

## TOWARD GLOBAL ETHICS

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*[Several earlier essays in this journal have explored questions such as whether it is possible to speak of intercultural dialogue about the common good in an era of globalization, or whether one can even seek a “global ethics.” These questions are more poignant and critical since the tragic events of September 11, 2001. The author here argues that a revised concept of the common good can still be useful. She brings to bear on global ethics some aspects of Aquinas’s view of practical reason, especially its historical contextuality and its interdependence with moral virtue.]*

ONE OF THE MOST daunting questions contemporary life poses to Catholic social teaching is whether its concept of “common good” can survive globalization. That question became acutely urgent in September 2001, when the terrorist organization al Qaeda heightened its visibility among the ranks of transnational actors. The continuing value of the “common good” concept will depend on its ability to encourage intelligent communal discourse about the possibility and shape of a “good society,”<sup>1</sup> avoiding both gross injustice and the violent, anarchic solutions it can provoke. Catholic tradition has operated to date on the premises that some social visions are more reasonable and beneficent than others and that bona fide argument not only can and will elucidate the difference, but will produce laws and institutions reflecting it. In the nugget definition of John XXIII:

The common good touches the whole man, the needs both of his body and of his soul. Hence it follows that the civil authorities must undertake to effect the common good by ways and means that are proper to them; that is, while respecting the

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<sup>1</sup> David Hollenbach, S. J., “Afterword: A Community of Freedom,” in *Catholicism and Liberalism: Contributions to American Public Philosophy*, ed. Bruce Douglass and David Hollenbach (New York: Cambridge University, 1994) 334. See also, David Hollenbach, S. J., “Common Good,” in Judith A. Dwyer, ed., *The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1994) 192–96.

hierarchy of values, they should promote simultaneously both the material and social welfare of the citizens.<sup>2</sup>

Effecting the common good is difficult even within one national or ethnic community; if taken to planetary lengths, responsibility for the common good seems nigh impossible to secure. Even before the American public's forced reeducation in varieties of Islam and of Middle Eastern society, communications technologies had illumined a kaleidoscope of cultural traditions and clashes that make universal reason and natural law seem increasingly incredible. Few today would venture to arrange a hierarchy of "man's" physical and spiritual needs, or to define "material and social welfare" in the same way for all societies. In any event, international relations seem more determined by economic than by moral forces, the former having been magnified by new information systems to an unprecedented and virtually uncontrollable degree. The global dominance of transnational economic institutions and corporations, evading governance by national states or international bodies, has almost demolished the idea that relations among peoples can be promoted cooperatively under an effective world authority.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the perpetrators of the 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon sought self-justification precisely in the idea that the U.S. is a malign international power that only retaliatory violence can curb.<sup>4</sup> The Catholic common good paradigm, relying on nature, reason, and universal law, has come to seem an Enlightenment relic, naively isolated from cultural pluralism, economic globalization, and competing philosophical and theological interpretations of the human condition, especially those projected from other cultural situations. In fact, these challenges raise the possibility that the question of a universal ethic or normative common good is no longer even the right question to ask.

On the other side, the United Nations and its Secretary General Kofi Annan were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in late 2001 to symbolize the

<sup>2</sup> John XII, *Pacem in terris*, no. 57, in David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, ed., *Catholic Thought: The Documentary Heritage* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1998) 140.

<sup>3</sup> See Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, 3rd ed. (Addison-Wesley, 2000); Joseph S. Nye Jr. and John D. Donahue, ed., *Governance in a Globalizing World* (Cambridge, Mass. and Washington: Visions of Governance for the 21st Century and Brookings Institution, 2000); and David Held, Anthony G. McGrew, David Goldblatt and Jonathan Perraton, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> For illustrations of radical Islamic fear of a "Zionist-Crusader alliance" and some of its historical roots, see Michael Scott Doran, "Somebody Else's Civil War," *Foreign Affairs* 81/1 (2002) 22–42.

hope for and reality of “a better organized and more peaceful world.”<sup>5</sup> In his Nobel lecture in Oslo, Annan said that “humanity is indivisible,” and affirmed that “peace must be sought, above all, because it is the condition for every member of the human family to live a life of dignity and security.”<sup>6</sup> Annan’s leadership assumes the ability of all cultures to identify conditions of a dignified and secure life, then to seek it cooperatively for all persons and groups.

Recent issues of *Theological Studies* have sought to foster “global awareness” in moral as well as theological scholarship, while displaying the cultural variation around the world and within United States theology itself.<sup>7</sup> In the 2001 “Notes on Moral Theology,” Jean Porter takes the position that a global ethic is impossible, and that it is moreover unnecessary because cultures can overcome moral disagreements by proceeding on an ad hoc and pragmatic basis.<sup>8</sup> William O’Neill, S.J., writing about African thought, avoids any antithesis between universal and particular moralities by recasting the debate as a discussion of how narrative traditions critically reinterpret themselves using rhetoric and symbols such as “human rights.”<sup>9</sup> Neither Porter nor O’Neill is prepared to endorse an objective, universal, or common ethic in fact or in principle, though both allude to the fact that people from very different cultures do come together to debate and even agree on paths toward resolution of difficult social problems. In Porter’s words, “The very success of these processes does at least suggest that there are significant commonalities in human existence that make cross-cultural moral consensus a real possibility. We cannot take such a consensus as a given, bestowed on us by a universal morality, but that does not mean that we have to despair of developing it.”<sup>10</sup> Such development will have to do without hope for “a global ethic” however. My aim is to explore actual intercultural moral and policy consensus and the character of practical

<sup>5</sup> Gunnar Berge, chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, as quoted by Sarah Lyall, “In Nobel Talk, Annan Sees Each Human Life as the Prize,” *New York Times*, December 11, 2001, A3.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, A3.

<sup>7</sup> This aim is voiced in Michael A. Fahey’s editorial for the *TS* 62/1 (March, 2001). It is exemplified in the issue on Black Catholic theology 61/4 (December, 2000), and in essays such as Peter C. Phan, “Method in Liberation Theologies,” *TS* 61 (2000) 40–63; James T. Bretzke, S. J., “Moral Theology out of East Asia,” *TS* 61 (2000) 106–121; Maureen A. Tilley, “The Collapse of a Collegial Church: North African Christianity on the Eve of Islam,” *TS* 62 (2001) 3–22; Jean Porter, “The Search for a Global Ethic,” *TS* 62 (2001) 105–21; William R. O’Neill, S. J., “African Moral Theology,” *TS* 62 (2001) 122–39; and Peter C. Phan, “The Wisdom of Holy Fools in Postmodernity,” *TS* 62 (2001) 675–700.

<sup>8</sup> Porter, “Search for a Global Ethic” 120.

<sup>9</sup> O’Neill, “African Moral Theology” 131, 135, 138.

<sup>10</sup> Porter, “Search for a Global Ethic” 120.

reason, in order to nuance the idea of a global common good and to strengthen the prospect of finding global ethics.

### THE IMPORTANCE AND ELUSIVENESS OF GLOBAL ETHICS

The search for a global approach to the common good has serious practical implications.<sup>11</sup> Too often in the past, and as numerous postmodern and deconstructionist thinkers have noted, construals of universal human nature and of the good society have been projected by elites as ideological protections of their own interests, usually in willful ignorance of glaring cultural biases. The Ugandan theologian Emmanuel Katongole is a Catholic priest educated in philosophy at Rome and Leuven, who has taught at Duke University in collaboration with Stanley Hauerwas. According to Katongole, liberal political theory and its prioritization of the nation state serve “the Western-inspired capitalistic economy,”<sup>12</sup> with results that can hardly be justified in terms of the global common good. On the other hand, however, the abandonment of any notion of moral objectivity or shared human needs and values could create a dangerous vacuum, especially in “first world” academia and politics, where the atrophy of serious commitment to global social change threatens to leave an open field for naked assertions of self-interest.<sup>13</sup> If philosophy and theology have given up on global standards, economic institutions have not, and the standards of the latter are hardly egalitarian. Likewise, recent events in response to terrorism have exposed a debate, even rift, in U.S. foreign policy over whether an “America first” agenda should guide the global influence of the world’s remaining superpower.

Communication, consensus, and action across cultural borders do take place, however provisional and fragile their achievement might be. Political scientists Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink describe the strength and effectiveness of transnational advocacy networks that have been able to

<sup>11</sup> Recent international Catholic ventures in this regard include Karl-Josef Kuschel and Dietmar Mieth, ed., *Concilium 2001/4: In Search of Universal Values* (London: SCM, 2001); and J. S. Boswell, F. P. McHugh, and J. Verstraeten, *Catholic Social Thought: Twilight or Renaissance?* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000).

<sup>12</sup> Emmanuel Katongole, *Beyond Universal Reason: The Relation between Religion and Ethics in the Work of Stanley Hauerwas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2000) 221.

<sup>13</sup> See Gary Teeple, *Globalization and the Decline of Social Reform: Into the Twenty-First Century*, rev. ed (New York: Prometheus Books, 2000). On the importance of a revived notion of common good in dealing with phenomena like transnational capital and global finance in a newly interdependent world, see John A. Coleman, S. J., “Retrieving or Reinventing Social Catholicism: A Transatlantic Response” in *Catholic Social Thought* 281–86.

build on broad intercultural agreement around three central issue areas: human rights, the environment, and women's rights.<sup>14</sup> It may be possible to aim at a theory of "global ethics," if not of "a global ethic" in the sense of a single, closely specified set of norms. "Significant commonalities in human experience" do give rise to common perceptions of justice and injustice across cultural boundaries, especially when specific issues are at stake.

One glimpse of the possibility of global ethics is given through the International Criminal Court, established in 1998 by 120 signatory nations. For instance, in constituting sexual assault as a crime against humanity, the founding documents point to and reinforce a global rise in consciousness of women's human dignity. The shameful fact that the United States still opposes the ICC merely confirms that some moral ideals are so widely recognized that they will not be defeated by even the most powerful dissenters. Genocide is also now commonly recognized to be a crime and not a tolerable face of war. In 2001, international war crimes tribunals convicted eight Rwandans and a Bosnian Serb general, Radislav Krstic, of this crime, in separate trials in Arusha and The Hague.

International concern about the environment testifies further that humans everywhere require certain natural conditions of life and that moral obligations to protect nature make sense to peoples around the world. The fact that in 2001 the United States reneged on a previous commitment and became the lone dissenter to the Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement to fight global warming, was met by disapprobation both internationally and domestically. The Protocol's supporters, including the European Union and Japan, proceeded with implementation. These instances illustrate that there are some issues on which it is possible to mobilize action by drawing together different interests around "global" ideals of social responsibility, even if they are not always uniformly endorsed or applied. Global ethics does not stand or fall with a universal set of specific moral prescriptions, which few today would defend, but with the idea that there are after all some moral nonnegotiables and some clearly identifiable injustices to which all cultures and religions should be responsive for humanistic reasons.<sup>15</sup>

As the Catholic social ethicist John Coleman has stated, the common good "looks to both some objectivity of the good and a concomitant societal consensus" about public goods and the institutional arrangements nec-

<sup>14</sup> Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1998).

<sup>15</sup> A longstanding project to bring religions together around issues of global responsibility is the Parliament of the World's Religion; see Hans Küng and Helmut Schmidt, ed., *A Global Ethic and Global Responsibilities: Two Declarations* (London: SCM, 1998); and several essays in *In Search of Universal Values*.

essary for human flourishing.<sup>16</sup> While objectivity and consensus may seem like elusive philosophical and practical goals, Emmanuel Katongole is ultimately right to acknowledge that “the notions of truth, rational justification, and objectivity themselves are not in question; the problem is that the standards for their achievement have been set in the wrong place.”<sup>17</sup> A mistaken standard of objective truth is a simple and accurate correspondence between an object known and a rational knower’s mind or propositions, a standard without which there can be no demand for detailed behavioral prescriptions that remain the same always and everywhere. Even a very modestly realistic ethic must follow the pragmatist turn in recent philosophy to the extent of granting that truth is integrally related to the social and historical context of the knower and hence to community experiences and practices.<sup>18</sup>

The issue is not so much whether moral truth exists at all, but how it emerges from the relation between agents or knowers and their contexts, and how radically it varies with histories, communities, and traditions. Do individual subjects or groups create disparate realities and truths through idiosyncratic practices, languages, and self-understandings? Is “rational justification” radically particular to specific traditions, or is there such a thing as reasonable evidence upon which different communities can agree? Over against the stark alternatives of objectivist foundationalism and relativist nonfoundationalism, one possibility is “a refigured model of rationality that encompasses radical contextuality as well as cross-contextual, interdisciplinary conversation.”<sup>19</sup> Maybe the “commitment to a mind-independent reality” and a “fundamental presupposition of objectivity” are still viable if sufficiently revised, but the evidence must be pragmatic, interactive, and provisional, disclosed through the “pull of purpose” in moral experience.<sup>20</sup>

I want to probe the meaning of global ethics as an intercultural process, serving the common good through experience-based consensus about the truth of moral relationships. If it makes no sense to speak of a real, reasonable, and truly “common” human good, in the interests of a better

<sup>16</sup> Coleman, “Retrieving or Re-inventing Social Catholicism” 290.

<sup>17</sup> *Beyond Universal Reason* 177.

<sup>18</sup> See Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1985). For a strong theological endorsement of theological pragmatism, see Sheila Greeve Davaney, *Pragmatic Historicism: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Albany: State University of New York, 2000).

<sup>19</sup> J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, *The Shaping of Rationality: Toward Interdisciplinarity in Theology and Science* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 174. Another philosopher of science who defends a “modest realism” in science and political ethics is Philip Kitcher, *Science, Truth and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University, 2001).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 216.

global society, then the trajectory of the modern papal social encyclicals has outlived its usefulness (some would say its ability to oppress). If global ethics for the common good does or still can make moral sense, then it must be revised in light of a much more pluralistic and decentralized philosophical, theological, and ecclesial situation than obtained over a century ago when modern papal social teaching had its inception in Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum*. If postmodern, deconstructive philosophy and politics have worked as strategies of liberation for the oppressed, now common good theories can become strategies of accountability for the oppressors.

Reinterpreting common good and defending global ethics requires a reexamination of practical reason and the relation of moral truth to context, to commitment, and to action. It requires a refined understanding of goods and relationships as interdependent components of morality. My present essay, though its aim is dialogical, obviously conducts this project from the standpoint of "Western" moral theory and a discussion about global institutions and ethics that has its base point in Euro-American theory and experience. It cannot be claimed, a priori, that the proposals it advances will be as useful for thinkers in other contexts as they might be in the originating one. Katongole, no stranger to the canons of Western academia, no doubt speaks for representatives of many other cultural traditions when he resists having African philosophy and social thought "placed" by Western paradigms that ask different questions, work on different assumptions, and misinterpret African subject matter.<sup>21</sup>

The same note is sounded by another non-Westerner who uses the gap between cultures as her site of boundary-crossing creativity. In her memoir *Border Passage*, the Muslim Egyptian Leila Ahmed (now a Harvard professor) poignantly describes the lack of fit she felt between her complicated experience growing up in an upper class family in Nasser's Egypt, and the Western theory (Marxism) she was expected to command when she arrived as a graduate student at Cambridge University in the 1960s. Why, she wondered inchoately, was there one acceptable theoretical construct to which academic success was attached, and which was built out of the experience of the white, middle class, male majority? Ahmed missed in those days "a language with which to speak subtly and complexly and in ways that would enable us to make fine but crucial distinctions in reflecting on the highly fraught and complicated subject of being Arab."<sup>22</sup> Today, languages suited to the complexities of other communities of experience are

<sup>21</sup> Emmanuel Katongole, "The 'Faces' of African Philosophy: On Being 'Placed' by Western Paradigms and/or Misrepresentations," *St. Augustine Papers* 1/1 (2000) 5–13. Published by St. Augustine College of South Africa, PO Box 436, Bedfordview 2008 (cusa@global.co.za).

<sup>22</sup> Leila Ahmed, *Border Passage: From Cairo to America—A Woman's Journey* (New York: Penguin, 1999) 239.

emerging from those communities themselves.<sup>23</sup> While they hardly reject intercultural communication and consensus, much less concerted social action against injustice and for the common good, the terms on which these are sought and understood are original.

### REINTERPRETING MORAL REASON

What ideas or definitions of moral rationality and universality are rejected by the skeptics of global ethics or “a common morality” who do address this problem out of Western academia’s civil war among liberalism, foundationalism, and postmodernism? Most are motivated precisely against the imperialist tendencies and pasts of their own cultural traditions. Jean Porter, for instance, is wary of “a global ethic” that claims that “all moral traditions share a fundamental core, which amounts to a universal valid morality,” since statements of very general principles are uselessly “platitudinous,” and specific derivations will be controversial and incompatible.<sup>24</sup> It would be better simply to seek practical consensus ad hoc. Others similarly reject “the misleading and impossible quest for a moral Reason which stands outside the flow of time and contingency.”<sup>25</sup>

While such characterizations find their target in some forms of Kantianism and liberalism, and rightly battle dogmatism and imperialism, there may be other, less pernicious, forms of moral realism available to serve as part of a liberative strategy. Not surprisingly, Roman Catholic authors (including Porter and O’Neill) often see promise in an Aristotelian-Thomistic understanding of moral rationality, linked to “narrative” or traditions and practices as historically reappropriated. Can historically located moral reasoning still lead to generalizable knowledge about human goods and relationships, and at least some concrete specifications, even if not a universal “code” of behavior? A rereading of practical reason can assist toward a positive answer.

Although one line of Aristotelian and Thomistic interpretation emphasizes the tradition-bound and even revelation-dependent exercise of practical reason,<sup>26</sup> another line stresses practical reason’s realist dimensions to

<sup>23</sup> *TS* offers access to much of this literature, as referenced in n. 7 above.

<sup>24</sup> Porter, “Search for a Global Ethic” 119–21.

<sup>25</sup> *Beyond Universal Reason* 137.

<sup>26</sup> See Thomas F. O’Meara, O. P., *Thomas Aquinas: Theologian* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1997); Jean Porter, *Natural and Divine Law: Reclaiming the Tradition for Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); and Stephen J. Pope, “Overview of the Theological Ethics of Thomas Aquinas,” in Stephen J. Pope, ed., *The Ethics of Aquinas* (Washington: Georgetown University, 2002) 30–33. My thanks to Stephen Pope for many helpful criticisms of my discussion of Aquinas. For a review of several additional works in a similar vein, see Joseph

give it broader scope. Though now ably recast in the more historically sensitive treatments of authors such as Daniel Westburg<sup>27</sup> and Pamela Hall,<sup>28</sup> a realist interpretation of practical reason, as knowing and applying the natural law, already predominated in exaggerated form in 19th- and 20th-century Catholic moral theology. Earlier sources' abstract and deductive model of rationality is now deservedly repudiated.<sup>29</sup> Can moral reasonableness be reconstructed to allow both for the historical nature of moral knowledge, and for a common, even global, morality? For that matter, even traditional Catholic social thought was hardly abstract or deductive in its progressive interpretations of the common good. Indeed, the faultiness of certain concrete proposals or assumptions (like gender inequity, the hierarchical arrangement of social classes, and a conservative view of government authority) derive from the ad hoc and situated nature of the reasoning process behind them, especially in the early social encyclicals. At the same time, themes such as the inherent sociality of human persons, the reciprocity of rights and duties among social members, a responsibility to the common good that morally overrides mere assertions of power or interest, the right of all to participate in the common good, and, increasingly, its "universal" or global nature and the "preferential option for the poor," are claims whose recognizable moral worth may survive the tradition's acknowledged shortcomings.<sup>30</sup>

Thomas Aquinas's moral theory can be useful in moving past the im-

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Wawrykow, "New Directions in Research on Thomas Aquinas," *Religious Studies Review* 27/1 (2001) 32–38.

<sup>27</sup> Daniel Westburg, *Right Practical Reason: Aristotle, Action, and Prudence in Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

<sup>28</sup> Pamela M. Hall, *Narrative and the Natural Law: An Interpretation of Thomistic Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1994).

<sup>29</sup> Confirming this conclusion is virtually every contribution in Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, S. J., ed., *Readings in Moral Theology No. 7: Natural Law and Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1991).

<sup>30</sup> In a post-September 11 article on human rights, Michael Ignatieff defends a concept central to modern encyclicals, human rights, on the basis of its wide appeal to the disempowered, its ability to challenge the inequality of cultures and civilizations, and its power to ground deliberation "in a basic intuition that what is pain and humiliation for you is bound to be pain and humiliation for me" ("The Attack on Human Rights," *Foreign Affairs* 80/6 (2001) 116. In a surprising political turn, World Bank spokespersons and documents have begun to sound like recent popes, endorsing development goals in terms of inclusion, participation, solidarity, and common human resources and aspirations. See James D. Wolfensohn, "The Other Crisis," Address to the Board of Governors, October 6, 1998 (Washington: The World Bank, 1998); *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty* (New York: Oxford University, 2001). See also an essay by a former managing director of the International Monetary Fund, Michel Camdessus, "Church Social Teaching and Globalization," *America* 185 (2001) 6–12; and June O'Connor, "Making a Case for

passee between the historicity of reason and the universality that global ethics seems to demand, by allowing an interpretation of moral objectivity and reasonableness as fundamentally practical. Though by no means exhaustive of wisdom on the subject of global ethics, the thought of this major figure of Western Christianity provides insights that resonate with other cultural views of the practical and “narrative” character of morality and its bearing on moral relations among communities. For Aquinas, moral reason is practical reason, perfected by the virtue of prudence. Prudence is an intellectual virtue whose chief purpose is not to attain speculative truth, but to execute truthful action.<sup>31</sup> Two points in particular about practical reason or prudence bear on the present discussion. A first is that practical reason deals with the truth in contingent matters, for human action is always particular and historical. Conversely and by implication, moral reasoning always takes place within ongoing patterns of action. A second and related point is that prudence as an intellectual virtue is closely bound up with moral virtue. Moral knowledge and truthful action require the interdependent working of reason and will, that is to say, desire and commitment. These two points will be treated in the next two sections.

#### PRACTICAL REASON IN AQUINAS: CONTINGENCY AND TRUTH

First, then, the contingency of the subject matter of practical reason has implications for the nature of moral truth. The deductive method of neo-Scholasticism, and its claim to timeless certitude in the specific conclusions proposed on the basis of its principles, is clearly untenable, a point already well established.<sup>32</sup> Aquinas himself says in defining prudence that “the intellect cannot be infallibly in conformity with things in contingent matters” (ST 1–2 q. 57, a.5; see also q. 94, a. 4 on the natural law and contingent truth). A recent interpreter, Pamela Hall, describes knowledge of the natural law through practical reason as “narrative” in character, by which she means that “both knowledge of human nature and what conduces to the flourishing of human nature” are

discovered progressively over time and through a process of reasoning engaged with the material of experience. Such reasoning is carried on by individuals and has a history within the life of communities. We learn the natural law, not by deduction,

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the Common Good in a Global Economy: The United Nations Human Development Reports (1990–2001),” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 30 (2002) 157–73.

<sup>31</sup> *Summa theologiae* (hereafter cited as *ST*) 1–2, q. 57, aa. 4–6; q. 58, aa. 3–5; q. 61, a. 1. These articles contain key statements about prudence as an intellectual virtue. Subsequent citations of the *ST* shall be given in the text.

<sup>32</sup> See, for instance, Michael B. Crowe, “The Pursuit of the Natural Law,” in Curran and McCormick, *Natural Law* 296–332 (originally published in the *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 1971).

but by reflection upon our own and our predecessors' desires, choices, mistakes, and successes.<sup>33</sup>

A point to be stressed perhaps more strongly is that human nature, its ends, its flourishing, and its moral standards are not "discovered" as already existent and unchanging entities. They too are "contingent" and perhaps in some degree mutable; the extent to which this is the case is a matter of debate. Aquinas's distinction between primary and secondary precepts of natural law introduces the possibility of claiming more stability for basic human inclinations and ends than for more concrete specifications of their fulfillment.<sup>34</sup> A somewhat different implication of Aquinas's view, however, is important for the present discussion: moral reason, though historical and tradition-dependent, nonetheless accesses truth. The intellectual virtues, including prudence, are "directed to the apprehension of truth (see 1, q. 79, a. 11, ad 2)."<sup>35</sup> But truth and reason in moral contexts have to be understood as integrally bound to action, indeed as emerging within action, not only as "leading to" it as their effect. Since prudence is "right reason about things to be done" (*ST* 1–2, q. 57, a. 4), "practical truth," the truth of practical reason, "arises only within contingent states of affairs,"<sup>36</sup> and by means of an "inevitable choice between competing options."<sup>37</sup> Moral truth as practical truth is a truth of action. Aquinas thus generalizes the basic principles of the natural law from inclinations and patterns of behavior that all societies experience as contributing to human flourishing (preserving life, rearing young, cooperating socially) (*ST* 1–2, q. 94, a. 2), with applications depending in part on circumstances and cultural settings.<sup>38</sup> Moral truths, both particular and general, are realized inductively, experientially, interactively, and in the midst of concrete human problems and projects.

<sup>33</sup> Hall, *Narrative and Natural Law* 94; Jean Porter, *The Rediscovery of Virtue: The Relevance of Aquinas for Christian Ethics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990) 122, affirms the relevance of individual circumstances to the exercise of prudence.

<sup>34</sup> Aquinas writes of widely recognized basic inclinations and the general precepts based on them in *ST* 1–2, q. 94, a. 2. In *ST* 1–2, q. 100, he affirms that "every judgment of practical reason proceeds from principles known naturally" (a. 1), but also states that some of the more particular precepts of the natural law are better known by the wise and are clarified by revelation (a. 1, a. 3, a. 5). For a discussion, see Stephen J. Pope, "Knowability of the Natural Law: A Foundation for Ethics of the Common Good," in James Donahue and M. Theresa Moser, R. S. C. J., *Religion, Ethics, and the Common Good* (Mystic, Conn.: Twenty-Third Publications, 1996; The Annual Publication of the College Theology Society, Vol. 41) 57–59.

<sup>35</sup> Gregory M. Reichberg, "The Intellectual Virtues (1a IIae, qq. 57–58)" in Pope, *Ethics of Aquinas* 134.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* 135.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 139.

<sup>38</sup> See n. 34 above.

The possibility of global ethics, then, should not be pondered in the realm of abstract or deductive reason alone, but through engagement with practical, political affairs. The question is whether there are some human relationships, undertakings, or crises, that are or are becoming “global” in scope, and some equally wide moral truths that are known by engaging them. The fact that certain transnational and even global institutions have de facto emerged due to communication, information, and transportation technologies, and are already shaping patterns of relationship among human persons and communities, means there is a transnational and even global *moral* sphere, not just a “political” or “economic” one. Politics and economics are moralities by other names. Moral concern, moral obligation, and the possibility of moral action exist today in expanding circles of relationship, and it is here that reasonableness and truth find their practical meaning and are tested.<sup>39</sup> Are global moral relationships advancing or demeaning the common good? Are there any common moral values to guide the long-distance, complex, and increasingly comprehensive relations among cultures, values that can command a reasonable consensus because they are recognized for their human “truth” from a variety of different settings?

Vietnamese theologian Peter Phan reminds us that liberation theology holds theory secondary to practice in that “praxis is the criterion of truth.” Yet theory and practice are always dialectically related, “in a perpetual motion,” so that “the pendulum of cognition never comes to a dead stop.”<sup>40</sup> The criterion of global moral truth must be a network of global experiences and practices that also provide its content. Writing of culturally diverse liberation theologies, Phan sees “fellow travelers on a common journey to a new destination,” particular voices that can “construct a new harmony” (which is not the same as a “false universalism”), attacking, for example, the “near-universal domination of the free market system.”<sup>41</sup> The question for global ethics of the common good, though, is whether such harmony exists outside of Christian theology.<sup>42</sup> The test must similarly be practical. The case for global ethics must be advanced not only intellectually, but on the basis of facts.

In the nature of the case, practical evidence for a global convergence of moral values cannot be conclusive and final. But it can support the kind of

<sup>39</sup> Francis Schüssler Fiorenza writes of “criss-crossing judgments” yielding a “broad reflective equilibrium” (“The Challenge of Pluralism and Globalization to Ethical Reflection,” *In Search of Universal Values* 70–85).

<sup>40</sup> Phan, “Method in Liberation Theology” 59, 60, 61, respectively.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* 63.

<sup>42</sup> Jean Porter attributes the moral values of the natural law to a historical and theological tradition whose values cannot in fact be generalized (*Natural and Divine Law* 108, 141–44).

truth claim about reasonableness in contingent matters that is proper to the moral realm. Several examples of internationally acclaimed moral ideals and calls to action against injustice have already been offered (including the environment, human rights, women's rights, genocide, and economic exploitation). A current illustration is the relative success of United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan in building international consensus around certain social justice ideals, even when their implementation would require compromise of the interests of some ostensible supporters.

In September 2000, the U.N. General Assembly issued a *Millennium Declaration* that outlined general ideals and goals emerging from concrete experiences of injustice worldwide. The *Millennium Declaration* problematizes the unevenly distributed benefits and costs of globalization, resolving that "only through broad and sustained efforts to create a shared future, based upon our common humanity in all its diversity, can globalization be made fully inclusive and equitable." Among "fundamental values . . . essential to international relations in the 21st century," the *Declaration* includes freedom (and democracy), equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility (of nations for worldwide development). Proceeding with specific recommendations, it resolves to halve by 2015 the number of people earning less than \$1 a day and those without safe drinking water; to ensure universal primary schooling for boys and girls; to halt the spread of major contagious diseases; to assist AIDS orphans; and by 2020, to improve the lives of slum dwellers. It also resolves to promote gender equality, to give young people opportunities to work; to encourage the availability of affordable therapeutic drugs in developing countries; and to create partnerships for development with the private sector and civil society.<sup>43</sup> Although these ideals do not come with specific implementation strategies, their mere articulation serves as a moral wake-up call to governments and CEOs, and a call to action to activists and NGOs. Their moral force comes from the fact that they name essentials of human flourishing that few of the most ardent deconstructionists or practitioners of *Realpolitik* would have the hardihood to deny.

Ideals took on a more practical and pointed face in April 2001, when the General Assembly adopted a *Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS*. In establishing a world "superfund" for AIDS and other fatal diseases that afflict the developing world, Annan focused international moral attention on a specific disaster that is virtually global in scope. The *Declaration of Commitment* calls for both prevention and treatment. It names goals that specifically address the transmission and treatment of HIV/AIDS, but it

<sup>43</sup> Resolution adopted by the General Assembly 55/2, *United Nations Millennium Declaration*, September 8, 2000, available at the United Nations Website, ([www.un.org/millennium/declaration/aes\\_552e.htm](http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/aes_552e.htm)).

also reaches much further into social structures that create the conditions under which AIDS spreads, including international debt, gender inequality, and lack of education.<sup>44</sup> The *Declaration* receives practical cash value from the fund that subvents it, a proposed 7 to 10 billion dollars. Initial donations, the *Declaration* itself, and the publicity it has received should be useful tools in mobilizing global action around a plague that is integrally linked to the world's most entrenched structural injustices.

Critics of the idea of global ethics might object that U.N. consensus statements reflect certain national interests disproportionately over others; that they voice general aims with little practical hold on reality; and that the disingenuousness of some signatories results in very uneven implementation. There is truth in all these criticisms. Nevertheless, programmatic moral statements give moral leadership a global face, encourage grassroots activism, support local and regional structural change, and stimulate concerted resistance to noncooperative nations or transnational institutions. They aid the "mobilization of shame"<sup>45</sup> that pressures outliers to international agreements to reconsider their policies. This whole process both relies on and reveals the appeal of widely shared values rooted in perceptions of justice and injustice, funding a global ethical process that is most successful in eliciting transformative outrage when concrete abuses are on the table.

The U.N. consensus documents demonstrate that there are certain basic human needs and goods that are not all that difficult to recognize globally, and that these can even be the basis of global ethical ideas and norms. They illustrate another point that takes us back to Aquinas's treatment of practical reason: what is at stake in cultural differences over ethical issues like gender equality, debt relief, health inequities, and politically motivated violence is not so much disagreement about what is good for human "flourishing" but about who exactly is entitled to flourish. The aspect of Aquinas's thought that bears on the entitlement question is the link between intellectual and moral virtue. In his view "the truth of the practical intellect" depends "on conformity with right appetite" (*ST* 1–2, q. 57, a. 5, ad 3). The proper exercise of practical reason requires moral as well as intellectual excellence. It is not enough to identify human goods; it is also necessary to will or desire them in the right way. The most radically divisive moral dispute historically and culturally is whether a virtuous attitude toward the sharing of goods must be broadly inclusive, or whether, on the

<sup>44</sup> General Assembly Declaration of Commitment on H.I.V./AIDS, 28 June 2001, excerpted in "From the U.N.'s Statement on AIDS: 'Prevention Must Be the Mainstay,'" *New York Times*, 29 June 2001, A8.

<sup>45</sup> Robert F. Drinan, S. J., *The Mobilization of Shame: A World View of Human Rights* (New Haven: Yale University, 2001).

contrary, it is morally praiseworthy to allot access to even basic goods (not only luxuries) on the basis of intrinsic status, social rank, or merit. Let us return in more depth to this point.

### AQUINAS: PRACTICAL REASON AND VIRTUE

Moral reasoning and moral virtue require one another and develop simultaneously. According to Aquinas, “moral virtue cannot be without prudence, because it is a habit of choosing” (*ST* 1–2, q. 58, a. 4), and likewise, prudence “cannot be without moral virtue” (*ST* 1–2, q. 58, a. 5). In judging the right action to take in particular cases, it is not enough to know general principles of action; to judge well, one must also be disposed to or desire the particular goods or ends that would be reasonable, not letting one’s judgment be swayed or destroyed by concupiscence or disordered desire (*ST* 1–2, q. 58, a. 5). The central thesis of Daniel Westberg’s *Right Practical Reason* is that intellect and will are interactive in the process of action; it is a misconception to think that the reason first knows goods that the will subsequently does or does not choose.<sup>46</sup> In line with our preceding consideration of moral truth, Westberg affirms that, for Aquinas, moral “truth” is found, not in apprehension as such, but in judgment leading to action. Acting is the chief end of practical reason as well as the central aspect of moral virtue;<sup>47</sup> reason, will, and action are simultaneous in moral relationships and in the attainment of moral truth.

Because no created or finite good is absolute, and since goods appear as alternatives and can conflict, knowledge of practical goods is often ambiguous.<sup>48</sup> The will, habituated to certain types of choices through participation in patterns of behavior, influences intellectual knowledge of goods. Will and reason acting together particularize and specify the goods at stake in any circumstance, giving rise again to action, which in turn situates reason and will. For both Aristotle and Aquinas, this results in a certain circularity in moral virtue. “For reason to be correct, the appetite needs to be properly ordered, seeking after proper goals, with contrary or excessive desires properly regulated, fear, anger, and so on under control, and proper regard for other persons’ good held in the will. When reason and appetite are mutually regulated in this way, then the agent may be seen as virtuous.”<sup>49</sup> Conversely, “sin” or moral evil “can occur in intention for the

<sup>46</sup> Westberg, *Right Practical Reason* 82, 84, 246–47.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 61, 65, 195.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* 85.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 247. Similarly, according to James F. Keenen, S. J., “the mutual dependency of prudence and the moral virtues (this is not a vicious circle but rather an evolving spiral [the metaphor is attributed to Thomas Kopfensteiner]) incorporates and integrates moral reasoning into an evolving vision of the human person” (“The Virtue of Prudence (IIa IIae, qq. 47–57),” in Pope, *Ethics of Aquinas* 259.

wrong goods, faulty deliberation, erroneous judgment, and poor execution. Intellect, will, and emotion all mutually affect each other, and share in the order of virtue and the disorder of vice.”<sup>50</sup> Aquinas reduced this problem of circularity in reason and will by giving priority for Christians to the virtue of charity,<sup>51</sup> but he still maintained that there is a natural realm of right reason in which virtue may be understood in relation to human goods.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, even when formed by charity, the morally virtuous person still must choose among complex, ambiguous finite goods, a process that demands the coordination of natural human powers of discernment.

Before considering how the integration of reason, will, and action bear on global ethics, it will be useful to nuance further the senses in which we may speak of the *goods* that ground morality. Practical reason is concerned with knowledge, choice and realization of goods for human beings. What are these goods? They are both material and social, both personal and institutional. Practical reason must integrate these aspects. Thinking back to the *Millennium Statement*, it is obvious that most human misery results from poverty and lack of essential *material* goods like food and water, clothing and shelter, and treatment for illness. A further reflective step identifies *social* goods, the lack of which results in poverty, and access to which also means better access to things required for physical survival. Social goods are also good in their own right, as comprising and enabling moral relations among persons and intellectual, moral and spiritual goods of persons (like knowledge, love, faithfulness, honesty, and hope). Some goods of social relationship or social participation are gender equality, education, employment, religious membership, and political participation both for individual citizens and for nations and other collective agents. At the level of consistent social and cultural patterns which either do or do not include given categories of individuals or groups, these social goods take shape as social *institutions*. Grounding these institutions are moral attitudes or dispositions that prescribe inclusivity and its extent: respect for freedom and equality, solidarity, tolerance, and shared responsibility are named in the *Millennium Statement*.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 215.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 247.

<sup>52</sup> Eberhard Schockenhoff distinguishes Aquinas from Augustine on this point. Whereas Augustine sees any act without charity as merely an act of sinful self-love, for Aquinas, “the virtues of the natural human being in their orientation to the particular ends of human practice deserve their own human significance, which is not destroyed by the absence of charity.” Though imperfect, the natural virtues are sinful only when they prevent one from pursuing the final end of love of God (*ST* 2–2, q. 23, a. 7) (Schockenhoff, “The Virtue of Charity (IIa IIae, qq. 23–46),” in Pope, *Ethics of Aquinas* 251). The point is confirmed by Keenan, “Prudence” 266–67 and Clifford G. Kossel, S. J., “Natural Law and Human Law (Ia IIae qq. 90–97)” 176–78, both in Pope, *Ethics of Aquinas*.

Moral ambiguity often results from conflicts among goods and the need to prioritize them, at least in concrete cases. Though all cultures value both individuals and social roles, differences about priorities frequently result from the relative weight given to individual rights and communal needs. This illustrates the interdependence of moral knowledge and action with choice and commitment (the will). The place where intercultural pluralism is most strikingly encountered is in social institutions that extend and normalize opportunities for access to goods. While no one would deny that basic human goods are due to one's friends and to equal members of communities, communal membership and hierarchies within and among communities are much more controversial matters. Prudent moral reasoning requires virtue, but what is a virtuous disposition toward the needs of others? The modern virtue of solidarity reflects the Enlightenment ideal of equality as well as intercultural awareness, enabled by mass media, of common needs and suffering. Solidarity may not imply absolute equality, but it requires universal access to a decent minimum of goods. The ideal of inclusive solidarity, in contrast to the idea that justice permits division by gender, caste, and ethnicity, is new as an international policy emphasis. However, it is rooted in ancient moral and religious traditions, East and West, including Christianity (Matthew 5:38–48, Matthew 25:31–46, Luke 10:25–37, Galatians 3:28).<sup>53</sup>

One Indian Christian theologian writing from Delhi vouches that “we need a sense of human, moral, and spiritual values . . . and an appreciation and quest for the common good, local and universal, leading to justice and equality.” Further, he insists, religions have “an inbuilt prophetic structure” based on their acceptance of “the common density of all peoples.”<sup>54</sup> A Confucian philosopher confirms the ideals of mercy, neighbor-love and compassion found in many religious and moral traditions when he identifies the “one persistent idea” in Confucianism as a universal ideal of “human-heartedness,” a centering of “ethical interest on the love and care for one's fellows, that is, and affectionate concern for the well-being of others.”<sup>55</sup> Yet what another scholar of Confucianism observes on this point is equally true of Christianity and other traditions: concern and the constituents of well-being were not traditionally disseminated on an egalitarian

<sup>53</sup> See John Paul II, “Towards a Common Ethical Code for Humankind,” Address to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences 2001; and World Council of Churches, “The Need for a Global Ethic,” Declaration by the Eighth General Assembly in 1998, both in *In Search of Universal Values* 7–14 and 15–18, respectively.

<sup>54</sup> Michael Amaladoss, S. J., “Religions for Peace,” *America* 185 (December 10, 2001) 6–8, at 7, 8.

<sup>55</sup> A. S. Cua, *Moral Vision and Tradition: Essays in Chinese Ethics* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1998) 274; on universality, 307. See also Bretzke, “Moral Theology out of East Asia” 111–12.

basis, but according to one's place in a structured hierarchy, above all, in China, the family. A concept such as human rights only becomes viable within Confucianism on the basis of 18th-century reinterpretations of humaneness that value the enhancement of all human lives.<sup>56</sup>

Although the New Testament contains many affirmations of socially radical and inclusive discipleship, these strands have never been given unqualified institutional support, nor is it likely that they were fully realized at Christianity's origin. The Christian churches have found their truly inclusive prophetic voice only in recent times, and religious and humanistic calls for solidarity still need to be in dialectic relation to individual and cultural experience, and to moral insight from those whose testimony is still marginal to the dominant debates. In all societies, practical reasoning about goods will only be inclusive and participatory if it is informed by a will to place the needs and sufferings of all on the same plane, and to reform practices and institutions that unduly prioritize individual or collective self-interest.

Injustice and harm to the common good, then, result from the reality of bias, moral evil, or—in religious language—sin. Self-interested manipulation of social norms is a problem even in age-old caste systems that already allocate goods inequitably. Bias ranges itself against contemporary solidarity in rationalizations against consistent inclusiveness. Subjective rationalizations and social ideologies—often co-opting religion for their ends—still define some people as not fully human, not human in the same way, or not as deserving, as other people whose entitlement to basic goods is recognized by those who control access. Self-interest is exacerbated by scarcity of resources and opportunity for domination. The central obstacle to global ethics, therefore, is not mainly intellectual ignorance of commonalities in human nature that make certain goods necessary to human well-being. It is unwillingness to distribute community resources equitably, and to extend participation in basic goods to all human individuals and groups. Intellectual knowledge, moral orientation, and ongoing patterns of action reinforce one another for good or for ill.

Thomas Aquinas is highly instructive on the genesis of this dynamic. The second previously mentioned point about Aquinas's view of practical reason is that morality involves both reason and will, knowledge of the true and desire for the good. These are not sequentially related but interdependent throughout the phases of moral agency. To understand "global ethics," we must go beyond asking whether certain human goods, material and social, can be universally known in principle, and at what level of specific-

<sup>56</sup> Anthony C. Yu, "Enduring Change: Confucianism and the Prospect of Human Rights," *Lingnan Journal of Chinese Studies*, New Series No. 2 (October 2000) 27–70.

ity. In view of the interdependence of the intellectual virtue of prudence with the will, and the reciprocity of both in practice, it must be asked whether the moral disposition to seek human goods fairly, and today inclusively, can also be commonly recognized as good or ideal, and whether it has potential for practical realization on a wide scale. We will have to offer evidence both that goods can be known and that bias can be overcome, enabling a reasonable global process of ethical discourse and change.

### GLOBAL ETHICS AND SOLIDARITY

There is no dearth of evidence that basic human material and social goods are recognized in virtually every human society and culture, but social institutions much more rarely stabilize and regularize equitable access to these goods. Global ethics can begin to correct this disordered situation by encouraging solidarity in moral attitudes, moral recognition or knowledge, and moral practices. An important step toward rightly ordered desire and action is taken by the theoretical identification of solidarity, egalitarianism, and reciprocity as virtues, not just as enacted toward one's friends but more inclusively. The insight of Aquinas and his interpreters that cognition and desire are interdependent factors behind and within choice and action is exemplified by the practical relevance of even abstract declarations of human solidarity and mutual respect. Next, practical steps toward the implementation of theoretical commitments test the presence and level of the will disposed to seek them as goods. Bona fide commitments to a global antidisease fund, for example, are proven by financial donations and the creation of health infrastructures that can diagnose patients, administer therapies, and counsel preventive measures. Such actions enhance recognition of health as a good and form dispositions to act similarly in analogous cases.

For societies as for individuals, knowledge, will, and action are entwined, with "truth" emerging at the point of their convergence. The public recognition of cross-cultural, even "global" values and programs is already a sort of action or practice that disposes will and emotions to solidarity. Theoretical recognition, affirmative judgment, choice, and action are always already preceding and informing each other in the concrete, making any one a reasonable point of entry for analysis or for practical reinforcement.

The dialectical nature of ethical knowledge, commitment, action, and truth is reflected in the pluralistic way moral responses to globalization actually arise. While the diversity in focus and location of such responses can be interpreted as testifying to their fragmented and ultimately incommensurable nature, I am convinced such a reading is a mistake. More credence need not be given to postmodern agnostic theory about the pos-

sibility of a common morality, than to the evidence of a remarkable convergence of ethically-motivated action in the present global system. Keck and Sikkink identify “complex global networks” that reform ideas, influence policy debates, pressure domestic policy, and enforce or seek to renegotiate international norms and rules. What they see as distinctive about such networks “is their transnational nature and the way they are organized around shared values and discourses.” What stimulates network formation is “core values—ideas about right and wrong.”<sup>57</sup> But it is not just any values or ideas of right and wrong that motivate these activists. The most important and visible areas of change—human rights, women’s rights and the environment—display a unity of moral vision, a common commitment to redressing imbalances of power and well-being so that marginal persons, groups, and nature can flourish. Inclusiveness, equality, and solidarity are uniting values. Institutions, practices, and norms that give solidarity life will in large part be specified contextually and culturally. This does not rule out some cross-cultural continuities in what can plausibly be regarded as consistent with the core values (e.g., no terrorism, torture, rape, genocide, or unlimited emissions of ozone-destroying gases).

Significant global activism around basic human welfare and solidaristic ideals offers modest evidence that global ethics is in progress. Programmatic commitments to and activism on behalf of more inclusive global coexistence are of course neither uniform nor triumphant. Yet their level of success does warrant the hope that, if reinforced by institutional safeguards and appropriate coercive sanctions (not necessarily emanating from a sole “world authority” as envisioned by John XXIII), reasonable moral judgment and solidaristic commitments to action could influence the global moral environment toward more equitable access to such basic goods as food, health care, sexual self-determination, safety from violence, religious freedom and political participation. Journalist and culture critic William Greider observes that the global “common good” depends on a sense of shared purpose that communications technologies today make possible but profound economic disparities subvert.<sup>58</sup> Yet we need not rule out the possibility that a new “virtuous circle” might emerge in which rich nations realize that responsible behavior is to the ultimate advantage of all, and that satisfaction for “defending the common good” is a sometimes sufficient reward for virtue.<sup>59</sup>

Especially in view of the practical conditions and dimensions of global ethics, as a process rooted in actual communities and cultures, the diverse

<sup>57</sup> Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders* 199, 200, 201 respectively.

<sup>58</sup> William Greider, *One World, Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997) 461.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* 463.

religions and moralities in which people live have an important role. Religious and moral forms of life can instantiate practices, illuminate knowledge, and habituate the will. In Christian terms, the Holy Spirit gives the gift of wisdom to guide prudence toward conforming with love.<sup>60</sup> In the words of Emmanuel Katongole, “What is needed is an alternative politics in which, because it is grounded on an ontology of peace and commonality, difference and indeterminacy do not necessarily imply violence.”<sup>61</sup> Reinterpreting Stanley Hauerwas’s characterization of Christian social action as “witness,” Katongole uses this term for intercommunal engagement under the realization that one’s own convictions may be questionable, and that the values of another tradition may correct them.<sup>62</sup> Objectivity reinterpreted demands no crude conquest of alien convictions and viewpoints but rather revision, extension, confirmation, and critical rejection of ideas and practices, always going forward in trust that engagement can be productive and agreement often achieved,<sup>63</sup> because certain parameters of human flourishing are shared.

As far as global ethics is concerned, good theory is important because philosophy and theology aim at truth, but also because theory is dialectically related to practice. Good theory enables good practice and vice versa. Old theories of “nature” and “universal morality” did not meet the tests of inclusive, egalitarian, compassionate practice that religions idealize and that international, intercultural statements and programs increasingly uphold. Narrative accounts and alternative tradition-based moral perspectives from formerly excluded communities are overriding these old theories in new, provocative, threatening, yet exhilarating ways. But neither liberal theory nor Euro-American deconstructive and postmodern rejoinders have been able to strike a “new harmony” (Phan) with these voices strong enough to restrain the “Western-inspired capitalist economy” (Katongole) that has become the *de facto* morality of globalization, nor the violent retaliation that is its dark shadow. Perhaps greater success can be achieved by an internally diverse and participatory approach that reaffirms commonality and even global ethics in a prophetic mandate for solidarity in the common good.

<sup>60</sup> Pope, “Knowability of the Natural Law” 62.

<sup>61</sup> Katongole, *Beyond Universal Reason* 233.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* 150.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* 167, 170.