

*The Common Good in Global Perspective*¹

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ABSTRACT: Today's world is marked by violent conflict, division, and inequality. In the face of these problems, it seems implausible to talk about global common goods, but it is precisely these kinds of issues which drive us to reflect on what it is that we can do together to address them. The paper clarifies what the common good is not, and proceeds to explore and analyze the experience of common goods. In the global dimension of international relations, evidence is sought to show that cooperation is not only motivated by fear or self-interest, but also by the desire to uphold an international order for its own sake. International cooperation for common goods is exemplified in several cases, but the concept of common good as heuristic and the related criteria for identifying genuine common goods are available to guide the construction of further collaboration at an international level.

KEYWORDS: Common good, heuristic, cooperation, international relations, governance

Global perspectives permeate the flow of information and inform our thoughts and plans. Our news bulletins are full of reports of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq and Syria, violent conflict in Ukraine, Burkina Faso, Somalia, Nigeria, and Sinai on the border between Egypt and Gaza. The Ebola epidemic in West Africa threatens to spread outside the continent and so our common vulnerability throughout the world is highlighted. Many other issues grab our attention, such as competition for water, neocolonialism, the vulnerability of low-lying places to flooding due to rising sea levels, and air pollution due to China's rapid industrial expansion. It seems that the only thing that is common in such

a world is the reality of violent conflict, division, and inequality, and not a sharing in the enjoyment of the good things life has to offer. In the face of these problems, it seems implausible to talk about global common goods, but it is precisely these kinds of issues which drive us to reflect on what it is that we can do together to address them. The paper has four parts. First, I will say what the common good is not; second, I will explore our experience of common goods; third, I will apply these ideas to the global dimension; and fourth, I will draw a conclusion.

What the Common Good is Not

The common good is *not* a store of solutions to existing problems. It is not a blueprint for universal peace and justice which simply awaits the arrival of the appropriate agent to implement it, whatever that agent might turn out to be—world government, the universal church, the universal class, the proletariat representing humanity, among others. The common good is not some content already known and recorded perhaps in some encyclopedia, which only needs to be accessed and interpreted, and then applied in concrete situations. Furthermore, the common good is not the interests of the *bourgeoisie*, or of any other group, carefully concealed behind pious and universal language, and imposed on all as their good. It is not propaganda, an instrument of oppression and of manipulation; it is not an ideology. And finally, it is not the exclusive property of the Catholic Church (Riordan 2008).

It is useful to list all these things which the common good is not because these typically are the misunderstandings with which talks of the common good are met. These misunderstandings of the common good are not only to be found among its enemies and opponents. They occur also among the greatest advocates and supporters of the common good. For instance, church leaders often appeal to the common good as that which ought to be pursued instead of only particular and sectional interests. When everyone is in harmony and there are no problems then all can be in agreement about their common good, and such appeals are intelligible to all. However, when

these appeals are made in the context of disputes and conflicts, in which different parties have their differing estimations of the nature of the problem and the requirements of a solution, what the common good requires is not so evident. Yes, it is appropriate to remind participants of the goods in common and of the striven-for solution which ought to respect and take into consideration the justified demands of all parties in the dispute. But it is not appropriate if the impression given is that the solution is already known and knowable, and that the church or civil leaders know already what is best, and what is to be done.

Is there not a common good at the level of our ideals and aspirations, transcending our actual disputes? For instance, doesn't everyone desire peace and justice? All the more so when we look at our world and its many conflicts, not a few of which erupt in dreadful violence, destroying so many lives and so many goods. Yes, we want peace. We want justice for all. We want a recognition of human dignity and the dignity of every individual person. We want everyone to enjoy their rights and to have the security that their rights will be upheld in appropriate institutions. We want an end to hunger, fear, and hatred. So, are not all these our common goods? Don't we have a vision of the common good, therefore, which can guide our efforts and collaboration?

Yes, we have our visions of what we want to achieve, and often the elements of those visions are shared, at least in naming the ideals and values at stake. But does it follow from our use of the same words that we have a common good? This is another case where the friends and advocates of the common good can be a source of misunderstanding and a cause of confusion. The apparent unity found in the use of the same terms and ideas can often conceal a fundamental diversity in the aspirations of different people. Take the word 'peace.' Biblical scholars elaborate for us the meaning of the word 'shalom' from the Hebrew Scriptures. It names a state of affairs beyond the absence of violence, in which there is prosperity, contentment, and harmony. At the same time, the Arabic word for peace, very similar because of the Semitic background, is 'Salaam.' In various formulations, Muslims greet you with the wish for peace: '*As-salamu-alaykum!*'

No doubt there are Jews in Israel for whom the wish for *shalom* extends in the spirit of the prophet Isaiah to include all the gentiles, all kinds of human persons. But doubtless also there are Israelis and not a few fundamentalist Christians who are exclusivist in their understanding of peace [shalom], reading the biblical promise as directed to the chosen few, and so the peace and security, prosperity and contentment are to be realized by that few, regardless of what happens to those at whose expense the peace is achieved.

No doubt there are Palestinians for whom the wish for *salaam* includes all humankind, and most immediately, the Israeli neighbor. But we are also aware of those for whom the eradication of the state of Israel is a precondition for the achievement of peace. This is a familiar example, but one which underlines for us the complexity of our collaboration and our conflict. It is not only that Israelis and Palestinians are opposed on what peace entails; Israelis among themselves are divided, as are Palestinians.

We could take other terms on which we rely to formulate our visions of a decent human existence. The other term often combined with peace is 'justice.' Who is prepared to say she wants injustice? All declare their desire for justice, but that appearance of agreement is illusory. Think of human law courts, which are instruments for the doing of justice. In our adversarial systems, we usually have two parties who are opposed to each other, whether in criminal or civil law cases. Each pursues justice, but precisely because they do not agree on what justice entails in their particular case, a third party is required to determine the issue, whether a judge or a tribunal or a jury. Yes, justice is the point of it all, even as peace is the point of war, but even the resolutions arrived at can be unpopular or rejected as 'unjust.'

The terms we use to express our ideals, our aspirations, terms such as justice, peace, and also liberty, equality, dignity, and humanity, can indeed invoke and convey our agreement and our shared vision of what is required for a decent and fulfilled human existence. But in those cases in which there is consensus, normally the plural personal pronouns 'we' and 'us' and 'our' refer to a very specific group or family or community. When such a cohesive community exists united by shared ideals and agreement on what is good, then the reference to ideals such as 'peace' or 'family values' can be enough to

evoke the community's fundamental agreement on what those ideals entail. But I suggest that such harmony is rare in our world, at least when you move beyond the local and the small scale, such as a family or a parish or a school or university. Much more common is the case in which the list of ideals and values appears to convey consensus. But actually, when you scratch the surface you discover real differences, and not just varied nuances of meaning, but opposed goals and ambitions for the group.

What may be deceptive is when the idealized language of the universal values is invoked as expressing the common good, fooling us with merely apparent consensus at the level of language, but concealing from us the real disagreements and conflicts among us. This is a danger for friends of the common good. By invoking a merely apparent consensus they unwittingly become spokespersons for some particular and vested interest which has been successful in capturing the language of the common good and relevant institutions for its own purposes. Then the language of the common good indeed becomes an ideology, and an instrument of oppression.

What is our Experience of Common Goods?

Despite these difficulties, it is not meaningless to speak of our common goods. It is best to start with our experience of successful cooperation. Just as all action is for the sake of some good, so all cooperation, all action together, is for the sake of some good in common (Aristotle 1972). This is important and because it is so often overlooked, it deserves emphasis. The good comes first; obligation comes second! The peremptory command of negative injunctions sometimes gives the impression that duty and obligation are foundational for the moral life: 'Do not kill, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony.' However, these are negative in formulation, and their definiteness is not matched in corresponding positive commands. Corresponding to the command not to kill, one might think of various recommendations to preserve, protect, promote, respect and honor human life, but in none of these formulations is it exactly clear how precisely one is to promote or respect life, in any manner equivalent to the definiteness of 'do not kill.'

The value at stake in both negative and positive commands is that of human life. Each living human being is an instance of the good at stake in both negative (do not kill) and positive (protect life) commands (Chappell 2009). Life is the good; duties toward life are secondary to that. The good is foundational, explaining the point of action and cooperation.

The good that people see attracts them, they see its point; it attracts, and so they pursue it. They do not pursue it first of all because they think they ought to do it. Perhaps that idea might follow on, but the first relation is one of appreciative response to what appears good (Chappell 1998). I don't eat the *tilapia* or the chicken *adobo* because I ought to eat. They look good, are appetizing, and so I take and eat. Of course, we might recommend the fish by saying 'you *should* try the tilapia,' or we might encourage someone recovering from illness who lacks appetite, 'you *should* eat more.' But basically, these are ways not of formulating a moral obligation, but of saying what is good. The fish is good; for your own good, for your own sake, your recovery to health, eat! Whenever people cooperate, they do so because there is some good that they can achieve by their cooperation. This is the basic meaning of a good in common, a shared interest. All sorts of qualifications and distinctions can be added in order to make this sufficiently sophisticated to deal with current reality (Riordan 2008).

The forms of cooperation on which we rely are extremely complicated. We take this for granted but it is instructive to reflect in some detail on the complexity of the cooperation that brings the food to our table, for instance, or the sophisticated technology we now rely on such as mobile phones, iPads or laptops. These involve the cooperation of many people around the world, sometimes in surprising ways. The provision of credit and the financing of trade which make the movements of goods possible can be coordinated from locations far away from the action itself. Recently, when I was checking the tea carton which was labelled Twining's *English Breakfast Tea* I discovered that although the tea was picked in Sri Lanka, it was blended and packaged in Poland and marketed worldwide by a corporation with an office in London. How many transportations had been coordinated by the time a ship arrived in Davao with a container van which included my breakfast tea among its contents? Multiply

that by so many of the products we now take for granted daily and we begin to get some idea of the complexity and sophistication of actual cooperation. It is worth mentioning at this point how remarkable are the market institutions which enable honest and mutually beneficial cooperation between people otherwise unknown to one another from different sides of the world (Riordan 2007). Think further of the forms of cultural, social, legal and political cooperation beyond the purely economic, and the complexity is apparent. This complexity makes it difficult to speak of our goods in common. So we rely on shorthand labels, like 'prosperity and a dignified existence,' 'peace and justice,' to name the things we work together to achieve. Mostly, these terms function well in signaling our agreement and harmony in our common undertaking. However, there are times when they conceal real conflict. Then it is good that the conflict become explicit so that we can deal with it. Yes, we want economic development and prosperity for Mindanao. That means we need investment, infrastructure, jobs; and if we want the end, surely we also want the means! Does it follow that we must give a free hand to the mining corporations which propose to open up copper and gold mines in the homelands of indigenous peoples (IPs), their ancestral domains? There are some who use the language of common good in this sense, but we can see the deception involved: Agreement on the desirability of economic progress does not entail that all are agreed on specifics. In fact, it is the contrary. When we look at the issue we see that there is genuine conflict. Different people want different things and they cannot all get their way. If some succeed, then others must accept that their goals will not be achieved. Goods are incompatible, opposed to one another. Devoting hundreds of hectares of ancestral domain to open-pit mines, and capturing the water supply to meet the needs of mining, are not compatible with the preservation of the landscape and the sustainability of the water resource. Goods are incompatible, not common. What then might common good mean in such a conflict situation? Can it have any meaning?

Precisely in such conflict situations the common good can name the solution we are striving for in which the justified concerns of all participants are given due consideration, and where no one might have reasonable grounds to object to the outcome when achieved (Riordan 2008). But if

this is what common good means in a conflict situation, notice that we do not know in advance what the appropriate solution is. We know that we are looking for it, and that we do not yet have it. And we also know what conditions any proposed solution would have to meet. If any persons or groups or their interests are systematically excluded from consideration by such solution, then we know it cannot be for the common good. This is one criterion we can apply in testing any proposed solution. Another criterion points to the different kinds of goods and the different dimensions of human good at stake. If some aspects of the goods of the people involved in the conflict are systematically discounted, or disregarded, then the outcome is questionable in terms of common goods. If, for instance, the culture, or the autonomy, of the tribal peoples is discounted as a relevant good in the calculations about mining, then we could query the outcome as a genuine common good. These two criteria allow us to criticize proposed solutions which are unsatisfactory, and so they allow us to filter out political candidates who fail to promote the common good. But notice, they do not tell us in advance of our ingenuity and creativity, which will be the best solutions. So, in conflict situations 'common good' labels are something which we have yet to discover, something which we do not yet know, but about which we know enough so that we can identify the wrong answers. To capture this idea, I use the notion of 'heuristic' (Lonergan 1957, 36). A heuristic concept is an aid to discovery. In conflict situations, in which there are incompatible goods, the common good names the solution which would be fair, the solution we are striving to achieve. It is the language we use in our ignorance, and we must be modest about what we know and do not know. And we who are the professional knowers, in the church, and the academy, find such humility especially difficult.

Of course, many participants in disputes, such as the mining issue, will use the language of common good to try to persuade us that their preferred solution is indeed the best one. If they are genuine in their use of the language, they can be challenged to submit their solution to the double test. Are all persons, groups and their warranted interests taken into consideration in the outcome, or are some systematically excluded? Isn't this the rationale

behind the requirement of 'free prior, informed consent (FPIC)'? And are all relevant goods and dimensions of goods allowed consideration, or are some discounted as irrelevant? Without these tests, the language of the common good is in danger of becoming ideological and illusory.

We can see how these criteria function when applied to education policy. We are concerned that no individual or group be systematically excluded because of poverty, ethnic or religious background, from access to basic and higher education, or from the benefits of education. And we are concerned that no dimension of human wellbeing be excluded. In other words, not just education for the economy, delivering marketable skills, but the development of the whole person, including the physical, cultural, intellectual, civil and political as well as religious dimensions.

These introductory discussions help clarify what can and cannot be said with the concept of the common good. It can help to identify something concrete and specific in the context of successful cooperation. In situations of conflict, it can be used to name the solution which might satisfy the justified demands of parties which initially pursue opposed or incompatible goals, a solution that is as yet unknown, but is sought with a view to managing the conflict peacefully. To guide the search for the common good, there are two criteria available. One specifies that any exclusion of individuals or groups or their warranted concerns from consideration would undermine the claims of any outcome to be the common good of the parties in the conflict; and the other notes that any systematic discounting or ignoring of the dimensions of human wellbeing would also jeopardize the acceptability of a proposed solution as being for the common good. These initial clarifications now permit the further question about the global dimension. Can there be meaningful talk of common goods in international affairs or at the global dimension?

The Global Dimension

There are many who deny the relevance of this concept, even as a heuristic concept, in international relations. There is perhaps a prior question to be addressed when we use the term *global*. Are we considering

the global community of human persons who might be thought of as having relations with one another in a globalized world? Some theorists such as cosmopolitans focus on this perspective (Brock and Brighouse 2005). By contrast, international relations considers not so much the relations between individual persons, but the relations between states. States are the institutions whereby human societies and communities act in the world. Even on this level, there are different perspectives. Do we consider states as interacting arbitrarily with one another, with a system of states, or do we think of a community of states, such that the terms of their interactions are pre-shaped by existing informal or formal arrangements? (Bull 2002; Jones 2012).

I propose to take the relations between states as the domain in which to consider possible global common goods in common (Riordan 2014). The established and standard account of international relations denies explicitly anything like a common good. The usual explanation of cooperation between states is that it is either due to force and coercion, or due to a calculation of self-interest (Hurrell 2007). In fact, standard analyses of political cooperation within states, which draw on the notion of a social contract, covenant or basic agreement, appeal to these reasons as the chief motivators. Guaranteeing their security, their survival, or achieving something of benefit to them are considered to be the principal motivating reasons for people's cooperation within political systems. But we know at the national level that this is not and cannot be the whole story. At the national level, we know that we are united by more than the need for security and the need for goods and services. We are bonded also—perhaps more fundamentally—by our common history, shared story, language, culture, institutions, and also religions. Nationalists, and communitarians appeal to these grounds to explain political cooperation within existing states, as equally if not more important than the various grounds of self-interest (Miller 2013). Not 'what's in it for me' but 'what's in it for us' is proposed as the relevant perspective explaining cooperation.

At the international level, in the relationships between states, is there only coercion and the pursuit of self-interest? Is there anything at the global level comparable to the sense of belonging, the sense of nationality or nationhood we know in our countries? Leave aside for a moment the doubt that the

sense of a shared identity is enough to overcome the temptation within our countries to pursue sectional interest at the cost of others. It exists, and at least in some circumstances, can be relied upon to motivate cooperation. What might take its place at the international, global level? Is the sense of a shared humanity strong enough to override national interests? We will not be surprised when theorists claim that it is not strong enough (Dobson 2006).

If a sense of nationhood can unite the citizens of a country, what can unite the global population, or more urgently, what can motivate the states of the world to cooperate for the sake of some shared goods? As I mentioned, many deny that a common good can fulfill this role. They give the following reasons: First, at the international level there is no shared political order, nothing analogous to a state with a government, which can unite the many different and competing countries (Nagel 2005). The United Nations is not and cannot be a world government, since it depends on the willing compliance of its members—some of whom have the veto power over its resolutions, and all of whom can withdraw their consent. In other words, it is asserted that at the international level, there is a lack of government. Technically, there is anarchy—*an-arché*—no ruling body or principle (Cronin 1999). Second, there is the existence of competing ideologies and religions, and while the differences in question might not lead to violent conflict, they are sufficiently rooted as to militate against states finding common ground. Third, many of these differences are rooted in a history of colonialism, exploitation and oppression, and in the case of Islam, a history of humiliation, so that the possibilities of cooperation are burdened in advance by the heritage of unresolved bitter issues.

These and other reasons are presented to support the conclusion that there can be no global common good. The most that can be hoped for is cooperation motivated by either fear (force, coercion) or self-interest. The former is relied upon to explain the formation of such international bodies as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), mutual defense pacts to strengthen security against attack originally threatened by the former Soviet Union, and the Warsaw Pact. The latter is relied upon to explain the formation of such bodies such as the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), North

American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and Association of South East Asian Nations Free Trade Area (ASEAN-AFTA). The interest each contracting partner has in signing up in these bodies is to be in a position to benefit from the opportunities of trading freely. These remarks are not intended to rule out genuine questions whether or not, for instance, the terms of the agreement in the NAFTA are such that the United States of America (USA) inevitably benefits at the expense of its smaller neighbors, Canada and Mexico. I am not wanting to rule out the possibility that the argument of mutual self-interest in specific cases may be not only illusory but ideological.

Let us recall the remark above that wherever there is cooperation, there is some good at stake, for the sake of which the parties act together. In international affairs, the parties are states. If the cooperation is for security, or if it is for the benefit of trade, that would not contradict the basic principle. These also are goods, and elements of human wellbeing and flourishing.

Recalling also the second criterion for declaring something to be a common good that any exclusion in principle of any aspect of human good gives us grounds for thinking that the good in question is suspect, that it is not the common good of the collaborators. So if in international relations we find it articulated as an axiom that the only reasons for the sake of which states will cooperate are fear and coercion, on the one hand, and self-interest on the other hand, then the systematic exclusion of any other kind of reason makes us suspicious. Why cannot there be other reasons? Why are we to be blocked from seeking them or trying to articulate them?

The next step is to examine our experience of international relations, in order to find examples in which it is not only fear or selfish greed which motivates states but other concerns also. What we have to explain is how a relatively stable international order is both created and maintained. Given the order that we find, it would be strange if the only sources of that order were either fear or selfish greed. This is not to deny the reality of coercion, or of self-interest, but simply to say that they do not give us the whole story.

It might be objected at this point that there does not seem to be much order in international affairs at present, that experience points more to disorder and conflict than to harmony and collaboration. I do not deny the obvious. But I

am concerned that the very real issues of violent conflicts and global problems can blind us to the extent to which significant elements of order in the forms of coordination and cooperation between states already exist. As in the more domestic examples above of global trade, we can be inclined to take order for granted. However, the philosopher's role is often to draw our attention to what we overlook, so that we understand it more thoroughly.

What elements of order in our world might give us grounds for thinking that states can have other motivating reasons other than fear and greed? A few examples may help to counterbalance the exclusive reliance on coercion and self-interest. A first example points to the contingents of soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) alongside Irish battalions on the Golan Heights, the border between Israel and Syria. Recently, they were in the news because of action by Syrian insurgents (*Philippine Daily Enquirer*, 30 August 2014). Why, we might ask ourselves, are Irish and Philippine men and women acting together, at risk to their own lives, thousands of miles from home? They have been sent by the relevant civilian authorities of our two countries. What motivates this action? Here, I suggest, we have one clear example in which the standard motivators of fear and greed are not helpful. It is not because these two republics fear military action by either Israel or Syria that their soldiers are there. And it is not because Ireland or the Philippines stand to gain materially from the deployment of troops. This is far from a case of colonization, or military occupation to exploit available resources. This is a peacekeeping operation under the auspices of the United Nations (UN). Those who stand to benefit from the peacekeepers' efforts and presence are not their own citizens but the people of Lebanon, Syria and Israel whose lives and properties are in jeopardy from the military and paramilitary forces in the region. Our countries cooperate in the context of the UN to uphold elements of an international order which is believed to be conducive to peace. Undoubtedly, there can be a debate about this and there is room for improvement (Hurd 2007). However, the motivation for the troops on the ground and their commanding officers requires some sense that what they are doing is not only commanded by legitimate authority, but is meaningful and justified. Without some such

conviction, in the short or long run, troops lose the willingness to risk their lives and fight (Schellenberg 1982).

Another example of an existing order in international affairs is the creation and maintenance of a regime for the care and protection of refugees (Cronin 2003). It is undeniable that the efforts undertaken by states that collaborate in this regime are not explainable by the standard accounts of fear and self-interest. The costs are borne by states and their taxpayers who do not themselves stand to benefit from it. Others are the beneficiaries of their efforts. We do not have to invoke pure altruism or a sense of charity or self-sacrificial love to explain this commitment to safeguard and secure the rights of people who are not protected by their own states, which have the primary responsibility to do so. But the reality on the ground demonstrates that many states in our world—not all—are willing to bear costs to themselves so as to maintain an order of cooperation between states. The point of this international order is the provision of goods of many kinds. The example here points to the rights of refugees. Another current example is the international response via the World Health Organization (WHO) to the outbreak of Ebola virus in West Africa. The tension between a self-interested safeguarding against possible transmission of the virus reflected in policies of restricting travel and imposing quarantine on the one hand, and an altruistic concern to assist the communities which are directly suffering from the outbreak on the other hand, is very evident. The point is that the self-interested perspective, while not unreasonable, does not dominate the scene. The concern for the good of the victims and their communities predominates in the international cooperation.

Not only the rights of refugees, but the whole international human rights regime and its institutions illustrate cooperation for common goods (Reus-Smit 2010). It is important to recall the origins of this regime in the aftermath of the Second World War, when the UN was instituted out of a desire to prevent a recurrence of war. The newly assembled UN also committed themselves to preventing the sorts of atrocities committed by states against their own peoples and others which had come to light in the course of the war. It was the awareness of problems and dangers which motivated first the drafters and then the states who ratified the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights (UDHR), and the subsequent Conventions, to put in place the regime of human rights, articulating standards below which no state should fall in its treatment of its people (Glendon 2001).

There is a similar motivation at play in the history of the formation of the European Union (EU). Countries which over centuries and decades had been enemies—led by inspired statesmen—realized that they could do something to build cooperation and unity so that former enemies could combine their efforts in the securing of the good life, a better life, for which the absence of war and the provision of a minimum of material affluence were conditions. These institutions, the UN and the EU, are examples of efforts to create and maintain an order of relations at an international level which could be beneficial to all. They have evolved in such a way that they provide participating states with reasons to conform simply because of the authority vested in these institutions by virtue of their recognized legitimacy (Hurd 1999). This point still stands even if it is accepted that these are flawed institutions, and that they need to be reformed. The debates about the nature of their flaws, the corrections which might improve them, and the steps needed to be taken so that those corrections will be accomplished, are debates about common goods, goods which the states and their citizens work together to achieve, even while struggling to clarify what in detail might actually provide a satisfactory solution (Hurd 2007). The common good in this context is a heuristic concept also, naming something we desire and strive for, even if we don't know yet what it is.

Granted that there is the absence of government at a world level, there is nonetheless an order in the system which the participants consider to be authoritative. The challenge is to explain the nature of order in the absence of government. If a legitimate authority does in fact exist, at least in parts of the system characterized by a sense of community among states, then the system cannot be described as an anarchy in the traditional sense. Our states abide by a variety of norms, from the fundamental rules of sovereignty to the complex rules of commerce and regulation. The shared interest in supporting a particular style and quality of international order is a common good of the cooperating states. The emergence of community among states follows

from their recognition of the communality of interest and the realization that this communality is worth preserving and strengthening. With such emergent common goods of international cooperation, there is no guarantee that the common good of their partnership is actually fair, just, or as good as it might be. Looking at history and practice, we do not identify an ideal set of values but only the prevailing values of the collaboration (Cronin 2003, 13-14). Without a shared conception of what is worthwhile, however limited or inadequate, the collaboration of states is not intelligible. The concepts and norms that now play a significant role in the relations between states include human rights, the rejection of slavery, and military aggression.

Whatever anyone will want to achieve on a global scale, they will require institutions to do it. Social, environmental and technological changes require responses that cannot be left to the initiative of individual states. Climate change, water shortage, computation and communication technologies, genetic manipulation and security issues are just some from a long list of concerns that require coordination (Hurrell 2007, 293-96). Migrations and dislocations mean that the world is not composed of homogeneous societies—nations each in their own states. Identity politics and struggles for cultural recognition are not matters for individual states alone. While a world state is both dangerous and impractical, there is a need for some combined power for the maintenance of order and for the promotion of worthwhile common purposes. Global inequalities and the growing demand for justice in the world also drive our expectations toward shared authority. In many of these areas, structures are already taking shape, not of government in the strict sense, but of global governance. The emergence and development of the International Criminal Court (ICC) along with other special courts dealing with local conditions (such as Bosnia, in Sierra Leone) among others provide relevant examples (Ralph 2007).

Conclusion

What is the global common good? There are two meanings. *First*, from our reflection on experience, we can identify the goods of successful cooperation. There is the common good that is already realized in the practices and shared

expectations that have emerged in international relations. And then there is the *second* meaning of the term common good, naming that which is striven for, which is still being sought, as the objective of deliberation and negotiation.

In the first sense, we can see how the institutional structure of international society has already incorporated certain ideas, values and principles and established corresponding practices of governance such as respect for human rights, prohibition of aggression, and self-determination. This shared meaning (not necessarily universally shared) allows us to speak of a world common good. But in a second sense of common good, the openness to development and discovery is sustained by the heuristic nature of the concept of a common good. This heuristic as a guiding principle will be required because the admission of the importance of shared meanings and shared values should not obscure the reality of conflict, difference of value commitments, and tensions arising from disputed distributions of power. Heuristically, we speak of the common good as that which we work toward in diplomacy, negotiation, and conciliation. We do not know what the outcome will be, but we will not accept just any outcome, peace at any price. Our criteria for the common good will allow us to criticize and filter out the inadequate attempts at solutions. No one or group is to be excluded, and the perspective on the human good not to be restricted in principle.

While there is much to be done, it is still worth taking time to clarify what we think we are doing. To this clarification, philosophy and theology can make their contribution. Already in this process of reflection, those involved discover that they already have a common good, namely the clarification of what is at stake, and the validation of practical proposals. That there is a good in common among the partners in conversation will be true, even if they disagree, or are in conflict, so long as they attempt to discuss their disagreements and manage their conflicts, that are consistent with the two criteria: Exclude no one and no one's interests; and do not allow the agenda to be hijacked by restricted accounts of human wellbeing.

Note

¹ This paper was delivered at a university lecture in Ateneo de Davao University last 19 November 2014.

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