

Towards a Confucian Global Governance 邁向儒家式的全球治理[§]

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"We are men with hybrids and original sin and therefore seek the good, the true, and the beautiful."

— Immanuel Wallerstein —

"Proportionalism or chaos."

— Waldemar De Gregori —

Introduction

Private and state-owned enterprises now rule societies as never before. As a result, the global economy is no longer oriented towards welfare for everybody, but to the maximization of investors' profits, resulting in the widening of the rich-poor gap. The mechanisms that were intended to guarantee power for the democratic majority have become means to sustain strong elites, who derive power from their relationship to national and international economic might. Simultaneously, tolerance, dialogue, and solidarity are destroyed by socio-economic conflicts, punitive wars and a variety of discriminations that still prevail, which lead to increased domestic securitization¹ and an arms race to compete with foreign opponents. Together, these factors have incubated two major threats to human life: firstly, the incendiary spiral that could trigger a nuclear war; and secondly, the loss of real conditions for human reproduction as a result of environmental deterioration. Both scenarios represent a grave threat to mankind, and require effective international agreements in order to prevent disaster.

Critical thinkers have denounced the trend towards private, exclusively profit-oriented exchanges for producing and entrenching a moral deficit. In fact,

1 Extensive cyber and physical police control over civil society.

allowing the "invisible hand" to guide markets marginalizes people and disturbs the political community, whose "identity (is) constituted socially for us all."² Michael Sandel has thus described the adverse effect of inequality on social bonds: "The hollowing out of the public realm makes it difficult to cultivate solidarity and sense of community on which democratic citizenship depends."³ Gianni Vattimo, Charles Taylor and Richard Rorty (1931-2007) have criticized neoliberal policies and the military-industrial complex of the George W. Bush administration for amplifying global uncertainties.⁴ In addition, industrial pollution and the intensive extraction of raw materials jeopardise the renewal of ecosystems, inhibiting the reproduction of life.⁵ Consequently, critical thought points out how contemporary civilization needs an "ethics of responsibility" for the care of human beings and the environment at the same time.⁶

The insights of previous generations remain relevant to the present day: is it possible to correct the trend towards self-destruction of contemporary civilization? What changes must be made to overcome entropic globalization and ensure the sustainability of human life? What kind of organization would be best positioned to make such changes? Diverging views of *governance* have become points of contention in the discussion around globalization. The purpose of this article is to answer these questions from the perspective of Confucian philosophy. I argue that the Confucian concept of harmony is crucial to establish

2 Ernst Tugendhat, *Ser-verdad-acción: ensayos filosóficos* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 1998), pp. 212-213.

3 Michael J. Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing To Do?* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), p. 267.

4 Vattimo, Gianni, Charles Taylor and Richard Rorty, "A Roundtable on Globalization," *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory*, 8, 2 (Spring, 2007), pp. 151-162.

5 Wim Dierckxens, *Política y población* (Costa Rica: Universitaria Centroamericana, 1981).

6 Karl-Otto Apel, *Teoría de la verdad y ética del discurso*, trad. Fernández Retenaga (Barcelona: Paidós, 1991); Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999); Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

an alternative model of globalization capable of correcting humanity's present slide towards self-destruction.

This article is split into four sections: 1). global governance as a theoretical issue; 2). how to apprise the moral constituency of global governance from a Confucian perspective; 3). the idealized Confucian world government; 4) the nature of the Confucian-inspired alternative global governance.

Global Governance as a Theoretical Issue

At the end of the Cold War, some liberal thinkers celebrated the end of ideological conflict and the advent of liberal democracy as "the final form of human government." This notion of a form of governance that would guarantee a peaceful international order led Francis Fukuyama to postulate the "end of history" from a Hegelian perspective.⁷ According to this idea, states' mutual interest in the benefits of trade leads them into permanent cooperation, thus avoiding wars. Indeed, in the decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union, trade surged, connecting states as never before. Yet open and concealed wars continued. Moreover, military strikes often followed political disputes and economic sanctions, as in the case of the European Union and Russia in 2014.

An alternative approach was to reinforce the new world order in the aftermath of major political change. In 1995, the Swedish Government, supported by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, launched the Commission on Global Governance, which produced the report *Our Global Neighborhood*. In Confucian style, the report called for accommodating the diverse interests of countries, institutions and individuals, by selecting leaders with a strong vision, ethics and courage, because "the quality of global

7 See Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest* (Summer, 1989), pp. 3-18.

governance depends ultimately on leadership."⁸ While universal rules and procedures are required by world social, political, and environmental problems, there is no definite agreement on them. Global governance is a controversial matter, diverging approaches to which result from contrasting political and philosophical premises. Libertarians and postmodernists reject the notion of global governance, while for neoliberals, moderate liberals and socialists, global consensual government guarantees international welfare and peace.

Libertarianism has its roots in the work of John Locke (1632-1704), Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865), Max Stirner (1806-1856), and Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876), among other theorists. Libertarianism represents an ideological spectrum ranging from thinkers who view the production and capitalist distribution model as the best way to secure individual autonomy, to those that advocate the transferal of economic control to the community itself. Both reject external regulations from state institutions or international bodies. Some do not accept the state at all while others, like the radical right-wing Tea Party in the U.S., prefer the minimal state. Robert Nozick (1938-2002), a moderate rightist, accepted the minimal state that "treat us as inviolate individuals, who may not be used in certain ways by others as means or tools or instruments or resources; it treats us as persons having individual rights with the dignity this constitutes."⁹ Essentially, libertarians feel that using rules to realize all social and political goods violates individual rights at national or international levels.

Postmodern philosophers have criticized the state for its catastrophic effects on the autonomy of both individuals and groups. Such thinkers argue that modern states operate according to a modern rationality embedded in the logo-centric trend, according to which human reason has an absolute value, above other capabilities such as feelings, desires, or emotions. This monological rationality

8 Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighborhood: The Report of the Commission on Global Governance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

9 Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (Oxford: Basic Books, 1974), p. 333.

transforms individuals and societies into metaphysical entities or metanarratives. Thus, postmodernism posits a kind of Newtonian anthropology, which must be rejected in order to allow different language games, political heterogeneity, local and group self-determination. In short, we have to install paralogies against rigid-central logic or dissent against consensus.¹⁰ Therefore, any world government represents centralized authority or hegemonic reason.

Some neoliberals, like libertarians, support the idea of the minimal state. Nevertheless, a small state should still organize international institutions in charge of global governance. As the so-called Washington Consensus advises, free movement of capital and production must be established by all governments to promote global welfare through competition among the producers. When open economies such as Chile or Singapore take advantage of global markets, they are usually presented as examples of the benefits of neoliberal economics. Unlike libertarians, however, neoliberals find global governance useful. Open markets overseen by international economic institutions are, for them, synonymous with open societies and world happiness. They assume, in classic utilitarian fashion, that in a laissez-faire environment, a natural order of cooperation in exchanging goods and services emerges that satisfies human wants. In their view, the existing international system is almost the best it can be, thanks to commerce that gives equal opportunities to all, regardless of national and geographical boundaries.¹¹ Defenders of this doctrine, who are political conformists, assert that international economic agreements and associations between private entities and governments should be enhanced, and political intervention avoided.

Political thinkers who accept global political rules over world-wide business tend to take into account the negative collateral effects of uncontrolled free

10 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); *Libidinal Economy*, trans. by Iain Hamilton Grant (London: Athlone Press, 1993).

11 Thomas L. Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).

market economics. They accept the system that facilitates open economic transactions and private business, but they criticize the poverty, depletion of natural resources, and social ills that are the by-products of the system, arguing that world leaders should solve these problems with new state policies and regional integration. They do not call for thoroughgoing change, but for the adaptation of policies to shore up world stability. James N. Rosenau, for instance, opines that national and trans-national institutions have to expect chaos and turbulence; this is because now the individual's new sensibilities and capacity for self-consciousness towards authority are the driving force of global society today.¹²

More radical social and environmental claims are made by critical theorists, particularly Jürgen Habermas. Like John Rawls (1921-2002), he foresees the world order based on the extension of deliberative democracy, which in his mind is represented by the European postwar experience. Nevertheless, while Rawls stresses the legitimacy of the enforced international institutions,¹³ Habermas highlights the transition from classical political order based on sovereign nation states to that of a transnational "global domestic politics without a world government," whose neoliberal politicians wreak ecological, social, and cultural disaster.¹⁴ It is possible however, to oppose his recommendation, on the basis of several upheavals in the European Union, which undermine its status as the prototype for world governance.

For political and economic reform advocates, in contrast, no real solution to world ecological and social problems exists without the aggressive revision of the global economic system of production and exchange. According to the classic world system studies of Immanuel Wallerstein, to Antonio Negri, Michael Hardt,

12 James N. Rosenau, *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

13 John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples: With "the Idea of Public Reason Revisited"* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999).

14 Jürgen Habermas, *Time of Transitions* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006).

and postcolonial theorists, global crises are attached to the capitalist mode of production of goods, discourses, and institutions entrenched by European modern empires. According to this view, market domination of social institutions is the problem most likely to trigger world disorder today. This is because globalization—based on free trade and economic interdependence—determines the decisions of central governments, in contradiction with the democratic foundations of states.¹⁵

This article argues that Confucian philosophy endorses the latter judgments more than the former. According to its eudaemonistic moral doctrine, based on social understanding and the practice of the virtues, there is no conflict between individual and collective duties. Since the promotion of welfare is only one of complex social relations, privileging economic factors over political ones will result in social disarray. Rather, social harmony hinges on the equilibrium of diverse and not always convergent forces. Confucianism emphasizes the extent to which human order depends on agreements among human beings themselves and not on the pre-established design of God or transcendental conciliation by any invisible hand.

Towards a Confucian Appraisal of Global Governance

Globalization is often assumed to be a value-free trade-off. Its supposed neutrality, however, is directly contradicted by the moral underpinnings of the international system, which are related to individual and collective responsibilities towards present and future human and non-human species.¹⁶ Empirical

15 Alain Badiou, "L'emblème démocratique," in Giorgio Agamben et al., *Démocratie, dans quel état?* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2010), pp. 15-24; Jacques Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*, trans. by Steve Corcoran (London: Verso, 2006).

16 Andrew Linklater, *Men and Citizen in the Theory of International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1990). To Attfield, people of the future have moral standing, and the range of their needs must be understood correspondingly. In some cases, ignoring them may be the moral equivalent of genocide; see Robin Attfield, "Ecological Issues of Justice," in Heather Widdows

approaches have shown how wars, greed, poverty or environmental destruction and degradation continue to oppress people. Confucius 孔子 (551-479 BCE) calls them the "violent bad" and opposes them to sociability, good feelings, filial piety, and learning (*Analects* 13.11; 17.9).¹⁷ If bad actions succeed, social order is upset. In the contemporary economic order, as long as human affairs are dictated solely by investors' goals, the natural complexity of human society will be reduced to a single dimension, preventing individuals and communities from fulfilling their potential. The main problem lies not with transformative or economic logic itself,¹⁸ but with its domination of multidimensional social organization. A world order certainly exists, but as long as violence, poverty and exclusion persist, it cannot be described as fraternal or humanitarian.

To imagine an alternative world government from the perspective of Confucian values, we must first consider the concept of universal order posited by Confucianism. We have to apply our full capacities to observation and study as the wise men do. According to ancient Chinese philosophy, the idea of order inheres in the harmony of the universal laws ruling the cosmos. In Confucian ontology, being is a composition of different elements in the eternal present of the universe or *t'ien* (heaven 天), the immanent reality, as opposed to the delirium of extra-mundane worlds, from which superstition emanates (*Analects* 7.20). Consequently, Confucianism encourages people to focus on their lived experience rather than spiritual mysteries and the afterlife, summed up in the rhetorical question, "While you do not know life, how can you know about death?" (*Analects* 11.11) The multiple forces that constitute the universe "are continually being produced," resulting in a universal order of complexity that

and Nicola J. Smith (eds.), *Global Social Justice* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 83.

17 In this and all future references to *The Analects* 論語, James Legge's translation is used. See James Legge (trans.), *The Analects of Confucius: With a Selection of the Sayings of Mencius, The Way and its Power of Laozi* (East Bridgewater, MA: Signature Press, 2008).

18 Here we accept the triple specialization of mind to understand the world, to apply work to transform it and the ability to contemplate it; or cognitive, transformative and ludic logic capabilities. We refer to them as reflective, operative and ludic cultures also.

holds everybody, including great men and sages, in awe (*Analects* 71.19[3]; 16.8 [1]). Through this complex and constant movement, universal harmony is always able to avoid chaos.¹⁹

According to Confucianism, harmony is not determined by gods, but by human intelligence; people's actions determine the relation of the human world to the universal order. Like universal harmony, social life is complex and dynamic. However, its order depends on the practice of the virtues; without virtues, the "violent bad" leads to turmoil. Complexity, interdependence, and hierarchy are the basic characteristics of Confucian ethics and political philosophy.

Individuals, groups, and nations are complex and diverse entities or microcosms. Every human being is unique but not an atom or independent Leibnizean monad, and may not become completely autonomous as in the Kantian way of thinking. Born as a result of the exercise of virtues by our parents, each of us is set in the world within a specific position in the framework of family, city, and country. Human beings live in a network of reciprocal relations,²⁰ reinforced by the practice of virtues because "virtue is not left to stand alone. He who practices it will have neighbors." (*Analects* 4.25) As a member of the human family, each individual enjoys equal rights of freedom, security, and welfare and so on, toward his or her self-attainment.

At the same time, we are individual beings whose identity is correlated to familial and social linkages. There is a biological hierarchy among generations: we start at the bottom to reach the top in our old age. However, more significant

19 "The Master said, 'Does Heaven speak? The four seasons pursue their courses, and all things are continually being produced, but does Heaven say anything?'" (*Analects* 17.19[3])

20 "There are five ways forward in the world, and three methods of advancing on them. Ruler and minister, father and son, husband and wife, older and younger brother, friend and mentor—these are the five ways forward (dadao) in the world. Wisdom, authoritative conduct, and courage—these are the three methods of excelling in character. How one advances along the way is one and the same." See Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhongyong* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), p. 104.

than biological is moral hierarchy, which categorizes people through their relationship to the virtues. In summary, all human beings are equal but they have to deal with different life projects, which are conditioned by their particular familial and social links: "In teaching there should not be distinction of classes," but "Those whose courses are different cannot lay plans for one another." (*Analects* 15.38-39)

Confucian philosophy, then, is concerned with the delicate balance between various levels of society. This gives rise to its versatility, so that it can be assumed now by the theories of complexity and postmodernism rather than makeshift rationalism. The last one is a kind of reductionism which needs to establish a metaphysical sphere to integrate the fundamental aspects of human life, as in the transcendental line that goes from René Descartes (1596-1650) to Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Confucius, in a different way, incorporates ethics into ontological and epistemological dimensions without the despair of possible contradictions. Human rationality and external reality are interdependent forces linked each other in perennial opposition and association. This is a similar method to dialectic operation activating the opposition, but, contrary to conventional dichotomist dialectic looking for unity, Confucius preserves an immanent triple structure. On this point, we are reminded of Confucian compositional thought, not *logicist* because love, feelings, and emotions are included. Rather than becoming one to be open to a new opposition, as in modern dialectics, virtues have to be harmonized at all times, like great music whose different parts go hand in hand (*Analects* 3.23). In this framework, discipline, frugality, honesty, politeness, generosity, sincerity, diligence, kindness and courage are the most frequent personal and social virtues.

In addition, the Confucian social network imposes different roles and responsibilities upon people. This idea was codified in the doctrine of "the rectification of names," which stresses the importance of knowing and using the correct designations of things in relation to other things. According to

Confucianism, this is crucial to understanding how we should act and how we can expect to be treated by others. If parents act as parents, children as children, masters as masters, there will be no confusion in personal relations, which become transparent, instead of those apparent social relations or individual roles: "A cornered vessel without corners—A strange cornered vessel!" (*Analects* 6.23) Without junctions it is not an authentic pot. Consequently, "If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things. If language be not in accordance with the truth of things, affairs cannot be carried on to success." (*Analects* 13.3[4]) In the case of government, for example, if a governor does not behave in a way that befits his title, he is considered a fraudulent figure likely to cause political disorder, because, "There is government when the prince is prince, and the minister is minister, when the father is father and the son is son." (*Analects* 12.11[2])

In Confucian ethics, equal rights do not denote equal responsibilities, because individuals are differentiated by familial position and social status. Hence, "The superior man, in his thoughts, does not go out of his place;" Confucius claims to have seen superior men "contemplating good, and pursuing it, as if they could not reach it." (*Analects* 14.28; 16.9) If awareness of complexity, interdependence, and hierarchy is lost, harmony becomes an impossible aim. Behind social disorder there are immoral governors who are responsible for the social injustice that put large categories of persons under a systematic threat of domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacities, at the same time as these processes enable others to dominate or have a wide range of opportunities for developing and exercising their capacities.²¹

21 Iris Marion Young, "Responsibility and Global Justice: A Social Connection Model," in Ellen Frankel Paul, Fred D. Miller, Jr., and Jeffrey Paul (eds.), *Justice and Global Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 114.

For Confucius, conversely, "when harmony prevails, there will be no scarcity of people; and when there is such contented repose, there will be no rebellious upsettings." (*Analects* 16.1[10])

In today's globalized world, private and state corporations have usurped the power of politicians, with the latter's complicity. Politicians behave immorally when they legislate according to their private interests instead of those of the whole community. For instance, in the current European fiscal crisis, the lenience of German authorities in relation to their banks acquiring toxic assets coincided with lax Mediterranean governments receiving massive loans from Germany.²² In the words of Mencius 孟子 (ca. 372-289 BCE): "When rightness is subordinated to profit, the urge to lay claim to more becomes irresistible."²³ Growing global unrest confirms that leaders failed in their responsibility to control the public disorder caused by rising income inequality. In this regard, Confucius confirms the argument made by Habermas about the colonization of the sphere of public life by the market.²⁴ The rising wealth gap is a global problem, related to political oppression, discrimination, economic exploitation, and so on.

Some of these transnational problems are perniciously exploited by conservative politicians, who instead of looking for universal solutions in a spirit of truth, equity and solidarity, deride such universal solutions as threats to employment and fiscal health, or as a cause of the presence of poor immigrants in their countries. Europe presents the clearest example of a zone in which chauvinism is rising after a fall in collective welfare. A Confucian response would focus on national and international ideal governance by morally superior people, qualified by virtuous practices, who take responsibility for blending

22 Michel Aglietta, "The European Vortex," *New Left Review*, 75 (May-Jun., 2012), pp. 15-36.

23 Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. by Irene T. Bloom, Philip J. Ivanhoe (ed.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 1A1.

24 Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. by Thomas McCarthy (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

inquisitive, transformative and emotive or ludic intelligencies. As Confucius said, "The superior man seeks to perfect the admirable qualities of men and does not seek to perfect their bad qualities. The mean man does the opposite of this." (*Analects* 12.16)

Ideal Confucian Global Governance

When the complex universal order is taken as a reference for building social harmony (which in turn depends on human understanding), the idea of global governance must incorporate multiple virtues. As long as human beings do not enter dialogue to reach common goals, harmony among them is impossible. In order to achieve harmony and avoid anarchy, high moral standards are the most valuable resource. Important decisions should be made only by morally cultivated persons.

In the Confucian model, mankind is understood as one family. Individual and collective flourishing demands on multiple actions related to diverse virtues, without one virtue being allowed to dominate the other. This differs significantly from the Greek political utopia where philosophers were exalted by Plato (ca. 424-348 BCE) and Aristotle (ca. 384-322 BCE), and modern European political philosophy which is based on the rational calculations of individuals. For Confucius, there are three central virtues, which come with their own correlated difficulties: "The way of the superior man is threefold, but I am not equal to it. Virtuous, he is free from anxieties; wise, he is free from perplexities; bold, he is free from fear." (*Analects* 14.30)

The triadic pillars are interlinked: "The superior man holds righteousness to be of the highest importance. A man in a superior situation, having valor without righteousness, will be guilty of insubordination; one of the lower people having valor without righteousness will commit robbery." (*Analects* 17.23) The idea that

one virtue cannot dominate another separates Confucian philosophy from extreme rationalistic positions—such as those characterizing European modern thought—and suggests a commonality between Confucianism and the postmodern rescue of emotions and dialogue.²⁵ At the same time, this tripartite model of virtue delegitimizes the usual dichotomy that contrasts rational/emotional, analytical/intuitive logic, East/West, Western/Asian values and so on, accepted by many scholars, including some Confucian commentators.²⁶ Neither mono-logical nor dualistic, the Confucian tripartite system should be understood as an epistemological and ethical platform, as in Pierce's logic, psychoanalysis or triadic social philosophy. The latter posits a model of the world order that combines economic, political and religious powers.²⁷

In Confucian philosophy, where one virtue calls on the others to form a tripartite balance, social harmony is produced at the local, national or global level. Rawls and Walzer demanded justice only at national level, afraid as they were of foreign authoritarianism, which could destroy domestic settlements. For Confucius, however, human society is nothing but a family that can be ruled by righteousness. Confucian utopianism centers on the challenge of assembling global cognitive, operative and ludic reasoning based on moral criteria. In this system, world harmony requires that the most morally developed individuals direct human affairs with wisdom, benevolence, and courage, like a father who takes care of his children. The world would not be governed by sages alone;

25 David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987); Jung Hwa Yol, "Confucianism as Political Philosophy: A Postmodern Perspective," *Human Studies*, 16, 1-2 (1993), pp. 213-230.

26 Critiques of Western values, including human rights, have been offered by Daniel A. Bell's *Beyond Liberal Democracy: Political Thinking for an East Asian Context* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Wm. Theodore de Bary's *Asian Values and Human Rights: A Confucian Communitarian Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998); Wm. Theodore de Bary and Tu Wei-ming's *Confucianism and Human Rights* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); and Yan Xuetong's "New Values for New International Norms" (Beijing: China Institute of International Studies, Feb. 25, 2013), available at http://www.ciiis.org.cn/english/2013-02/25/content_5755168.htm.

27 Waldemar De Gregori, *Manifiesto de la proporcionalidad democracia directa* (Raleigh, NC.: Lulu Enterprises, 2011).

alongside the moral elite, business leaders, spiritual leaders, and scientists would come together to study and agree on the rules for planetary cohabitation.

Thus, the actions of remarkable people—including the measures they dictate for bringing harmony to the world—are legitimized ethically. In this model, humanitarian intervention is unavoidable, but soft power and conviction are preferable to coercion: "if remote people are not submissive, all the influences of civil culture and virtue are to be cultivated to attract them to be so." (*Analects* 16.1[11])

What criteria determine right action? The answer is twofold: firstly, the virtuous men as models and secondly, our capacity to find what is referred to in the *Analects* as the "Constant Mean," which enables us to "judge of others by what is nigh in ourselves—this may be called the art of virtue." (*Analects* 6.27-28) It can also be understood as the will to maintain stability. According to the *Zhongyong* 中庸, "when equilibrium and focus are sustained and harmony is fully realized, the heavens and earths maintain their proper places and all things flourish in the world."²⁸

Entrusting global governance to the most virtuous people contrasts with the current world order, which is dominated by transformative reason, and which imposes the incentive of profit onto scientific, political and emotive cultures. In the Confucian ideal society, virtuous and competent persons work for the common good; leaders care for the people, and the people trust them and willingly submit to their rule; rulers ensure that there are sufficient resources for the whole population to carry on a secure and ethical life.²⁹

28 Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhongyong*, p. 90.

29 As Mencius added, "If the lord practices humane government, the people will feel affection and will die for their officers." (*Mencius* 1A12)

Of course, this idealized conception of society is met by a real world controlled by unilateral business goals, where geopolitical and ideological confrontation tracks the path of economic struggle. In seeking to reconcile the two, this article finds that controversies arising over global governance turn into a programmatic debate on systematic transformation through negotiated political arrangements. The question, then, is not whether or not global governance exists, but what kind of global governance is desirable and feasible, and how it may be obtained.

Confucian Inspired Alternative Global Governance

Observation of world affairs shows us that new calamities added to old, unresolved problems must be dealt with immediately by the international community. While some countries and regions, such as East Asia, have made substantial improvements to their standards of living, with better access to healthcare, education and employment, many countries and continents are suffering the privations of unemployment, poor labor conditions, hunger, and pandemics as never before. By 2013, more than one billion people were suffering extreme poverty, and income inequality, unsustainable consumption, and production did not diminish.³⁰ Meanwhile, selective military alliances between powerful countries justify interventions in distant regions on the premises of either humanitarian motives or defense of their national interests. The United Nations was created in 1945 precisely to overcome security challenges and ensure the protection of political, economic and social rights, and yet many international actors continue to take the institution for granted.

30 United Nations Economic and Social Council, *World Economic and Social Survey 2013: Sustainable Development Challenges* (Geneva: United Nations, 2013).

In this way, the contemporary international system reinforces the negative effects of its unidimensional structure, which allows for the replacement of substantial, multilateral political actions with financial governance. According to Confucianism, violence, poverty and exclusion are symptoms of disharmony that cannot be tolerated. If the solution of Confucian ideal government is out of reach, new ways must be explored to overcome the dominance of the world order by market forces. After evaluating some possible solutions we should then propose a series of changes, emphasizing legitimate multilateral governance, its necessary control over transformative goals, and the role of regions in building true universalism.

There are several possible solutions to current global crises. Some of them envision strengthening financial institutions worldwide to force a total opening of national and regional markets; others rely more idealistically on the possibility of granting control of world affairs to the most honest, wise and magnanimous people, who would raise global moral standards; others center on universalizing the successful practices of regional integration. This article argues for the strengthening of multilateral rule through more robust and autonomous regional entities.

Recently, draconian measures imposed by the European troika (IMF, Central European Bank and European Commission) on the Mediterranean countries during the 2008 financial crisis demonstrated the extent to which European society is controlled by *financialized capital*—the result of the rigorous application of neoliberal doctrine.³¹ The neoliberal notion of a perfect market expresses a monist longing for a supernatural order to regulate international dynamics. The autonomous worldwide sovereignty market is the cause—and not the solution—of extant maladies. On the other hand, as 20th century history has shown, eliminating all private business simply nurtures state monsters. Therefore,

31 Michel Aglietta, "The European Vortex," *New Left Review*, 75 (May-Jun., 2012), pp. 15-36.

how to regulate the global market is central question of any discussion of global governance, which will be revisited later in the article.

The institution of a world brotherhood led by the most virtuous persons is an ideal associated with Confucianism. However, the primary responsibility of national governments is to preserve each nation state so that it may be recognized as such and can enter into dialogue with the international community. The principle of sovereignty prevents interference in domestic affairs by the rulers or citizens of other states. It is assumed that the application of justice, the defense of the law, the protection of civil liberties and other rights are primarily matters for national governments, whose legitimacy and continuity depends on their work in those domains. It is clear that sovereignty cannot be absolute. The community of states has created mechanisms to resolve their differences and to defend human rights. Thus, specialized multilateral organizations deal with border conflicts and prosecute leaders who commit crimes against humanity. Above all, an international system is an interstate structure, which must be taken into account.

Unlike monist, dualist, mechanical and supernatural orders, in the Confucian model, global governance is based on the establishment of a harmonious world order, and achieved through the accommodation of transformative, inquisitive, and emotive cultures. Hence, the most important task for the multilateral institutions is to facilitate international cooperation so that peace, welfare, and freedom will be guaranteed. Global governance can be defined as a global agreement aimed at conserving peace, well-being and the spiritual development of mankind.

Perhaps, in order to guarantee the necessary conditions for the flourishing of future generations, it is important to rescue the legacy of former generations. In the 20th century, more than 100 million people were killed in wars around the world. In the middle of that century, the victorious allied states came together to create the UN, the only representative multilateral body that has ever existed. The

UN embodies the foremost effort for dialogue in human history, established with the purpose of closing the book on racism and aggressive nationalism. Today, we can say that that goal was accomplished in formal terms only, because covert racism, interventionism and military aggression, political and social discrimination, intolerance and other unacceptable practices continue to afflict humanity.

In the current race for world power, peace is not the only sacrifice; truth is also a victim of that conflict. In the speeches of political leaders, rhetorical war is waged in order to shore up narrow political agendas, and to garner support for actions designed to control supposed external threats. Indeed, real wars follow semantic and digital information wars.

Misguided scientific priorities represent a further problem in need of a solution. The priorities of scientific research should be the curing of pandemics and common diseases. Regional and UN research centers and universities should also seek to develop measures against climate change and environmental depletion also. The reinforcement of all UN systems in their global dimensions, including scientific research programs, is an urgent pending task, on which little progress has been made in the 21st century. These goals are undermined by war and the national security agenda, which sucks vast and disproportionate amounts of state budgets (which could be better spent on welfare programs) and guarantees great profits in the defense industry. In exceptional cases, most notably Costa Rica, governments have spent their citizens' money on social programs and have suspended weapons acquisitions for extended periods of time. If multilateral and regional bodies can oversee security and create enhanced trust among countries, defense budgets and security research could be reduced to reasonable levels, while multilateral and national resources could be spent on research into how to raise quality of life.

From the perspective of transformative culture, ensuring the well-being of the world's population is the fundamental task of our global age. It is the shared responsibility of multilateral and regional institutions, as well as national authorities, since the latter have ceded control of economic activity to patterns of globalized exchange. The loss of human lives by malnutrition and pandemics is intolerable, especially when excessive consumption is encouraged in rich societies or in the affluent strata of poorer societies, or when governments favor military spending over helping to meet the basic needs of their people.

At the same time, multilateral responsibilities exist for the promotion of worldwide humanitarian values towards a harmonious civilization. This is a special feature of Confucianism, which scholars explain in different ways. Some argue for the overcoming of the nature-man dichotomy in order to defend human condition embedded in nature following the human-cosmic continuity,³² others support collective rights above the individualistic prerogative,³³ while a large number of them highlight the foundation of peaceful coexistence on the basis of feeling, emotion and difference, apart from modern rationalist reductionisms.³⁴

Benevolence, humanitarianism, and generosity are qualities stressed by all the major world religions. Besides the taxes paid by citizens as part of the social contract, many religions encourage generosity in the form of compulsory alms. In Islamic societies, for example, this form of charity, known as *zakat*, is calculated on wealth or annual income.³⁵ In Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, giving (or

32 This is one of the four essential aspects of Confucianism for the scholar Chun-chieh Huang, besides the unity of mind and body, the interaction and integration of the self with other, and historical consciousness. See Chun-chieh Huang, *Humanism in East Asian Confucian Context* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2010).

33 Brooke A. Ackerly, "Is Liberalism The Only Way Toward Democracy? Confucianism and Democracy," *Political Theory*, 33, 4 (Aug., 2005), pp. 547-576; Shuan O'Dwyer, "Democracy and Confucian Values," *Philosophy East and West*, 53, 1 (2001), pp. 39-63; Weixi Hu, "On Confucian Communitarianism," *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*, 2, 4 (2007), pp. 475-487; Arben Fox Russell, "Confucian and Communitarian Responses to Liberal Democracy," *The Review of Politics*, 59, 3 (1997), pp. 561-592.

34 See, for example, Yunping Wang, "Confucian Ethics and Emotions," *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*, 3, 3 (2008), pp. 352-365.

35 Amy Singer, "Giving Practices in Islamic Societies," *Social Research: An International*

dana) to strangers is encouraged.³⁶ Stressing commonalities such as these would allow religions to function as an integral part of global governance.

As expressed by humanism, social and cultural diversity gives birth to plural interpretations, multiple economic and political organizations, and countless forms of artistic expression. In our current world order, we are far from recognizing the aesthetic and spiritual richness of diverse cultures. In view of the tripartite equilibrium, in the future, tangible and intangible cultural heritage should be safeguarded by states and regions, in consonance with multilateral requirements. Simultaneously, tolerance, solidarity, and inclusiveness should be encouraged. The participation of civil society organizations, cultural and religious institutions and NGOs in national, regional and multilateral deliberations and decision-making should be enforced gradually, in light of the ideal of world citizenship.

Multilateral enforcement to govern transformative reason represents the overwhelming challenge to global harmony today. A global oligarchy has emerged in which the planet's billionaires and multimillionaires effectively own poorer countries. As Piketty has stated, "If we add to this the fact that the return on capital increases with the size of the initial endowment, a phenomenon that may well be reinforced by the growing complexity of global financial markets, then clearly all the ingredients are in place for the top centile and thousandth of the global wealth distribution to pull farther and farther ahead of the rest."³⁷ Undoubtedly, social crisis begins with the accelerated growth of inequality, leading to the loss of mass consumption, an increase in unsustainable debts, and finally, economic depression.

Quarterly, 80, 2 (Summer, 2013), pp. 341-358.

36 Diana L. Eck, "The Religious Gift: Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain Perspective of Dana," *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, 80, 2 (Summer, 2013), pp. 359-379.

37 Thomas Piketty, *Capital In The Twenty-first Century*; trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014), pp. 326-327.

As has been shown, in the current world order, social complexity has become structured by economic rationality, with its imperative of accumulation, leading to financial speculation with toxic assets. With respect to skeptics and deniers of global governance, it is necessary to recognize how the spectacular growth of the financial market reveals the ability to arise through the creation and application of their own laws. Global monitoring instruments are still determined by the interests of the core economies in the immediate postwar period, at the expense of peripheral countries. The characteristics of global plutocratic governance are such because economic power weighed more in the intergovernmental negotiations than multilateral political agreements. Therefore, alternative global economic governance offers shelter to financial institutions and trade agreements to the guidelines and requirements of the UN specialized bodies like the proposed Economic Security Council.³⁸ Authentic multilateral banking and universal trade agreements, including all countries and regions, should also be improved. National banks should participate through regional banks in the formation of multilateral financial corporations. So, regional institutions might prepare standard multilateral policies, and, at the same time, could help to implement measures agreed at the highest global level.

Regional organizations must be strengthened in order to recover the power of the UN and avoid the global unrest caused by the World Bank and IMF, in alliance with regional banks, in their effort to foment financial openness.³⁹ We must examine the rationality of multilateral institutions in building true universalism and global governance, as a replacement for financial power that dictates political arrangements and controls countries and entire regions. Worldwide social unrest inflamed by a rapidly widening income gap can be avoided through progressive taxation, assuring full employment and universal income. In this way, Rawls's Difference Principle, which entails a moral

38 Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighborhood: The Report of the Commission on Global Governance*.

39 Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2000).

responsibility to distribute wealth in favor of the least well-off, should be extended beyond the nation state. With respect to other nations, Rawls accepted only the "duty of assistance," on the grounds that each state is responsible for its own failure or success.⁴⁰ However, since most of them lack of economic autonomy, political dominance over transformative activities should be carried on by regional and multilateral regulators.

Now we can turn to an explanation of why the Confucian approach confers a strategic function to regional entities in global governance. If the above is accepted, there are multiple tasks at multilateral levels, which depend on regional agreements. Global governance will not be possible without the active participation of the UN, as the highest normative level in charge of gathering local, national and regional agreements. The UN has prevented direct war between the greatest military powers but allowed their confrontation elsewhere. Intervention in national affairs by great powers, the arms race, and rival alliances have precluded the development of regional entities, through which world policies could have been enhanced.

Certainly, the UN must be the court of last resort to resolve conflicts that go beyond the regional level, either because the regional institution fails to resolve them or because there is no such regulatory instance. If autonomous regionalism oversaw peace and regional security, no state would be entitled to take military action against another state. Military intervention on humanitarian grounds could only occur by mandate of the regional institution and exclusively within the countries that comprise it. No regional organization would have the power to intervene in the countries that are not members or those belonging to another region. In addition, no state could belong to two regional military organizations at the same time.

40 John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples: With "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited."*

The European model is usually offered as an example of how regional integration can help to neutralize the threat of aggressive nationalisms. Habermas has stated that the post-national state should not be seen as a historical community of fate but a real nation of citizens in enlarged regional or supra-national spaces. His European "offensive position" indicates that the constitutionalized politics of the European Union must be universalized; that is, they must be followed by the whole world community in order to achieve global governance.⁴¹ We cannot discuss the importance of regional institutions as safeguards against chauvinism without pointing to the positive results of the European project, such as the easy movement of citizens through different countries, the rationalization of industrial production, respect for human rights and the creation of a regional identity. However, the European model has major drawbacks such as military dependence, national fragmentation, and financial market dominance, which dissuade us from taking it as a prototype for global governance.

On one hand, the European crisis could not have been anticipated by the institutions of European integration. On the other hand, its financial policies, instead of dissipating the crisis, deepened it. Economic and social disparities within countries and between countries have grown, and military conflicts have destabilized Eastern Europe, especially Ukraine. These are not isolated effects; on the contrary, the great problem of the European regional experience is its lack of autonomy. From its inception until today, the Union has been informed by Cold War logic, as an area crucial to the strategic interests of the USA. Certainly, NATO preceded and conditioned the process of economic integration. Similarly, the IMF oversees European institutions. The universalization of the European experience, as Habermas and Saxer among others propose, compels the international community to pursue a unique economic and military strategy.⁴²

41 Jürgen Habermas, *Time of Transitions*.

42 Marc Saxer, "The Comeback of Global Governance. Ways Out of the Crisis of Multilateral Structures," *FES Dialogue on Globalization Briefing Paper 4* (Berlin: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Apr. 2009), pp. 1-11.

The problem with this proposal is not that it would be Eurocentric, but that it is not European at all, and its post-national citizenship and deliberative public space would also lack autonomy and authenticity. So, for genuine universalism to be achieved, the European Union must conform to the requirements of global governance through consultation with the rest of the global community. The same critique should be made of Asia-centric models of global governance, as some scholars have urged.⁴³

Instead, the reinforcement of multilateral dynamics through autonomous regional institutions must solve the problems of relativism and universalized particularism. In this model, active regionalism operates as a mediator between the particularity of states and the universality of the international community represented by the UN. Regional decisions facilitate multilateral operations, so that the fundamental task of multilateral renaissance is to encourage the strengthening of existing regional organizations and the creation of new ones where they do not exist. Of course, political autonomy is the condition *sine qua non* for the national and regional administration of cognitive, transformative and emotive cultures in adapting multilateral agreements. At the same time, national and regional spheres are providers of essential regulation for universal normativity.

Criticism of the ineffectiveness of the existing multilateral system should not imply the elimination of that system. The discussion should not be whether or not the UN works, but how to enable its programs to flourish, since it is the only institution empowered by the international community for global governance. The current weakness of the UN, as this article suggests, is the result of the lack of autonomous regional institutions which have to be empowered to dampen the

43 Linda Low, "Book Review: *East Asian Welfare Regimes in Transition: From Confucianism to Globalisation*," *ASEAN Economic Bulletin*, 23, 3 (Dec., 2006), pp. 392-395; Kishore Mahbubani, *The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2009); Joseph B. Tamney and Linda Hsueh-Ling Chiang, *Modernization, Globalization, and Confucianism in Chinese Societies* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2002).

tensions that arise between states with opposing interests and to transfer their agreements to the global sphere. In the model proposed here, such regional institutions should transform regional agreements and the best national practices into world policies. At the same time, multilateral authority is required when regional institutions fail to control regional conflicts.

The most obvious cause of the decline of multilateral authority is its displacement by global economic institutions. But the most worrying is the capture of military control by alliances, sometimes with, but mostly without, the consent of the Security Council. Instead of that, a harmonized international system must resist transformative dominance through military hegemonies. Unauthorized interventions by one or some states should be seen, therefore, an affront to the mission of the multilateral institutions.

Conclusion

This article has participated in the discussion on global governance from a Confucian perspective to understand and assess the ethical dynamics of the contemporary world order. An ethic of state responsibility sustained by sound international agreements is crucial for addressing and overcoming the double threat of the self-destruction of humankind through power struggles and the extinction of life on the earth as a result of environmental devastation.

After confirming this requirement, this article proceeded to consider the type of governance best-suited to meeting these challenges. The current mode of global governance is dictated by the objectives of financial speculation or *financialized* capitalism, and has wrought politically, socially, and environmentally inexcusable results. A Confucian analysis confirms the diagnosis of this negative universality and the need to reorient international exchanges towards a sustainable harmony among states and between mankind and nature.

When life on the earth is at risk as never before in the past, cross-cultural exchange, disarmament, equality, solidarity and the restoration of the ecological balance become global objectives that everyone must understand and help to realize. From the Confucian perspective, global order depends on the institutional capacity to coordinate the triad of reflective, operative, and ludic cultures, which are present in all societies all the time. Accordingly, today, virtuous persons who do not act in accordance with their particular interests, but as the spokesmen for the common good, must undertake the work of directing societies and coordinating universal rules. Nonetheless, goodwill and loose initiatives are not enough because the solution does not depend on the sum of individual actions. Instead of pushing for the creation of an international moral elite, we should circulate universal rules and policies through multilateral institutions, our most valuable assets for global governance.

To that end, multilateral institutions should act as judge and mediator of last resort, with reinforced powers to control world security and economic rules. Agreements should be built on the twin-track of national conformity to global standards and national implementation of multilateral norms, with an active role, in both cases, for regional organizations. True universalism takes regional experiences and transforms them into universal law while multilateral institutions encourage the organization of regional autonomous entities in places where they do not exist.