, which is put forward within a postmodern paradigm and based on intersubjectivity, constitutes an essential current reference point for the humanization of Social Work. For Cortina, "designing an

ethics based on cordial reason, on a prudent and lucid sense of justice, on the unwavering aspiration to freedom and on compassion is the human heart's true path" (Cortina, 2021: 26). This position is in tune not only with Arenal's proposal but also with the values of Social Work, a professional discipline in which there is still a gap between lived morality and thought about morality, between words and deeds, and in which, precisely for this reason, an *ethica cordis* can be very useful in integrating ethical virtues and moral duties within a single proposal. All this is so because we view the forging of a good character to be crucial in Social Work, even if to this end we must first specify the virtues that should be cultivated and endowed with meaning and significance in our specific context (Banks, 2021). Taking the virtue of cordial reason as a starting point to initiate an intra-professional dialogue on these issues may be of interest.

Both Arenal and Cortina strive to harmonize reason and emotion; they consider compassion to be fundamental in the humanization of people and the articulation of the equal dignity of human beings to only be achievable via social justice. Their reflections focus on aspects such as aporophobia, a prominent phenomenon within the Social Work worldview; Arenal theorized about it in her day without actually conceptualizing it (Arenal, 1861, 1880a), and Cortina (2017) recently coined a name for. Both women successfully combine virtues and moral duty in their proposals, Arenal doing so via subjectivity and Cortina doing so via intersubjectivity. Therefore, I see Arenal's *ethica misericordis* as having been broadened in its scope and to a significant degree updated by Cortina's *ethica cordis*. The ethical proposal of this Social Work pioneer finds its echo in Adela Cortina's ethics of cordial reason, which is why the virtue of cordial reason is one of the elements that should be integrated into the ethics of Social Work in Spain. The two thinkers' proposals have unquestionably been decisive in the humanization of society: Arenal as a chastiser of consciences and Cortina as an ethical activist for cordial reason.

Finally, despite the fact that Arenal, unlike Cortina, did not have the honour of joining Spain's Royal Academy of Moral and Political Sciences, the truth is that she was put forward for it by those who had a voice and authority at the time, and the Academy has issued awards in her memory three times, putting her ahead of other illustrious competitors (Lacalzada, 2020). The time will come when this symbolic recognition takes concrete form and the academy is honoured by the presence of Concepción Arenal among its members.

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