Responding to Globalisation and Creating Order Out of Chaos:
The Cultivation of Virtue as an Educational Aim in East and West

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ABSTRACT: Globalisation has given rise to a number of crises, most obviously, the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), but also to several others such as the demographic and environmental crises. There are also crises of values and meaning, which threaten the peace and stability of the world. Though capitalism seemingly triumphed following the collapse of the Soviet Union, reliance on an unregulated market economy in many instances has brought with it increasing poverty and the GFC, which was a direct result of a lack of regulation, has eroded the ability of government to provide important public services such as education, health and welfare. The seeming ascendancy of liberalism with its emphasis on individualism and autonomy, has resulted in the privatisation of public utilities, the diminution of the importance of community and the common good. It has also resulted in the gap between rich and poor widening to the extent that it threatens the stability of states. Added to this, there is increasing pessimism in political leadership and a perception that there is widespread corruption on different levels and for many people, life seems to be spiralling into chaos. It appears obvious that liberalism in its present form has failed and a more communitarian approach is needed to counter the perniciousness of individualism. An important antidote to the chaos of the present time is to regain an understanding of what is required for human beings to flourish. In both the east and the west, communitarian traditions propose that human flourishing consists in being directed to the common good and, through the cultivation of virtue, the attainment of wisdom. Drawing on Mengzi, as a representative of the east and Aquinas of the west, it is argued that the cultivation of virtue is a traditional aim of education in both east and west. Both Mengzi and Aquinas use the concept of cultivation to show how virtue is to be acquired and hence wisdom. By concentrating on cultivating virtue, it is argued, we can bring order out of chaos, creating better understanding amongst people and serving the common good, but this requires a re-acquaintance with older conceptions of human nature and the meaning of human life.

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Introduction

Globalisation is not something particularly new, as ever since the first traders arrived on the shores of another country, there has been an exchange of goods, of culture, religion and language. The difference between the present and the past is that it is so much easier to travel to distant parts of the world and to communicate in an instant via the internet, via mobile phone and social media. People everywhere are much more conscious of other people and cultures. Coupled with the entanglement of economies through the creation of world markets and the exchange of popular culture through mass media, the world seems a much smaller place. The realisation that some problems are global has also forcibly entered the consciousness of the world. In the twentieth century, this was made very apparent through two world wars that devastated vast regions of the globe and their aftermath, created the spectre of a nuclear holocaust as the United States and the Soviet Union competed for power. This was truly a global concern, since both antagonists possessed enough nuclear warheads to obliterate each other and, in the process the rest of world, many times over. Aptly named MAD, Mutually Assured Destruction was a policy in which both sides were assured that should one side attack the other, retaliation would be such that each would annihilate the other. The rest of the world could only pray that tensions would not rise so high that one side would be tempted to launch an all-out war. The Cuban missile crisis of 1962 brought the world to the brink of disaster, but fortunately common sense prevailed and disaster was prevented. Of course, since that time, a number of other nations have joined the United States and since the demise of the Soviet Union, Russia, as possessors of nuclear weapons and worryingly some other states, such as Iran and North Korea are vying to join the club.

While nuclear weapons remain a global problem, in recent years there have been a number of other crises which have also affected many nations and brought home the need for international cooperation in order to prevent the chaos that failing to address these is likely to befall many countries and people. Although we do not intend to attempt any kind of analysis of them here, we shall provide a few remarks in relation to some of the global crises that beset the world. One of the most obvious that has affected nations everywhere, though not all to the same extent, has been the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). This has had serious effects in a number of countries, such as Greece, and has brought about the country to its knees. Fortunately, so far, chaos has been narrowly averted. Other crises include the demographic crisis, affecting some developed countries, but also, somewhat surprisingly, the giant nations of China and India, the environment crisis and crises of religion, values and meaning. Each of these on their own has the potential to create instability in various regions

of the world and hence chaos as states are no longer able to govern properly.

Understanding the global forces at work shaping government policies is important, but equally it is vital to find ways to address these. In many countries, globalisation has not always brought with it benefits to the greater portion of people, rather, the rich have become richer and the poor, poorer. Housing, for example, has become out of reach of many people and health, education and welfare services have been eroded. The GFC, for example, brought untold misery to very many people, as they lost their life's savings. Pollution, as the result of the activity of corporations has also created misery for many, not to mention caused health problems also. We shall argue that a crucial element in tackling the many problems that beset the world and to bring order out of chaos is education. It is not, however, the kind of education which concentrates on providing people with skills in order to get a job. It is not denied that this is an important part of education, but in many respects, without the part in which human beings learn to be virtuous and humane, it is of little value. What is required is, firstly, an understanding of what is good for human beings and secondly, gained this, commitment to pursuing this. Happiness is what is good for human beings and it is proposed that the only path to it is through the cultivation of virtue. This is not a novel thought, as it is to be found in the philosophical and theological traditions of both the East and the West. By briefly referring to Mengzi, representing Confucianism and Aquinas, representing the Western thought, we shall show that there is significant consensus that the path to happiness lies in the cultivation of virtue. Our aim here is limited, since it remains to be shown that the pursuit of happiness is a universal one, present in all cultures and traditions, and that path to it is through the cultivation of virtue. The tackling of global problems requires a commitment to the pursuit of the common good, rather than of selfish ends, and this requires the formation of virtuous individuals.

We will begin firstly with a consideration of what is understood by globalisation because if we are to attack global problems we need to have sense of their relationship to the individual living in an individual state and how they affect him or her and their communities. Secondly, we will sketch some of the global crises affect individuals and states, and lastly, suggest how an education in virtue can act as an antidote to the worst features of the global crises threatening chaos, drawing on both East and West. The virtuous person, is one who takes seriously his or her responsibility for the other and for bringing about a just society in which everyone is able to share in the common good. The common good, here, though we do not define it, will include a clean and safe environment in which human beings are able to live in harmony with the rest of creation.

Globalisation

Although the concept of globalisation has been commonly referred to for perhaps 25 years, not everyone agrees about what it means. (Robertson, R. and White, K. E., 2008, p. 54) Many people in different parts of the world view the term with suspicion, since it appears to be another term for colonisation. For many, the term has an economic hue associated with the neo-liberal, economic rationalist advocacy of free markets, free trade, deregulation and privatisation. The rise of transnational corporations that owe no allegiance to any state, but only to themselves and their share-holders, has led to an awareness that some corporations operate on a global scale and so to a consciousness of their reach beyond the confines of any one nation-state. Moreover, since these corporations will act to maxi-mise profits, jobs in one country could be shifted to another, if the labour costs promise to be lower in that country. Corporations have the power to affect the livelihoods of individuals across the globe. What happens at one place affects what happens at another. Closing a manufacturing plant in Australia, for example, will affect workers and their families. Shifting it to a developing country, generates jobs there, which can be a ray of hope for people struggling to earn a living, but also comes with a price. Because the main reason for moving production to another country is to reduce labour costs, corporations have a vested interest in keeping those costs as low as possible. This is entirely rational, if the sole purpose of economic activity is to generate maximum profits. This will mean that there is little incentive to do more than provide a wage. It may mean, for the workers, long hours and dangerous working conditions. Globalisation becomes another word for exploitation.

Rather than seeking to identify the origins of globalisation, some argue that thinking about globalisation in a genealogical sense enables us to focus on its effects and its practice (Mooney, A. and Evans, B., 2007, p. 102). This is a recognition that definitions are unhelpful because glo-balisation is not a phenomenon to be observed or an object to be studied. It is, rather, to be understood in terms of what the effects of action at the global level amount to. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify some of the key features of globalisation. One obvious feature we have already identi-fied is the rise of transnational corporations that operate across national borders and this means that a feature of globalisation is a weakening of national sovereignty. Also identified is the interdependence of nations because of the growth of global markets and financial institutions. The increasing influence of bodies such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, of financial credit ratings agencies such as Standard and Poors, Moody's and Fitch group have the power to not only affect govern-ment policies, but also change governments, if the fiscal policies they pursue do not lead to expected outcomes. These institutions have a global

influence and it is arguable that the credit ratings agencies had a significant role in the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), since they were responsible for the credit ratings provided to a number of mortgage related securities, the so-called Collaterised Debt Obligations (CDOs). An analysis of the GFC shows how it grew out of speculation and the accumulation of debt. Turner says that rapid economic growth had been hailed as one of the triumphs of globalisation and the free market, but higher profit ratios for companies has come at the expense of lower wages for labour and so has fuelled a rise in debt (2008, p. 8). The internationalisation of finance is the most obvious feature of globalisation, that arguably has been observed ever since nations began trading with one another, but the difference in the modern era is that the economic interdependence of nations is much greater and various global events have an almost immediate effect on credit ratings, exchange rates and share prices. If there is an easing of monetary policy in the United States, for example, various share prices of companies will rise or fall according to whether the easing improves their profitability or lowers it. Fluctuations in share price can be observed on a daily basis.

The effects of markets cannot be underestimated, as they can have profound effects on the well being of people around the world. In its statement on globalisation, the United Nations (1998) said the following:

> "…Globalization risks downgrading the central place accorded to human rights by the United Nations Charter in general and the International Bill of Human Rights in particular. This is especially the case in relation to economic, social and cultural rights. Thus, for example, respect for the right to work and the right to just and favorable conditions of work is threatened where there is an excessive emphasis upon competitiveness to the detriment of respect for the labor rights contained in the Covenant. The right to form and join trade unions may be threatened by restrictions upon freedom of association, restrictions claimed to be "necessary" in a global economy, or by the effective exclusion of possibilities for collective bargaining, or by the closing of the right to strike for various occupational and other groups. The right of everyone to social security might not be ensured by arrangements which rely entirely upon private contributions and private schemes. Respect for the family and for the rights of mothers and children in an era of expanded global labor markets for certain individual occupations might require new and innovative policies rather than a mere laissez-faire approach. If not supplemented by necessary safeguards, the introduction of user fees, or cost recovery policies, when applied to basic health and educational services for the poor can easily result in significantly reduced access to services which are essential for the enjoyment of the rights recognized in the Covenant. An insistence upon higher and higher levels of payment for access to artistic, cultural and heritage-related activities risks undermining the right to participate in cultural life for a significant proportion of any community."

This statement makes it very clear that it is not possible for markets to operate in isolation and for corporations to be solely concerned with profits. Many individuals have a stake in the success of companies,

depending on them for employment, but also on their spending in the local economy. States should not accede to the demands of corporations for favourable treatment in establishing their enterprises in a country if this means the erosion of the rights of its citizens to adequate remuneration to support their families with dignity.

Globalisation, however, does not only involve the economic sphere. The ability to communicate rapidly across the globe is also a feature of globalization. The displacement of persons due to war and natural disasters or simply the desire for a better life has led to an increase in the movement of people around the world. As populations age and decline in developed nations, those with increasing populations will see some of their citizens seek a better life in those countries. In a more worrying trend, the spread of diseases across the globe is much accelerated by the increasing contact different countries now have with each other. The containment of pandemics and epidemics requires concerted and coordinated action globally.

Huntington has described globalization in terms of the clash of civilisations, in particular, a clash between Judaeo-Christian culture and Islamic culture (Huntington, 2002). It is argued by Robertson and White (2008, p. 57) that the clash is not primarily one about material resources as is often thought, but is cultural and it is through globalization that the predominantly Judaeo-Christian West has come into contact with the predominantly Islamic Middle-East and East Asia. Globalisation, it is asserted, has resulted in two cultures coming into conflict. This interpretation, however, seems to be at odds with history. Clashes between Christians and Muslims have raged over many centuries and though in the Middle Ages, in the popular mind the Crusades were ostensibly religious in intent, there were also a significant number of conflicts over territories and resources. Moreover, it was not necessarily the case that the clash was between Muslim and Christian.[1] The conflicts are more complex than simply a clash between civilisations. Moreover, there are other examples of religious differences where it is evident that the clash had little to do with either religion or culture, but everything to do with territory and resources. The Hindu and Buddhist cultures of India, for example, do not seem to have led to a clash of cultures, nor could it be said that there has been a clash between Confucian China and the Christian West on the basis of culture.

Globalisation can be considered a process whereby all of the nations, cultures and people of the world enter into a more unified global community as the result of the exchanging of products, resources, art, languages, ideas, ethics and cultural perspectives (Albrow, M. and King, E., 1990, p. 8). Robertson and White acknowledge that there are three major dimensions

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[1] See for example, Falk, A., 2010, also Neoclous, S., 2012.

to globalisation, namely, economic, political and social (including the communicative) (Robertson, R. and White, K. E. 2008, pp. 57-58). We would add that included in the social dimension is culture, but also would add a further dimension that is environmental. In their discussion of globalisation, Robertson and White acknowledge that there are four factors to which globalisation conforms: (i) the international-systemic aspect; (ii) the concept of humanity; (iii) the totality of individuals and (iv) the nation-state. They point out that we would not be talking about globalisation except against the backdrop of the nation-state. The growth of immigration has led, they claim to the rise of multiculturalism and this is a politically contentious development. Individuals are included because they are affected by global changes, as are their local communities. In the international-systemic aspect, they claim we need to think in terms of the West versus 'Terror', but also needed to be factored in is the rise of China and to a lesser degree, Russia (Robertson, R. and White, K. E., 2008, pp. 59-60). This view is to certain extent, outdated. There is evidence that the United States is in decline and while it is true that Europe is also struggling since the GFC, it cannot be said that Russia can be regarded as occupying a pre-eminent role in the world like the Soviet Union did. Nor are alignments so simply made as the West versus 'Terror'. It is evident that there has been a notable shift in relations between the West and Iran for example, once described as one of the 'axes of evil'. The war in Afghanistan shows little sign of ending, even though the U.S. has already signalled its withdrawal. China is emerging as a major power in the world, but it remains to be seen whether this will create a new bilateral rivalry between the U.S. and China. Africa also cannot be excluded from the picture, especially in the resource rich countries, though it is difficult to see any African nation emerging as a world power to rival either the United States or China.

Globalisation has two tendencies, the first is a recognition of greater global connectivity and the second is increasing global consciousness. Global connectivity is related to the various interconnections due to trade, to communication, to political alliances and to cultural exchanges. The second, global consciousness, is an awareness of the various levels on which human beings interact in different parts of the world. It does not involve some kind of world mind, rather, the recognition that the fate of human beings on the earth is intertwined in different ways. We have mentioned that there are environmental problems that have a global impact and are everybody's problems, not just those of particular nation-states. The emergence of global markets and the movement of people and goods around the world has increased awareness of the interconnections between nations and people. Local problems are no longer as local as they once were and States need to be much more mindful of global interconnectivity.

Global awareness is a key element in the recognition of the potential for various global problems to lead to chaos internationally. The GFC highlights the potential for global catastrophe through the inability of financial systems to sustain the amount of debt that they have taken on. This is not the only crisis with the potential to lead to chaos. Two other challenges to global order and well-being of the world's nations involve the demographic crisis and the environmental crisis. The latter encompasses climate change, about which we will have little to say, but it is not the only environmental crisis.

Demographic and Environmental Crisis

Despite fears sporadically expressed since Malthus[2], that the earth was being rapidly overrun by human beings, recent population data points to a slowing of human population growth and the pessimistic forecasts of human catastrophe made in the middle of the twentieth century, have not come to pass. The population data is mixed, in the developed Western nations, there are falling birth rates, as also in major Asian countries such as China and India, on the other hand, many African nations, Indonesia, Pakistan, amongst others, are projected to have large increases in population.[3] Global population is projected to continue to grow, but there is evidence that it is slowing and some more recent demographic projections suggest that the world's population will begin to decline within the next 70 years. The second part of the crisis is the ageing of the world's population. Here, it is projected that by the end of this century, depending on the projections for world population, it is estimated that at least 30% of the population will be aged over 60. These matters, considered together, for many countries will mean not only a declining birth rate, but because of increasing survival rates, also an ageing population. In a very short time, within the next 50 years, the number of workers available to support the aged will have declined. It is argued, for example, that Europe is headed towards a demographic "fiscal cliff", where the number of workers providing resources for those not working, such as the elderly, becomes too small to support them (Pritchett, L. and Viarengo, M., 2013, p. 63). Though this in itself may turn out to be not the major difficulty that seems to be thought there is nevertheless, an obvious effect to be experienced on the economy.[4] The ramifications of declining birth rates and rising

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[2] Malthus said that population increases according to a geometrical ratio, whereas food production increases according to an arithmetic ratio. The difference is quite significant, since in the former case, the increase is a multiplier effect, whereas in the latter, it is an addition to the previous term. (Malthus, T., 1798, p. 4).

[3] See URL: http://www.unfpa.org/pds/trends.htm, accessed 9.10.2013.

[4] See, for example, Nancy J. Altman (2005), who argues that there has been a decline in the ratio of workers to retirees over a period of time from 16:1 in 1950 to 4:1 currently,

life expectancies are complex and it is difficult to predict their outcomes. Nevertheless, it is a crisis, particularly for countries that are projected to see their populations considerably reduced. This has the potential to throw these countries into chaos.

Countries which are facing potentially explosive population growth face different challenges. Though some are blessed with an abundance of natural resources others are not, but despite this are experiencing population growth. Challenges here will be to provide education and employment, as well as appropriate welfare and health services. For those with plenty of natural resources, provided these are used for the benefit of all, the growth in population will not be a problem. If, however, the wealth generated by the exploitation of natural resources is used to increase the wealth of a small minority of rich capitalists, then the growth in population will result in an increase in poverty. For countries with few natural resources, but an increasing population, the problems will be different, but not insoluble. An abundance of labour can also work to the advantage of a country if it develops the right kinds of manufacturing industries. This is not to gloss the very real problems faced by explosive population growth, particularly in the poorest areas of the world. The possibility of exploitation of the most vulnerable is considerable and there is plenty of evidence of this in the world today.

It is evident already that in the developed world, population decline has been compensated by a shift to more technology based industry that does not rely heavily on a cheap labour force to produce goods. For example, much of the world's textile industry can now be found in Asia, where the cost of labour is much less than in the developed world. Likewise, China's economic growth has been largely built on its enormous labour resources, and the same may be seen, though not to the same extent, in India. Other countries, especially in Africa, with growing populations, may well provide the impetus for economic growth, while more developed nations seek to maintain their prosperity through technological innovation and scientific breakthroughs. Concentration on specialised areas requiring highly trained individuals would seem to be the way forward for countries with declining populations but highly developed education and research systems.

There are numerous reasons offered for the declining birth rates in most of the world and it is not our intention to discuss these. It suffices to say that European governments, as well as other governments, have begun to recognise the importance of arresting declining birth rates by providing

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with no ill effects. This is because what is required is that the amount of wealth generated has to be sufficient to support the retired population and this does not depend on the ratio of workers to retirees. This seems to be right, but it does also depend on economic growth.

incentives for women to have more children. Whether this is sufficient or whether there need to be more family friendly policies adopted remains to be seen. Encouraging immigration is another means of increasing the population of those in younger age groups, though this may have significant ramifications on a country's sense of identity. For example, a small country could rapidly lose its character and have its language and culture destroyed by a large influx of immigrants with a different language and culture. This is likely to lead to racial tensions that can rapidly escalate into violence and chaos. For large traditionally immigrant nations such as the United States, Canada and Australia, this is likely to be less of a problem, but the rise of nationalistic politics in many parts of the world, including these countries highlights the need for finding ways in which cultures can intermingle and live peacefully together.

Another source of chaos in the world are environmental crises. Although climate change and global warming are very much in contemporary media, it is unclear how significant their impact is likely to be in the future. There is no doubt that increasing occurrences of wild weather, cyclones, droughts and floods, have the potential to cause untold misery to huge numbers of people around the world. In cases of such disasters, global solidarity has come to be expected. There are however, many other global environmental problems. These range from deforestation to the depletion of fisheries and desertification. The destruction of the Aral Sea, once the fourth largest inland sea in the world, for example, points to the disastrous effects that government policies can have on the environment and the local population that depends on that environment (see Whish-Wilson, P., 2002; Micklin, P., 2007). Other examples are not hard to find. Land degradation and desertification has been recognised as a serious international problem and the UN has established the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). This body aspires to create a land degradation neutral world.[5] The UN says that land degradation and desertification has accelerated over 36 times over its historical rate, leading to poverty and hunger. The destruction of formerly productive land leads to famine, disease and ultimately to migration, where the cycle of degradation of land continues. Desertification is not a matter of sand dunes encroaching on productive land, rather it is the persistent degradation of dryland ecosystems through overgrazing, clear-felling of the land, unsustainable farming practices and mining. The UN estimates that 2.6 billion people are directly dependent on agriculture and 1.5 billion people are directly affected by land degradation.[6] This is a global problem, affecting

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[5] See URL: http://www.unccd.int/en/programmes/RioConventions/RioPlus20/Pages/Land-DegradationNeutralWorld.aspx. Accessed: 10/10/2013.

[6] See URL http://www.un.org/en/events/desertificationday/background.shtml. Accessed: 10/10/2103.

not just isolated countries, but many countries. There are a number of ways in which this problem can be tackled, but it requires concerted effort. Overfishing represents a major problem in the world today, as it affects the livelihood and food security of a very large global population. Depletion of fish stocks also decreases marine diversity, affecting not only fish, but also crustaceans, molluscs and marine plant life, thus changing marine ecology. Nearly one fifth of the world's population depends on fish for food and so overfishing not only jeopardises fish stocks, but can lead to the collapse of marine ecosystems.[7] This will certainly lead to food shortages and a grave global situation.

The environmental problems we have identified are just a few of a great many serious ecological and environmental issues that the global community faces. We have said next to nothing about climate change and global warming nor about the number of species threatened with extinction due to the depredations of human beings. Most can be seen as the result of human greed and the failure to respect the environment. The lesson which human beings need to learn is how crucial to our own survival it is to use the earth's resources sustainably and to preserve ecosystems so that other species can also survive. This will only be possible with the right kind of education. Before we turn to what is involves in this, we shall consider one more challenge facing the global community.

Secularism, Religion and Disappearing Civil Society

The place of religion in the public square is hotly debated in many parts of the world. Perhaps surprisingly, a significant number of nations have a state religion. Though the data indicate that fewer nations have a state religion today than did at the beginning of the twentieth century (111 out of 189 nations), the last 30 years indicate no real change (75 out of 188) (Barro, R. J. and McCleary, R. M., 2005, pp. 1334-1335). Empirical research suggests that religious practice is enhanced where there is a state religion, but is depressed where there is none.[8] Though the decline in the number of nations with state religions is not a definitive measure of a decline in religious practice nevertheless, there is evidence that in some Western countries there has been significant decline. More than this, however, is the hostility to religion that appears to be on the rise not only in a number of non-Christian countries, but also in Western countries that have their roots in Christianity. In some Muslim countries there is a marked hostility to Christianity, but also to other religions.[9] Australia, for example, as one

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[7] At URL http://www.un.org/events/tenstories/06/story.asp?storyID=800. Accessed: 10/10/2013.
[8] See Barro, R. J. and McCleary, R. M., 2005, pp. 1331-2; Barro and McCleary (2006).
[9] The reasons for this, it has been suggested, is that democracy is an ill fit in Muslim countries, where it is held that the supreme law is that of God, and not that of a human legislature. See Lakoff (2004).

of the countries without a state religion, shows a growing intolerance to Christianity, particularly Roman Catholicism, but to other religions also. Secularism in many ways has become the new form of state religion.[10] This is manifested through prohibiting public displays of religious icons and the wearing of religious symbols. In the place of religious practice and moral values based on religious belief is a new form of secular religion that absolutises the State and which bases its values on some form of liberalism or on some other ideology. Secularism manifests itself most strongly in rich, developed countries, according to Norris and Inglehart, but the opposite is the case in less developed countries. This is because life is more secure in wealthy countries, but much less so in poor countries. (Norris and Inglehart, 2011, p. 5) Despite these apparently contradictory trends hostility towards religion manifests itself across the globe. In developed countries, it is because the prevailing consensus is that religion has no place in the public sphere, but should remain a private indulgence. In developing countries, religion is ejected from the public sphere because it can often be an inconvenient conscience that reminds governments that they are to govern on behalf of the people.

In developed countries, secularism has brought with it a new concern that along with the decline in religion has come an erosion of civil society. Civil society seen as a bulwark against the excesses of the State and the market through its informal networks of community based associations, can be seen as in decline because there is less commitment to the common good. In developing nations, civil society in one sense is stronger because there is a recognition that human beings need each other in order to survive, but because both State and market are underdeveloped, civil society is also underdeveloped. Civil society is vital for the well-being of human beings, since the politically excluded, economically disadvantaged and the marginalised can all form their own associations in order to press those in power to redress the injustices and inequalities they suffer (Young, I. M., 2000, p. 165). This, however, requires firstly recognition that social structures and practices are unjust and the realisation among the oppressed and marginalised that they can act to transform their condition into one in which their dignity as human beings is affirmed. As Gramsci argues, this demands an education in which old ways of thinking are overthrown and the hegemony of the ruling classes repudiated (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 24-43).

The State will become corrupt if its citizens are not vigilant and where there is not adequate scrutiny and accountability of elected officials and

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[10] But see Norris, P. and Inglehart, R., 2011, who argue that despite the predictions that religion would eventually fade away, religion is growing strongly in many parts of the world (p. 4).

bureaucrats. It is not only the State, however, that sometimes acts arbitrarily and abuses its power. Sometimes it is the case that the State has not taken its responsibilities seriously, by, for example, regulating the financial sector. The Global Financial Crisis, which continues to affect the global economy, is the direct result of the lack of regulation and scrutiny of the activities of the financial sector. Powerful interests influence government to continue to turn a blind eye to their activities. Scandals abound from the baby milk formula outrage in China to the Ok Tedi environmental disaster in Papua New Guinea. The question is whether civil society is strong enough to be able to make a difference and, if it is not, what ought to be done to make it strong enough. Education is the obvious answer, one which enables students to take their civic responsibilities seriously and to have a desire to transform their community into a fairer, more equitable one in which all have a share in the common good.

Cultivating Virtue

The centrality of education to provide human beings with the necessary skills is well recognised and the State recognises its responsibility to provide education through its support of schools and universities. In doing so, however, the importance of cultivating and forming people to be virtuous is forgotten. The educating of responsible citizens who will be active members of civil society, creating and transforming their communities so that they are just and share in the common good does not feature significantly in most accounts of modern curriculum. Civics and citizenship is an element of civil society, but it is only a part of it, dealing only with each individual's responsibility to the State. Since each individual is dependent for his or her flourishing on being nurtured and nourished by his or her community, what is also required is a deep understanding and commitment to the other. This means individuals need to appreciate and acknowledge their place in the community and recognise that their own flourishing is entwined with others. Happiness, which is the end of human beings, requires as orientation to the good and what is good for human persons is to live their lives virtuously. It is not enough to create a good civic society, we need to create the good, just civil society. This means acting to transform society, eliminating corruption, injustice, inequality and oppression.

This view of the transformative nature of education is not new and has its origins in Greek philosophy in the West, and in Confucian philosophy in the East. Education is needed in order to bring about the good society and it is such a society which enables individuals to realise their good through becoming virtuous. Society in order to be good needs virtuous individuals and they in turn need a good society in order for them to realise their own good. In the Christian tradition, Aquinas reinterprets

Aristotle by adding Augustine, arguing for the centrality of virtue if human beings are to reach their ultimate fulfilment in God. Mengzi, interpreting Confucian thought, reaches much the same conclusion, namely, that the ultimate end of human beings is humaneness, that is, in being human and in being fulfilled as human beings, we are reunited with Heaven. Mencius proposes that the capacity to develop the virtues is what is definitive of what it is to be human.[11] If someone were to lose this capacity, he or she would no longer be human. Mencius says that the capacity to become virtuous is the *qíng* (情) of human beings. The *qíng* of a human being is what a human being cannot lack if he or she is still to be called a human being (Van Norden, B., 2003, p. 126, footnote 8). Possessing *qíng* is not enough, since human beings must develop the sprouts (*cái*, 才) of virtue that they are given. Cultivation of virtue is one of the aims of education and, since it is directly concerned with the good of human beings, the most important one.

Aquinas says that God is the one final end to which human beings are directed as a consequence of their rational nature and so our lives should be directed towards the achievement of the good. This is not easy, since we need to be able to perceive what the good is (*Summa Theologica*, I-II, Q.1, Art. 4 and *Summa Theologica*, I-II, Q.1, Art. 5). In Aquinas's view, the best prospect of being able to achieve this is to acquire good character and the virtues. To acquire the virtues, however, requires the right kind of habituation and not everyone is inclined to gain the virtues. Intellectual instruction in the virtues will only have an effect on those who already possess them to some extent.[12] Like Mengzi, Aquinas thinks human beings possess the seeds of the virtues already, but these need development. In addition, individuals need to be receptive to instruction in the virtues, otherwise they will not gain the virtues. A distinction is drawn by Aquinas between talking about the virtues and practising them. What is important is engaging in the slow process of developing virtuous habits by acting in a virtuous way. Aquinas says that in practical matters the truth of one's assertions are not tested by argument but by deeds and way of life. He says the following: "So the views of the philosophers seem to harmonize with our arguments, and consequently have some credibility. However, in practical matters the truth is tested by a man's conduct and way of living,

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[11] In a passage in the *Mencius*, Mengzi says that every person has the capacity to be sensitive to the suffering of others. In support of this, he says that anyone who came upon a child about to fall into a well would be moved to compassion. This is a natural impulse, that all human beings possess, but is only the germ of benevolence. The implication is that this must be developed. See Mencius (1970). *Mencius*. Tr. D. C. Lau. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2A6.

[12] See Aquinas's *Commentary on the Nichomachean Ethics*, X, Lect. XIV, 2139-47. Aquinas, T. (1993).

for these are the dominant factors. We must therefore examine the preceding opinions by judging them from the facts and from the actual life (of the philosopher). If they agree with the facts we should accept them; if they disagree we should consider them mere theories."[13] Virtue is not simply required in private lives, but in all aspects of the lives of human beings.

The pursuit of virtue is an antidote to the various challenges that present themselves to the world. In economic matters, virtue directs the financier to be concerned with the common good, instead of profit. So too, the politician will also be able to work for the common good and the welfare of his or her community. This is not to suggest that the challenges we have mentioned earlier will simply disappear if only everyone was more virtuous, but it is to propose that a realisation that each of us depends on others entails that we are responsible for each other and to the community. Each of the issues identified are at least partly the result of greed and focussing narrowly on selfish ends. An education in the virtues as proposed by both Mengzi and Aquinas (amongst others) is a remedy to selfishness and it is to be hoped will result in human beings who are conscious of their responsibilities to the wider community.

Conclusion

We began with a consideration of globalisation and what could be meant by it. Though by no means simply defined, we proposed that it at least meant an awareness of the global context in which we live as well as the practical outcome of increased global connectivity. Most obviously, this connectivity was the result of the development of global markets and new ways of communicating through mass media. Globalisation has also made people around the globe aware of the many different global problems and challenges that human beings face in the contemporary world. In one sense, global awareness is thrust upon us, when, for example, there is a global disaster, such as an eruption of a volcano that sends ash around the world. More often, sadly, it is through the misdeeds of financiers, as in the GFC, or of corporations that exploit people or destroy the environment. Crucially, it is not just a matter of recognising that these challenges exist, but also that we have to work together on a global scale in order to meet them. Some of the most obvious challenges come from a number of global problems, some of which we identified. It was never the intent to try to identify as many global problems as possible, but to illustrate that issues such as the GFC are the result of greed and the failure of entrepreneurs to understand that they have a responsibility to the other

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[13] Aquinas, T. (1993). *Commentary on the Nichomachean Ethics*, Lect. XIII, Ch.8, #2132.

and that the market exists, not merely for profit, but for the common good. Likewise, it was argued that the State exists for the common good.

In order to make any progress on tackling problems such as exist on the global scale, we need to begin modestly with our own close communities. It is there that we begin the development of virtue and through which we can reach out to others beyond our borders. It is not denied that there are other skills and capacities that human beings need in order to begin finding solutions to the various global challenges that we face, but crucially, if we do not have an understanding of what it is that is authentically good for human beings, then such solutions as we might find will not have the common good as their reason for being proposed. It may be profit, it may be expediency, or it may be a lust for power, but whatever the reason, it will not have the other at its centre. Both Aquinas and Mengzi teach us that true human happiness is to be found in the cultivation of virtue, but this is not impractical idealism, since through virtue we gain wisdom and so the insight and imagination needed to address the major global challenges facing us.

It is not an impractical exercise to concentrate on cultivating virtue, because if we possess virtue we will attack the major global problems for the right reasons and with the common good in mind, rather than our own self interests. We can bring order out of chaos, create a better understanding amongst people and serve the global community, but this requires a re-acquaintance with older conceptions of human nature and the meaning of human life. Moreover, it also demands the creation of a civil society, perhaps a global civil society, which is aware of its responsibility to fight injustice, poverty, inequality and oppression.

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