

## GLOBAL ETHICS AND A COMMON MORALITY

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### 1. *Globalization and its discontents*

'Globalization' is on everybody's lips; a fad word fast turning into a shibboleth, a magic incantation, a pass-key meant to unlock the gates to all present and future mysteries. For some, 'globalization' is what we bound to do if we wish to be happy; for others 'globalization' is the cause of our unhappiness. For everybody, though, 'globalization' is the intractable fate of the world, an irreversible process; it is also a process which affects us all in the same measure and in the same way.<sup>1</sup>

These words of Zygmund Bauman succinctly depict the contemporary situation all of us are facing no matter where we come from. As Christians, it is very difficult for us to oppose globalization, in principle, since Christians have been globalist almost from the start. Even though Christians have historically felt a deep rootedness in a certain national, ethnic or cultural identity, there was always someone or some groups who were ready to transcend their local and cultural bounds. Christian zeal for mission work over the whole globe: "to the ends of the earth" demonstrates this. Christianity is a 'global religion,' even though there is still prejudice to think of it as typically Western. Contrary to the global North, Christianity is rapidly growing in the global South, especially in Africa and Latin America.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, considering the most recent trend of globalization and listening to the expressions of discontents with it, as Christians we cannot stand by and act as if everything was just fine. There are many things to be worried about. The heightening of risk could be ranked as the first. The terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 and America's response confirms "the idea of a world that is increasingly becoming one, for it shows that no country, however mighty, is invulnerable to deadly force from the far corners of the earth."<sup>3</sup> American theologian Rebecca Todd Peters stresses the other side of September 11. She says that the loss the United States suffered of over three thousand lives parallels the loss of lives to the forces of death and destruction from poverty, malnutrition, disease, and armed conflict that people around the world have been experiencing for years as the direct and indirect results of globalization in our world.<sup>4</sup> The denunciation of capitalism and the West symbolized by the

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<sup>1</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization. The Human Consequences* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> See Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom. The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Peter Singer, *One World. The Ethics of Globalization* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. ix.

<sup>4</sup> Rebecca Todd Peters, *In Search of the Good Life. The Ethics of Globalization* (New York & London: Continuum, 2004), p. 173.

al-Qaeda terrorists in their attack on the symbols of Western political, military, and financial power (the Capital, the Pentagon, and the World Trade Center towers) reflects, Peters continues, the desperation, anger, resentment, and fury that fuels some of the opposition to globalization around the world. Peters explicitly relates September 11 to the discontents with globalization for generating profound economic and social inequality around the world.

There is also social risk and insecurity resulting from globalization. A journalist William Greider reports that in Thailand three decades of rapid growth lifted incomes generally, but has also deepened inequalities. The richest 20 percent now claim an even greater share of national income - 56 percent- while the bottom 40 percent has lost ground, from 17 to 12 percent. Labor unions were weak and fractured and severely restricted by law, but a working-class consciousness was slowly, haltingly developing. Yet, as they found a voice and pushed for improvements, better wages and working conditions, Thailand bumped up against global market realities - the easy flight of investment capital to cheaper locations. Another example of social and economic risk mentioned by some observers is the flight of investment capital and the manipulation of stock market by hedge-fund managers. This reality is eloquently brought into words by Albert J. Dunlop, the celebrated 'rationalizer' of modern enterprise as follows: "The company belongs to people who invest in it - not to its employees, suppliers, nor the locality in which it is situated."<sup>5</sup> These are a few of the many problems engendered by globalization. In addition to these problems, there are cultural and environmental insecurity and even legal insecurity among nations.

## 2. *The ethical challenges of globalization and responses to them*

This situation challenges us to think, and — more specifically — to think about it ethically. There are still many among the neo-liberals who assert the ethical or moral neutrality of economics, and by extension, also of politics. However, it is an undeniable phenomenon that a new ethical awareness is coming about in different disciplinary fields. To mention just a few of them, there are efforts to introduce ethics into the studies of international relations where it was traditionally neglected because of the false assumption that international relations are ethically neutral. Among several works, a work edited by Ken Booth, Tim Bunne and Michael Cox is highly representative of what I just mentioned.<sup>6</sup> Among philosophers, Peter Singer could be counted as one of those engaged in so-called "ethics of globalization" through his 2002 book *One World*. Sissela Bok, the author of *Common Values*, tries to formulate a minimalist ethics.<sup>7</sup> The

<sup>5</sup> Albert J. Dunlap (with Bob Andelman), *How I saved Bad Companies and Made Good Companies Great* (New York: Time Books, 1996), pp. 199- 200, as quoted in Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization*, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> *How Might We Live? Global Ethics in the New Century* (ed.) Ken Booth, Tim Bunne & Michael Cox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> Sissela Bok, *Common Values* (Colombia & London: University of Missouri Press, 1995). pp. 13-17.

list of philosophers could be extended to include Michael Walzer, Charles Taylor, Jurgen Habermas and Karl Otto Apel, among others. Their theories could be relevant for a discussion of global ethics. Theologians are also engaged in responding to the challenge of globalization. Hans Küng, a theologian in trade, recently showed the necessity of connecting ethics and international politics on the basis of his thorough study of Kissinger and Morgenthau. Larry L. Rasmussen, Max L. Stackhouse, Leonard Swidler and Rebecca T. Peters (from whom I already quoted) seem to deserve mention.<sup>8</sup> And the Dutch economist Bob Goudzwaard's works are worth studying in this respect.<sup>9</sup>

Not only individuals, but also groups of people, organizations and institutions are trying to think about ethics in a global context. There are several research and educational institutes for global ethics: Stiftung Weltethos (Germany), Institute for Global Ethics (U.S.A), The Wittenberg Center for Global Ethics (Germany), University Birmingham's Global Ethics Center (England), Center for Global Ethics (U.S.A.), among several. UNESCO does much works under the leadership of Dr. Yersu Kim, former Director of the Division of Philosophy and Ethics of UNESCO.<sup>10</sup> The Council of the Parliament of the World's Religions, which met in Chicago from 28 August to 4 September 1993 and in which 6,500 people from every possible religion took part, worked out and presented a *Declaration Toward a Global Ethic*. This declaration was drafted by Hans Küng. Almost all his suggestions were accepted in this meeting. First assumption of this declaration is: there cannot be a new global order without a new global ethic. The document defines global ethics as "a fundamental consensus on binding values, irrevocable standards, and personal attitudes."<sup>11</sup> Every human being must be treated humanely, is a fundamental demand. This demand comes out of the awareness that, now as before, women and men are treated inhumanely all over the world. This demand implies at least two things: 1) Every human being without distinction of age, sex, race, skin color, physical or mental ability, language, religion, political view, or national or social origin, possesses an inalienable and untouchable dignity; 2) Every human is obliged to behave in a genuinely human fashion, to do good and avoid evil.<sup>12</sup> The golden rule in its positive and negative form is proposed in this document as the

<sup>8</sup> Larry L. Rasmussen, *Earth Community, Earth Ethics* (New York: Maryknoll, 1996); Max L. Stackhouse, (ed.) *Christian Social Ethics in a Global Era* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995) and (ed.) with Peter J. Paris, *Religion and the Powers of Common Life*, Vol. I of *God and Globalization* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000); Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility. In Search of a New World Ethic* (New York: Continuum, 1993), (ed.) *Yes to a Global Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 1996), and *A Global Ethic for a Global Politics and Economics* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Leonard Swidler, (ed.) *For All Life. Towards a Universal Declaration of a Global Ethic* (Ashland, Oregon: White Cloud Press, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> Bob Goudzwaard, *Globalization and the Kingdom of God*. With Responses by Brian Fikkert, Larry Reed & Adolfo Garcia de la Sienra, edited by James W. Skillen (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2001); Bob Goudzwaard, "Globalization, Localization and the Sphere Sovereignty," in: Luis E. Lugo (ed.), *Religion, Pluralism, and Public Life. Abraham Kuyper's Legacy for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 325-341.

<sup>10</sup> Yersu Kim, *A Common Framework for the Ethics of the 21st Century* (Paris: UNESCO, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> *A Global Ethics. The Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions*. With commentaries by Hans Küng and Karl-Josef Kuschel (New York: Continuum, 1993), p. 21.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.21-24.

irrevocable, unconditional norm for all areas of life, for families and communities, for races, nations and religions.<sup>13</sup> The work in Chicago is certainly a great step toward further development, but it asks us to think more about how to realize the idea of humanity and reciprocity taken as fundamental norm and moral principle. I will come back to this subject in the last part of my paper. Let me ask what is the basic condition for ethics no matter it may be a global ethics or personal ethics.

### 3. *Ethics and cultures*

Allow me to begin with the well-known story of the parable of the Good Samaritan. This parable seems to offer some basic elements for ethics. By that I mean (1) the perception and knowledge of what happens, (2) sensitivity to respond, (3) following a line of action and (4) a concern for all the consequences. The Good Samaritan displayed these four characteristics of ethical action. He saw the situation of the victim; he knew what had happened; he had sympathy and went close to him; and he did what was right and proper for the victim and continued to care about him until the victim recovered. The intellectual, emotional and volitional aspects of a person are shown in this story. When a priest and a Levite saw the victim, "they passed by on the other side." In the action of the Good Samaritan we observe two things, one in common with, and the other different from the others who passed by. All three who passed by saw the victim and they knew what had happened. In this they are all the same. However, their reaction to what they saw was different. The Samaritan saw the victim and went to him and performed the action needed in that situation. The two other who came by saw him, but passed by on the other side. "Passing by on the other side" is not the same as "just passing by". The priest and the Levite passed by going to the other side (*antiparelthen*) (Luke 10:31). This was a voluntary act. What made them act so differently? We know that the Good Samaritan had pity on the victim: "when he saw him, he took pity on him" (Luke 10:33).

"Seeing and having pity" (*idon esplagchnisthe*) was the difference between the priest and the Levite on the one hand and the Samaritan on the other. "Ethics is optics," says Levinas.<sup>14</sup> Seeing and having compassion made the Samaritan move and do justice. He responded to the silent call of the victim and set himself to be responsible for the suffering of the victim. He gave to the victim what he had among his provisions. That victim was the other to him. The Samaritan didn't know who the man was. He just responded to this call of the other which went beyond race, skin color, language, and culture. The Samaritan was hospitable to the victim. This hospitableness or responsibility made him "good". The Samaritan felt deep sympathy, compassion for the victim. This spurred him to move in the victim's direction (*pros-elthon*), not in the opposite direction (*anti-*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>14</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalite et infini* (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961), p. xii; cf. p. xvii, p.51. For the meaning of this expression with respect to the question of suffering see Young Ahn Kang, "Levinas on Suffering and Solidarity", *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 59 (1997), pp. 482-504.

*par-elthon*) and to act in a way which was fitting and proper in that situation. Seeing and undertaking action, these are the beginning of ethics.

In our globalizing days, by means of television, satellite and internet we developed the ability to see and look into so many faces, confronting poverty, epidemics, wars and so many other miseries, incomparable with any ages. Even though we don't know much about what the situation is in our direct neighbour's house, we know what is happening in Somalia, in Bosnia, in Israel. We see so much misery in the world, but soon forget it when we see other scenes. Here there is no face-to-face encounter. We live as if nothing were happening, and the world in which we live has no troubles. It is paradoxical in a globalizing age that the more misery we see the more we become insensitive. However, in many cases such as the tsunami disaster December 2004, we see the possibility of global interest in and the appropriate responses to what happens in the world. People on the other side of the globe became neighbours to people confronted with a huge disaster. We know, however, there are still many areas in the world in which this kind of misery and disaster are just a part of daily life. Even though there are humanitarian action being done by mission groups and international organizations, the present state of things is far from satisfactory. The rich and the strong countries can do more than what they are now doing. Ethics is a look, but more than that. The 'look' should lead to a really ethical call to be heard. Peter Singer's *One World* with a subtitle "the ethics of globalization" voices abundant calls of this kind, especially directed at the United States of America, the richest and strongest country in the world, but, in his eyes, most reluctant to do action for the intervention of better atmosphere, better global economy, better global legal system and better global community.

We may ask further what made the Samaritan move to action? We don't know exactly what his motivation was. We may speculate about it. It could be his personal disposition; it could be that this disposition were developed and nurtured, and became a second nature; we could then expect virtuous action to spring from this character. It could be part of a culture of hospitality in which he grew up. The traditional cultures of the Near and Far East had customs of hospitality and this was an important virtue of their men and women — at least before modernization. It could also be Samaritan's religious understanding of God's commandments. The Samaritan knew God's command of love. He could have known the golden rule. What is important in this parable is, however, the fact that the Samaritan *did* what was fitting as he understood it in this situation, no matter what his motivation might have been: his virtue, his culture, his sense of divine command, or his yearning for being rewarded in this and another life. Ethics has to do with the right perception and knowledge, sensitivity to suffering (sympathy, compassion), active intervention and caring to the end. Ethics needs sensitivity and good will ready to sacrifice; it also requires correct knowledge about what is happening and what needs to be done.

All these components of ethical behaviour could be embedded in, and carried out by, culture. Culture can be a vehicle for carrying out ethical actions. Certain ethical actions can be encouraged through cultural embeddedness.

The inaction of the two men who passed by in the parable of the good Samaritan could be explained in terms of personal insensitivity and cultural or religious bias. In this case culture has become an obstacle to intervention in the situation, hindering what one should do. Nevertheless, I think, the core of ethics is beyond cultural barriers. The Good Samaritan was certainly reared in a culture in which the Jews were hated. We know of a story in which Samaritans didn't accept Jesus into their village (Luke 9:52-56). Is it an accident that the story of the Good Samaritan is placed very close to this rejection by the Samaritans? Nevertheless the Samaritan in the story overcomes his culture of hatred and behaved as fitting to that situation. In this sense the Samaritan went beyond a cultural barrier and showed mercy on the victim. If this is not the core of ethics, what could it be? I believe any authentic ethics is beyond the boundary of culture. On the other hand, I believe culture is very crucial and necessary for ethical practice. As mentioned earlier, Samaritan's hospitable attitude and willingness to dare to sacrifice could not be imagined without having been nurtured and encouraged by the culture in which he grew up. Culture could mean here the way of life together as well as the cultivation of the soul, mind and the heart, and in short, *paideia* or *Bildung*. I believe both senses of culture are operative with regards to ethics.<sup>15</sup>

#### 4. *Is there a common morality?*

Even though we can find egoistic, centripetal tendencies within a given society and among different societies, it cannot be denied that there is a "common morality" or a "morality on the basis of common sense." It is however not easy to determine what a common morality is from a Christian point of view. Drawing upon recent discussions I will mention two examples of Christian philosophers. Let me begin with Robert Merrihew Adams.<sup>16</sup>

It is interesting that Adams distinguishes between a common morality and an ethical theory. He is optimistic, and I agree with him, in thinking that there is a general, cross-cultural, shared common morality even though there is no common ethical theory. Ethical theories vary from utilitarianism to divine command theory and it cannot be expected that one could reach agreement on an ethical theory. Fortunately, this fact has hardly any impact on common morality. Adams thinks that the moral education of children is the source of moral agreement in the moral life. Even though children in America begin early to acquire the skills of moral *disagreement*, they learn first that kindness, generosity, and gratitude are good, and that selfishness is bad. Children learn in general that it is right for them to obey their parents and wrong to take or break what belongs to someone else. They do not quite have the concept of morality until they have learned to distinguish what is morally wrong from what

<sup>15</sup> For the importance of the distinction between two meanings of culture see Sander Griffioen, *Moed tot Cultuur* (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn *Motief*, 2003), p. 51ff.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Merrihew Adams, "Religious Ethics in a Pluralistic Society," in: *Prospect for a Common Morality*, Gene Outka & John P. Reeder, Jr (ed.) (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 93-113.

is prohibited by their parents on account of their preferences or tastes. This moral learning from their parents "sticks" because children find that a central core of the moral "facts they learned from parents are also viewed as facts in wider community."<sup>17</sup>

According to Adams, this "common core" is not an ethical theory. It is a kind of "overlapping consensus" (Rawls). Belief belonging to the common morality taught to children in close association with the more distinctive views and values of their parents, often in the context of religious institutions. I might add that the common morality in this sense is always very "thick". It is embedded in a certain culture and certain religion. Even though moral reasoning is not present from the start, it is the essential part of the practice of the common morality, according to Adams. Children learn principles that tell them not so much which particular actions to perform as to how to judge which actions ought to be performed. Among these are principles of universalizability ("Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"); fairness (rules should be applied consistently, and on the basis of facts) and beneficence (it is good to do what is good for people and bad to do what is bad for people). Adams thinks that these principles enjoy "general, even cross-cultural, acceptance." In Adams's discussion we can discern that the common morality consists in an understanding of what is allowed and what is not allowed and some basic moral principles about how to judge this. Even though the common morality has limits in its functions and is imprecise and relative to one's historical and cultural context, it works generally very well. Ethical theory can be of great benefit to the moral life: it can help one to draw one's own ethical conclusions in a more reasoned and consistent way and it can deepen one's understanding of ethical issues and increase one's sensibility to the whole range of principles and reasons on which people might want to rely in deciding them. However, it is not itself an area in which general agreement is to be expected, nor an area in which general agreement is needed for the common morality we already possess.<sup>18</sup>

The second Christian thinker I will consider is Alan Donagan. His conception of a common morality differs from that of Adams. Donagan understands a common morality as "a system of laws or precepts about human actions considered objectively, as deeds."<sup>19</sup> Donagan's understanding is based on Kant. Kant's tacit point of departure, according to Donagan, is a sociological fact: while all societies, and many groups within them, impose a set of customary dos and don'ts on their members' conduct, many but not all society recognize a smaller set of dos and don'ts, usually more vaguely defined, that measure the conduct of human beings everywhere. The concept of morality is the concept of such a smaller set of dos and don'ts. One mark of a civilized society is that its members share this concept. Donagan expresses his understanding of Kant with full endorsement: "Human conduct everywhere could be judged by standards accessible to members of societies other than their own, whose concept of morality

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* p. 97-98.

<sup>19</sup> Alan Donagan, *The Theory of Morality* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 52.

is therefore inseparable from the concept of a potential community of all human beings, *de jure* membership of which gives rise to duties that are more fundamental than those arising from *de facto* membership of particular societies, although they are compatible."<sup>20</sup>

In contrast with Adams, Donagan makes a distinction, following Kant, between *de facto* and *de jure* membership of the human community. Duties arising from *de jure* membership are not only more fundamental, they alone are related to the strict sense of a common morality, which is shared by all communities of humanity regardless of racial, cultural, and religious differences. Donagan thinks that this common morality based on a common human rationality is expressed most truthfully in the Hebrew and Christian tradition. He also thinks it is thought through and justified most philosophically by Kant.<sup>21</sup> This does not mean that a common morality has its foundation in the Hebrew and Christian faiths, but the morality supported and proclaimed in such tradition is based on reason that is common to all "civilized" humanity. Such a common reason explains why Jewish and Christian thinkers not only reach substantially the same conclusions about what the moral law common to all mankind was, in their respective ways of life, but also agree that their results were accessible to all men.

The contrast between Adams and Donagan with regard to a common morality reminds us of the contrast between Kant and Hegel. Adams's common morality has its roots in the moral education of children from their parents, and is enforced by social endorsement. This is maintained even though a common morality is imprecise in its formulation and relative to a given society and culture, and in this sense also limited. The sources of morality are the parent's preferences and tastes as well as their religious community and shared beliefs. A common morality can be shared, appreciated and lived without any kind of philosophical justification. I am not sure that the last remark could be applied to Hegel; the general position seems to be very close to his.

Donagan's explicit Kantian position has a different conception of a common morality. A common morality in Donagan's sense is surely a shared morality, but this is not limited to a contingent community, but rather applicable to all communities whose members consist of rational beings. As Kant talks about a "kingdom of ends" (*Reich des Zweckes*), Donagan postulates an ideal moral community which transcends all the limits of a given historical and cultural community and at the same time is present in all these contingent communities. The business of philosophy is to explore this common morality, "not to deny or suppress it, testifies to the power of the traditional philosophical conception of what morality is."<sup>22</sup>

Do we have to make a choice between Kant and Hegel, or between Donagan and Adams? This question seems to be urgent in our age of globalization. On a theoretical level, there are contrasts, for instance, liberalism versus communi-

<sup>20</sup> Alan Donagan, "Common Morality and Kant's Enlightenment Project" in: *Prospect for a Common Morality*, p. 54.

<sup>21</sup> In this sense Donagan's *The Theory of Morality* could be read as Kantian defense of the common morality of the Hebrew and Christian tradition. See p. 6ff.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* p. 9.

tarianism, ethical minimalism versus maximalism, and ethnocentrism versus cosmopolitanism. As an *a priori* system I think Kant's or Donagan's version is one of the best options. I believe reasons could be given for Christians to accept it as a secularized form of divine command ethics.

But a problem I can't solve in the way Donagan advocates is the exclusion of Hindu and Buddhist and certain other worldviews, which share a common morality.<sup>23</sup> Donagan begins his paper with the following questions about a common morality: "Is there any prospect that all societies and cultures in the world will one day accept the same morality? No. Is there any prospect that their *mores* or ways of life will become more similar? Yes, provided that the socialist and "third world" societies adopt market system of economics, as it now appears that they will."<sup>24</sup> It is difficult to guess what is the basis is of his affirmation and negation. Does this mean that the people who live with a Hindu or Buddhist worldview will not subscribe to a common morality? Or, is it presupposed that a common morality is expressed in the Hebrew and Christian traditions in its best form. Put differently, does he believe some part or some group of people never accepted these faiths?

If we accept Donagan's claim, that the Christian faith is already presupposed in a Kantian "common morality", as true and this is based on a common human reason, is a belief that human beings never share that "common reason" together the reason for him to deny that all societies and cultures will one day accept the same morality? I am not sure. It is frustrating for me to observe that Donagan believes that there is a common morality which is best expressed in the Hebrew-Christian tradition and that philosophy's business is to reflect on that morality while denying the possibility of sharing that common morality with all societies and cultures some day. If his point lies in the quantifier "all" in the strict sense of logic, perhaps I can understand his intention, but what is the point of talking about a "common" morality? Does "common" have to mean "all" without any exception?

Adams' position is different. He seems to recognize cultural and social differences. A moral practice in its embodied form has priority over an ethical theory. Adams even claims that ethical theory has no impact on moral practice. However, he knows that reality is much more complicated. In his opinion, we can easily agree that the killing of human beings and violent assault, are wrong, but there is deep disagreement about the morality of warfare, capital punishment, and euthanasia. We can agree about the general wrongness of stealing more readily than about the limits of individual property rights in relation to the state.<sup>25</sup> So many ethical theories could be chosen to defend different kinds of positions. Adams is pessimistic in thinking that there could be any consensus in ethical theory. He writes: "Nothing in the history of modern secular ethical theory gives reason to expect that general agreement on a single comprehensive ethical theory will ever be achieved — or that, if achieved, it would long

<sup>23</sup> Donagan, *Common Morality*, p. 54-55, and *The Theory of Morality*, p. 34ff.

<sup>24</sup> Donagan, *Common Morality*, p. 52.

<sup>25</sup> R.M. Adams, *op.cit.*, p. 95.

endure in a climate of free inquiry."<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, Adams is optimistic about a common morality: "If common morality were conceived as the complete morality of every participant, then it would seem to be in competition with the various religions and their ethics, and from their point of view it would appear as something like a false religion".<sup>27</sup> Adams thinks it is more accurate to regard a common morality as a set of agreements among people who typically also hold other, less widely shared, ethical beliefs.

##### 5. *Augustine and Calvin on common morality and the golden rule*

Is it possible to find a common morality in our globalizing world? I suggest there could be a third, middle way between Donagan's "formal" or Kantian approach and Adams' "material", "social" or Hegelian approach. Philosophically I tend more to be on the Kantian side, but I know from my experience of living in different cultures that morality, or at least some parts of morality can be very different. Deep in my heart, however, I believe Confucius was right when he said: "Human beings are similar in their nature (*xing*), but vary by virtue of their habit (*xi*)."<sup>28</sup> Confucius believed that all human beings are born from Heaven (*tian*) so that we share a nature in common. When Confucius speaks of 'nature' he primarily means a morality bestowed by Heaven. Christian writers, and among them, especially Augustine and Calvin recognized almost the same thing, i.e. that human nature is created by God. Let me quote just two passages from their works. In the *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine speaks of a kind of common morality in the context of his discussion of the principle of love and of figurative/literal meaning:

Some people have been struck by the enormous diversity of social practices and in a state of drowsiness, as I would put it — for they were neither sunk in the deep sleep of stupidity nor capable of staying awake to greet the light of wisdom — have concluded that justice (*iustitia*) has no absolute existence but that each race views its own practices as just. So since the practices of all races are diverse, whereas justice ought to remain unchangeable, there clearly is no such thing as justice anywhere. To say no more, they have not realized that the injunction 'do not do to another what you would not wish to be done to yourself' (Tobit 4: 16) can in no way be modified by racial differences. When this injunction is related to the love of God, all wickedness dies; and when it is related to the love of one's neighbor, all wrong doing dies. For nobody wants his own dwelling to be wrecked, and so he should not wish to wreck God's dwelling which is himself (*habitaculum dei, se ipsum scilicet*). Nobody wants to be harmed by anybody; so he should not do harm to anybody.<sup>29</sup>

The "golden rule" in a negative form is said to be a universal or common moral "injunction" which transcends racial differences. Unlike common grace in the Calvinist tradition, action or inaction following this injunction can prevent

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* p. 99.

<sup>28</sup> *The Analects*, 17.2.

<sup>29</sup> Saint Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, Translated with an Introduction and Notes by R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 79.

trespasses against God and our neighbour, even though it cannot produce goodness.<sup>30</sup> Almost the same thought can be found in Calvin. Let us listen to a passage from the *Institutes of Christian Religion* (2.2.13):

Since man is by nature a social animal, he tends through natural instinct to foster and preserve society. Consequently, we observe that there exist in all men's minds universal impressions of a certain civic fair dealing and order. Hence no man is to be found who does not understand that every sort of human organization must be regulated by laws, and who does not comprehend the principles of those laws. Here arises that unvarying consent of all nations and of individual mortals with regard to laws. For their seeds have, without teacher or lawgiver, been implanted in all men. I do not dwell upon the dissension and conflicts that immediately spring up. Some, like thieves and robbers, desire to overturn all law and right, to break all legal restraints, to let their lust alone masquerade as law. Others think unjust what some have sanctioned as just (an even commoner fault), and contend that what some have forbidden is praiseworthy. Such persons hate laws not because they do not know them to be good and holy; but raging with headlong lust, they fight against manifest reason. When they approve of in their understanding they hate on account of their lust. Quarrels of this latter sort do not nullify the original conception of equity. For, while men dispute among themselves about individual sections of the law, they agree on the general conception of equity. In this respect the frailty of the human mind is surely proved: even when it seems to follow the way, it limps and staggers. Yet the fact remains that some seed of political order has been implanted in all men. And this is ample proof that in the arrangement of this life no man is without the light of reason."<sup>31</sup>

From this passage we can easily infer that Calvin believes that some "seeds of political order" are implanted in humans by the Creator. This is the source from which the "universal impressions of a civic fair dealing and order" originated and the unvarying consent of all nations and of individual mortals with regard to which laws arises and by which human society is preserved. Calvin saw human frailty, but nevertheless he recognizes that there is a general conception of equity in human society and this is evidence for the fact that everyman has the light of reason. From this passage it is easy to get the impression that Calvin shares the same idea as natural law tradition with regards to the human sense of justice, law or equity. However, it should be noted that Calvin is totally negative with regard to moral self-perfection of humanity.<sup>32</sup>

In Calvin's commentary on Matthew 7:12-14 and Luke 6:31, the sense of justice or equity is understood as contained in the golden rule. The golden rule is an exhortation by Jesus to his disciples to be just and contains "a short and simple definition of fair-dealing (*aequitas*)."<sup>33</sup> To this Calvin adds: "so that we

<sup>30</sup> For more detailed discussion of Augustine's thought with regards to common morality see Gene Outka, "Augustinianism and Common Morality," in: *Prospect for a Common Morality*, pp. 114-148.

<sup>31</sup> John Calvin, *The Institutes of Christian Religion*, Edited by John T. McNeil & Translated and Indexed by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), vol 1, p. 272-273.

<sup>32</sup> See especially *Institutes* 2.1. 1-8.

<sup>33</sup> Calvin, *A Harmony of the Gospels, Matthew. Mark and Luke.*, Vol. I, Translated by A.W. Morrison (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), p.232.

should realize, that the only reason for there being such a reign of hatred upon the earth, men antagonistic towards each other for so many causes, is that they knowingly and willingly tread equity underfoot, yet every man demands its strict application for himself."<sup>34</sup> From this we may infer that the golden rule is not only given to the disciples of Jesus but to the whole world. In Calvin's discussion of the golden rule the distinction between the use of equitable dealing "for one's own advantage" and "for profit or loss of another" is important. Everyone knows perfectly well about this rule of justice or equity and applies it consistently "for one's own advantage". Every man shows himself to be a skillful teacher of fair dealing for his own advantage. However, we maliciously and purposely shut our eyes to "the rule of fairness, which shines in our hearts (*ad aequitatis regulam, quae in cordibus nostris lucet*)."<sup>35</sup> This means that everyone — everyone here means not only Christians but also other people outside of the Christian faith — knows the golden rule but keeps it "for one's own advantage", not for other's advantage. Actual state of affair is therefore different from the rule of fairness. Third point of Calvin is that nobody can have any excuse for breaking this rule of fairness. Calvin says,

So Christ teaches them, that the rule for each man to use, in living rightly and fairly (*recte et iuste*) with his neighbours, is for each to offer the other what he would have done to himself. This cuts across all empty pretence, which men think up for themselves, to cover and disguise all their injustice.<sup>36</sup>

In this commentary, Calvin uses almost the same vocabularies for the golden rule, which is used for the rule of political social order in the *Institutes*: "the rule of justice which shines in our hearts" and "the rectitude which is engraved on their hearts." This shows enough that Calvin believes that the golden rule is an actual basis for common morality in all societies. Calvin's understanding of the golden rule as the "rule of justice/rectitude/equity/fairness" encourages us to try to find in this the basic moral rule for a global ethics.

#### 6. *Global ethics and the golden rule*

Donagan is one of the ethicists who sees the golden rule as an inappropriate basis for a moral principle. He makes a choice between two traditional "first principles" from which all other laws and precepts could be derived. By two traditional "first principles" he means the golden rule and "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Lev. 19:18). Donagan opts for the latter and translates this into a revised version of Kant's second categorical imperative: "Act always so that you respect every human being, yourself or another, as being a rational creature." Donagan put this simply: "It is impermissible not to respect every human being, oneself or any other, as a rational creature".<sup>37</sup> However, I doubt Donagan's disjunctive options. This seems to ask us to decide the question of

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<sup>34</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>35</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>36</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>37</sup> Donagan, *The Theory of Morality*, pp. 57-66.

which principle is the more fundamental of Kant's two basic categorical imperatives. Donagan thinks that Kant was mistaken in thinking "the formula of humanity" to be equivalent to his formula of universal law, in which he captured the philosophical truth underlying the inaccurately stated golden rule. But I think if we look closely at the golden rule in a biblical context, it will be clear that it cannot be separated from the love of my neighbour as myself.

Contrary to Donagan, almost all the discussion of a common morality and global ethics refer to the golden rule as a kind of basis. Hans Küng is perhaps the most prominent scholar who never tires of emphasizing this. He believes as many others that all the great religions require observance of something like a 'golden rule' — a norm which is not just hypothetical and conditional, but is categorical, apodictic and unconditional — utterly practicable in the face of the extremely complex situation in which the individual or groups must often act.<sup>38</sup> Even though Küng mentions the golden rule so frequently, he seems to assume that the golden rule is too clear and so intuitively that you don't feel any need to ask what it really means. In a sense, I agree with Küng. Calvin also spoke of this rule's character in terms of "this simplicity." When everyone acts in the same manner towards others as they wish others to act towards them, then the second table of the law will be fulfilled. Calvin adds:

There is no need of long and involved discussion, if we keep to the simple path, and do not follow a fantastically exaggerated self-love to obliterate from our hearts the standard of fairness which is engraved upon them (*homines rectitudinem cordibus suis insculptam*).<sup>39</sup>

I believe Küng and Calvin and most others understand the golden rule as a rule of reciprocity between the other and myself. A Kantian understanding of the golden rule would be different from this kind of interpretation. Kant underscores its absolute imperative character and the human possibility of obeying moral commands in spite of human needs and self-interested tendency more emphatically. Through this command character of the categorical imperative, reciprocity loses its empirical property. In my obedience to the moral law I actually transcend my empirical conditions and may respect others regardless of my own and other's desires and wants.

Let's consider the Confucian understanding of the golden rule. Confucius states the golden rule in the negative form: "Do not do unto others what you would not desire others to do unto yourself" (*ji-suo-bu-yu wu-shi-yu-ren*).<sup>40</sup> But don't forget that Confucius has also a positive form. In the *Analects* 6.30 we read: "Erect others the way you would desire yourself to be erected and let others get there the way you would desire yourself to get there (*ji-suo-li-er-li-ren ji-yu-da-er-da-ren*). It is my understanding that in the *Analects* there is an asymmetry between 'oneself' (*ji*) and the other (*ren*). Others can be parents, brothers and sisters, friends, a king or the common people. This will not be so different from the biblical context, at least in a first approach. The constant teaching in

<sup>38</sup> Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility*, pp.58-59; *A Global Ethic*, pp.23-24; *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*, pp. 96-97, 225, 229, 232.

<sup>39</sup> Calvin, *op.cit.*, p. 232.

<sup>40</sup> *The Analects*, 5.12, 12.2, 15.24.

the *Analects* is that I should not worry about acknowledgement from others but worry about failing to acknowledge them,<sup>41</sup> that I should not study in order to show others, but study for the cultivation of myself,<sup>42</sup> I should cultivate myself, first of all, in order to serve for other's peace.<sup>43</sup> "Collecting" of my scattered mind and heart, "keeping" and "nourishing" it by means of reading and concentration are the way of Confucian self-cultivation, developed by the Song philosophers in 12th century. To my understanding, the effectiveness of the Confucian golden rule depends on the degree of my self-cultivation. If I remain at the level of the beast, then what I do will not be far from that of the beast. If I have cultivated myself to be a "gentlemen" or a "noble man" (*junzi*) then I will act in accordance with my development. I believe this is the reason Confucius was reluctant towards his disciple Zigong:

Zigong said, "I do not want others to impose on me, nor do I want to impose on others." Confucius replied, "Zigong, this is quite beyond your reach."<sup>44</sup>

If my understanding is accurate, the conclusion could be that the emphasis does not lie so much on the reciprocal relation between I and the other, as on my moral cultivation. The whole program of Confucianism is concentrated on moral cultivation in the individual, family, social, national and transnational levels by different stages (from childhood to adult) and by different means (book learning, method of concentration, keeping rituals and so on). With respect to global ethics Confucianism may contribute to the moral education of a person in a given, concrete community.

I believe that the golden rule when understood generally as a rule of reciprocity could function perfectly, if not as a moral principle, then at least as a moral procedure and as an expression of common moral wisdom of almost all humanity.<sup>45</sup> There is no reason not to make use of this common rule among peoples, nations, and multinational cooperation in order to build a common world in which cultural diversities are respected and shared. Christian churches can participate in teaching and promoting the golden rule both in local communities and global organizations with regard to the problems facing the contemporary globe, for instance, poverty, undernourishment, war, the loss of cultural identity and so on.

### 7. *The golden rule and the ethics of superabundance*

Assuming this, I believe we Christians have more responsibility. We have the responsibility not only of promoting but also of living the golden rule truly, more than others, at a local and global level. By saying this I feel the need to look closely at the golden rule once more in the Biblical context. Let me limit

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<sup>41</sup> *The Analects*, 1.1, 1.16, 14.30, 15.19.

<sup>42</sup> *The Analects*, 14.24.

<sup>43</sup> *The Analects*, 14.42.

<sup>44</sup> *The Analects*, 5.12

<sup>45</sup> For more informed discussion of the golden rule see Jeffrey Battles, *The Golden Rule* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

myself to the text of Luke. We read in Luke 6:31: "Do to others as you would have them do to you", a golden rule in positive terms. If this verse is situated in its proper context, a more radical interpretation is possible. The periscope in which the golden rule is situated begins with "But" (*alla*) (Luke 6:27). This makes a contrast with the way of life condemned in the previous verses. "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." (v. 27-28). This is a *paradox*. It looks quite different from the so-called rule of reciprocity. Reciprocity is basically a rule of give and take, a kind of bookkeeping. Balance is always important. The practical way of commerce among people is arranged mostly by this rule of reciprocity. However, the golden rule is situated in a paradoxical exhortation of Jesus Christ who asks us to go one step further that just keeping the rule of reciprocity. "If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic." (v. 29) This is far from give and take. Jesus asks his disciples ("you who hear me", v. 27) to give more than they are being asked. Not only more than they are being asked, but also without any expectation of reward. "Give to everyone who asks you and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back." Jesus is talking about a gift without a reward. Surely, a gift which is expected to be returned is no gift. The condition for being a gift is that there should be no possibility of being given in return.<sup>46</sup>

After this, Jesus said: "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (v. 31). In two respects this saying is surprising. First of all, Jesus said this as a command, as an unconditional command. Secondly, this command is given in a very conventional way. Anyone may think: 'I get the point' — while thus betraying one's natural expectation. Whereas Jesus totally transforms the conventional meaning of the golden rule. On face value, it is just the golden rule as commonly understood. If we go one step further, it is the same as "love your neighbours as yourself." On the deepest level, it is the equivalent of "love your enemies." Next verses (v. 32ff) intensify this kind of "overthrowing": "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. ... But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back." I think it is meaningful to maintain the different layers of the golden rule, that is, from its most conventional understanding to its paradoxical transformation into its deepest dimension.

From this radical view, the golden rule seems to be inadequate to be used as a clear rule for common morality and global ethics. But we may consider this in another way. The possibility and reality of giving presupposes being given to. Nobody can give without being given to no matter whether it is one's life, one's time or one's property. In principle, the one who is given to abundantly may give. Generosity comes from spiritual and material superabundance. Without having anything to give, nobody can give. He or she who received mercy can be

<sup>46</sup> For a detailed analysis and criticism of Derrida's pessimism on the possibility of gift see Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 74 ff.

merciful. Therefore Jesus said: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." (v. 36) We should not forget, however, that Jesus also said: "Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Luke 6:38) The last sentence confirms again the validity of the golden rule in its reciprocity, in its logic of equivalence. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the coming of the kingdom opens a new ethics of "superabundance" — if I may be allowed to use Ricoeur's term: you should give because you were given to superabundantly.<sup>47</sup> Jesus may command us: "Go and do likewise" *because* God's mercy and grace were given to us. This means that we Christians are responsible for the world and more responsible than any others with different faiths, because we are given superabundantly by our merciful God to love, to give and to care the world in which we are sent to live.

#### 8. Conclusion

I began this article with the phenomenon of globalization and its ethical challenges and ended with the ethics of superabundance. In this respect, Goudzwaard's discussion of globalization is highly relevant. He concludes his 'Kuyper lecture' with these remarks: "What I have written here is built on the deep conviction that in following the way of life opened by the risen Jesus, we may find the way out of our self-imposed, childish, and destructive pattern of economic life. If our societies seek to maintain the present way of life absolutely, without change, they will certainly perish. They will not be able to endure in the context of their own self-created hypnotic universe. But those societies that learn to lose their lives by acts of restraint and sharing, will find that they not only survive but also flourish. For a new King is already on his way to let us share in his abundance."<sup>48</sup>

Goudzwaard's proposal of five steps for the future, as concrete steps towards this type of healing globalization is also supported strongly by deep ethical convictions. Learn to live with restraints and the sense of saturation (a sense of "enough"), giving up and giving, open to the face of the other and so on could not be done without an ethical commitment. Goudzwaard's diagnosis of the "spiritual component" of globalization in terms of growing competition in every sector of contemporary life, not only in private enterprise and multinational corporations but also in universities, orchestra, and even in governments is possible with the ethical and religious perspective. Self-interest, which promotes competition, is denied any place in Christian economic thinking. All these ethical perspectives appearing in Goudzwaard's discussion of economic globalization are framed in an eschatology of hope rather than in a defeatism of hopelessness and pure resignation. This is the meaning of the slogan TATA

<sup>47</sup> See Paul Ricoeur, "The Golden Rule", *New Testament Studies* 36 (1990), pp. 392-397. For the more detailed discussion of the golden rule see Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as another*, translated by Kathleen Blamey (Chicago & London : The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 190 n.26, p. 202, pp. 219-29, p. 251, pp. 265-66, etc.

<sup>48</sup> Bob Goudzwaard, *Globalization and the Kingdom of God*, p. 44.

("There are thousands of alternatives") rather than TINA ("There is no alternative.").

Globalization is not a matter of fate but is a man-made reality. Therefore, Christians can and should try, with their fellow citizens, to reorient its direction, in obedience to the coming Sovereign. This calls us to turn our way of life from self-interest to the life-for-the-interest-of-others, from self-centered to the other-centered, from the economy of dissatisfaction and the endless pursuit to the economy of saturation and Sabbath. The recognition of the common morality emphasized by Augustine and Calvin, the rehabilitation of the importance of the golden rule in moral education, and the ethics of superabundance could be a good basis for the care economics that is so needed in the process of globalization. Even though Goudzwaard does not say this explicitly, he may agree with me that the Christian ethical perspective for our globalizing world can be expressed in terms of responsibility, justice and peace. While responsibility is the mode of being and acting of the ethical person, justice and peace are the goal of ethical action and the state of human flourishing in community. Christian communities are desperately in need of learning moral virtues and practices in obedience to the divine command to love mercy and do justice and walk humbly with God.