Philosophy and Globalization II

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Globalization, Globalized Ethics and Moral Theory

Abstract

One of the challenges arising from globalization viewed as a multi-dimensional phenomenon is the possibility of a moral integration of the world or at least that of finding some plausible common ground for a meaningful ethical dialogue. Overcoming the moral fragmentation of the modern world is made even more difficult in light of the diversity of views in moral theory. Is global ethics even possible in the light of many disagreements about metaethical and normative questions? Moral theory faces a challenge of providing a usable framework for moral discussion as a precondition for moral integration.

In his latest book Robert Audi proposes a model of pluralistic universalism as a combination of most of the historically influential moral theories, namely, virtue ethics, Kantianism and utilitarianism. The three central values being advocated are freedom, justice and happiness. I discuss this proposal and point to the role that pluralistic intuitionism plays in it.

Key words

globalization, global ethics, moral theory, disagreement, pluralistic universalism, intuitionism

1. Globalization

The phenomenon of globalization has been widely discussed in recent decades. Globalization intensely affects our daily lives, but at the same time its dynamics frequently remain difficult to recognize and to understand, whether we focus on economic, technological, socio-cultural, ecological or political aspects. There is little agreement on its meaning, origins and long-term consequences. Because it is still a process in development and its outcomes are not clear, understanding the globalization is made even more difficult. On the one side, it can be viewed as a phenomenon providing us with more options and choices, greater freedom, etc., but on the other side many view and understand it as a condition of a heightened vulnerability of individuals as well as groups.

Globalization is a multi-layered and multifaceted process and it is therefore difficult to define it in a way that would capture all of its dimensions and especially its value dimension. In many cases the definition of globalization would itself contain either positive or negative value assessment. It is therefore useful if we first try to provide some fairly neutral conception of globalization and then try to examine its value aspects. For example, David Held and others offered the following characterization of globalization.

"Globalization may be thought of as the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life, from the cultural to the criminal, the financial to the spiritual."(Held et al. 1993: 2)

One can characterize this interconnectedness and interdependence[1] as an uneasy gift, bringing together new opportunities and also new hazards. This can also be seen in the diversity of attitudes towards globalization. Some authors thus defend globalization as a process that increases economic prosperity, allows developing countries access to the global market and to more equal opportunities, creates an integrated global market and breaks up local monopolies, enhances civil liberties and democracy, and also as an opportunity for creating a proper framework for solving some of the most pertinent issues that the world as a whole faces today, such as the preservation of environment. Still many others oppose globalization (or oppose just some if its facets) as a process leading to unjust economic exploitation and outsourcing, the diminished cultural diversity or flatness of the world, etc. This shows that there is no single, uniform value characterization of globalization; any reductive attempt – either pro- or con- oriented – will likely fail.

2. The ethics of globalization and global(ized) ethics

One aspect of the mentioned interconnectedness concerns the possibility of moral integration of the world. We can imagine this ethical integration in the sense of coming to something like a global ethics or global ethos or – perhaps a more modest project but still an extremely challenging one – of finding enough common moral ground for a meaningful global moral dialogue in the modern world. Some aspects of this endeavor will be the central topic of this paper.

There are two major models for creating a world ethics, namely the Pact and the Union model. The first model sees global ethics limited to the sphere of interaction between different moral traditions or communities. Such a model of global ethics contains in its core an agreement consisting of a set of rules and commitments that cover interaction and exchanges between groups and communities on the regional and global level. Among these rules and commitments there can be things such as: commitment to peaceful co-existence, tolerance, mutual respect, partnership, and possible co-operation. But one may wonder whether such a pact is enough to achieve global order and/or global ethics. One of the consequences of globalization is, exactly, that such pact is not sufficient to provide a basis for such world order. Some of the problems that the contemporary world faces – such as the rapid degradation of environment, deep-rootedness of social injustice or inequality, and possible radical intrusions into human life by biotechnology – are such that it is highly unlikely that the Pact model of global ethics will be able to successfully solve or even begin solving them.

The more wide-ranging, active and certainly more difficult choice would be the Union model. This model of world ethics attempts to achieve a deeper moral integration, a common ethical core that would and could serve as a basis for regional moralities.

Will Kymlicka has recently usefully suggested that such a world ethics could be achieved in three different ways:

(1) by choosing one particular moral tradition and then persuade others (with or without coercion) to accept and follow it;

(2) by the invention of a new moral vocabulary and moral framework and then applying it globally (such as it is the case with UN human rights movement);

(3) or by the so-called two-level approach to global(ized) ethics. The first, upper level would consist of universal moral common ground (e.g. minimal standards of basic human rights or some very general moral principles); and the second, lower level of plurality of local traditions and moral dialogue, exchange and the process of learning between them (Kymlicka 2007).

No matter for which model one opts for, the Pact or the Union, overcoming the modern world's moral fragmentation is made even more difficult in light of the diversity of views in moral theory. Disagreements between different moral traditions and between moral philosophers themselves have in many people reduced the confidence that ethics can provide a framework of global ethics that we could all accept and follow. I wish to argue that the role of moral theory in such project has long been neglected or misconceived. I will point just to two sources or indications of that.

3. The separationist project

At the beginning of the 20th century in his book *Principia Ethica* (1903) G. E. Moore sharply divided metaethical questions (with special importance given to the semantic question about the meaning of ethical terms) from normative ethical questions. The former are prior and more important than the latter.[2] His followers – whether they accepted his metaethical theses or oppose them – have even deepened this broad divide. As a consequence, moral theories were frequently entirely robbed of normative or substantial discussion on ethical problems – and one might hasten to add quite uninteresting and empty for that matter – although the very same philosophers "outside their cabinets and study rooms" often vigorously defended ethical stands on current issues.

"Ethics was reduced to an impoverished form of metaethics that consisted in the analysis of the nature of moral discourse as such, without any place for a constructive system of morals. Logical empiricist views of language, meaning, and knowledge reduced moral discourse to the status of emotive expressions, on the grounds that talk about morals could not meet cognitive standards of descriptive scientific statements. Moral theory, reduced to this extremely narrow version of metaethics, turned out to be so unenlightening, so divorced from serious moral concerns and experience, and frankly, so boring that it nearly succeeded in killing of moral theory altogether."(Johnson 1994: 83)

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We are all witnesses to one of the presentations of this interconnectedness in present times. Economy crisis that started in a number of financial institutions in one county had steadily spilled out onto other regions, left hardy no part of the world intact.

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"But our question 'What is good?' may still have another meaning. We may, in the third place, mean to ask, not what thing or things are good, but how 'good' is to be defined. This is an enquiry which belongs only to Ethics, not to Casuistry; and this is the enquiry which will occupy us first. It is an enquiry to which most special attention should be directed; since this question, how good is to be defined, is the most fundamental question in all Ethics. That which is meant by good is, in fact, except its converse bad, the only simple object of thought which is peculiar to Ethics. Its definition is, therefore, the most essential point in the definition of Ethics; and moreover a mistake with regard to it entails a far larger number of erroneous ethical judgments than any other." (Moore 1903: §5)

On the other hand the tradition of analytic philosophy often celebrates John Rawls's work in *A Theory of Justice* (1971) as a great comeback of normative ethics. Instead of conceptual analysis and endless dissection of grammar of moral language Rawls offered a vivid engagement with issues of public policy and personal conduct. Rawls proposed a theory that was systematic in its character and normatively attractive. But the same stance of accepting a sharp distinction between metaethics and normative ethics is at work here. Rawls and many that followed him thought that we can begin solving normative ethical questions solely on the basis of informed and considerate moral judgments and therefore without further grounding of philosophical ethics in e.g. metaphysical, semantic or epistemological posits. This is the thesis Rawls defended in his paper "The Independence of Moral Theory" (Rawls 1975). In *A Theory of Justice* Rawls for the greatest part doesn't argue against other (meta)ethical views but just strives to build a closed and complete system of normative ethics "from the scratch", so to speak, using considered judgments as basic ingredients.

I believe that such separationist project is misguided. I agree with recent appeals that

"… although metaethics and normative ethics focus on different issues, systematical ethical philosophy thrives when these areas are brought into dynamic relation and pursued in an integrated way we might call 'philosophical ethics' – framing normative ideal we can accept in light of both the best normative reasons as we see them and an adequate philosophical understanding of their subjects and of the possibilities for knowledge or justified acceptance in this area." (Darwall 2006: 25)

4. "No global ethics without unified framework for ethical theory"

This integrated and unified endeavor is therefore also important considering the global ethical unification.

"The present age is marked by an ominous tension. Human diversity has never been so prominent, and the need for cooperation among utterly different people has never been so urgent. Differences in culture, education, ethnicity, religion, and lifestyles easily divide people. Can ethics provide standards of conduct that give everyone a sense of inherent worth and make it possible to resolve conflicts peacefully? This is a hope of most major writers in ethics. But they, too, differ among themselves, and their disagreements have, in many people, reduced confidence that ethics can provide standards we can all use in guiding our lives and our relations with others." (Audi 2007: vii)

Any attempt to provide a global ethics should also pay attention to its theoretical facets. All being said, we can now amend and extend one of the maxims of the 1993 Chicago *Declaration of the Religions for a Global Ethics* (Küng & Kuschel, 1994) of the *Parliament of the World's Religions* as one of the prominent attempts to provide global ethics "No global order without global ethics." with a further demand – "No global ethics without a unified framework for ethical theory." And this is true for any such effort to come to global ethics.

Moral theory thus faces a challenge of providing a usable framework for moral discussion and reflection as a precondition for global moral integration. I now present one such attempt to provide an outline of global ethics that pays a particular attention to theoretical aspects of this endeavor.

5. Pluralistic universalism

In his latest book *Moral Value and Human Diversity* (2007) Robert Audi proposes a model of global ethics. His model of pluralistic universalism is a combination of most of the historically influential moral theories, namely, virtue ethics, Kantianism and utilitarianism. According to Audi, these approaches – very roughly speaking – point to three things that are central to morality: first, happiness, well-being or good life (conceived mostly in terms of pleasure, pain and suffering); second, justice (in the sense of treating persons equally and with respect they deserve); and third, freedom. Audi combines (moral) virtue theories, Kantian ethics and utilitarianism and supplements them with moral intuitionism.[3] Virtue theories focus on "being a good person", developing virtues that constitute good life and happiness, and subsequently try to work out what the conduct must be like in relation to that kind of virtuous person. Kantian ethics focuses more on rules or a moral law one must follow in order to pursue the right thing. Respect and dignity of a person are important here. Utilitarianism is also a rule-based moral theory, but one which evaluates act in relation to their consequences, especially regarding well-being, happiness and reducing suffering of persons and community as a whole.

All three traditions are then integrated into a single moral theory. Audi calls this approach or view "pluralist universalism" and defines it in the following way:

> "On this approach (…) our broadest moral principle would require optimizing happiness so far as possible without producing injustice or curtailing freedom (including one's own); and this principle is to be *internalized* – roughly, automatically presupposed and normally also strongly motivating – in a way that yields moral virtue. Each value becomes, then, a guiding standard, and mature moral agents will develop a sense of how to act (or at least how to reach a decision to act) when the values pull in different directions." (Audi 2007: 17)

The core of Audi's project is, as we can see, value pluralism. Values are further understood as "guiding standards". This means that reflection about them can serve as a guide in making our decisions. At the same time, these central values provide standards for evaluating actions. Furthermore, this theory represents irreducible pluralism, which means that no value is more fundamental as the other and that no value is reducible to another.[4] As a consequence, a possibility of these values conflicting in particular cases arises. But that is the cost that any genuine pluralism – either pluralism of values or pluralism of principles – must pay. Moral conflict should not be understood just as a weakness of a moral theory, but as its strength (Strahovnik 2006).

But the question about more specific moral principles that could serve as guides to everyday moral decisions remains. The universal principle stated above is too vague and indeterminate in this regard. There is also the addition-

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In a sense this in a continuation of the project Audi started in his book *The Good in the Right* (2004), where he presents one of the most complete contemporary defenses of moral intuitionism and expands it into a form of Kantian and value-based intuitionism. There he discusses the relationship between intuitionism as a primarily deontological theory and the theory of value. He looks for a way to combine value(s) and reasons for action with the goal to better unify and ground intuitionism.

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"Audi`s position is pluralistic in several senses: As first he accepts, like Nussbaum, an irreducible plurality of several values (from hedonistic to the spiritual and moral values). Beside that he believes that human happiness is a universal value, but people can realize this good in their own ways (another common feature with Nussbaum). Audi's investigation of values, facts and moral communication provides important reasons for the possibility of universally valid and accepted ethics." (Žalec 2008: 47)

al problem with how much weight a particular value deserves in a particular case. Here Audi points to another prominent tradition in moral philosophy, i.e. moral intuitionism. David Ross developed an intuitionistic theory of *prima facie* duties and Audi builds upon it and slightly complements it. We could summarize the proposed list of basic *prima facie* duties as follows:

1) Prohibition of injury and harm: We should not injure or harm people;
2) Veracity: We should not lie;
3) Promissory fidelity: We should keep our promises;
4) Justice: We should not treat people unjustly and should contribute to rectifying injustice and to preventing future injustice;
5) Reparation: We should make amends for our wrong-doing;
6) Beneficence: We should contribute to the good/well-being of other people;
7) Gratitude: We should express gratitude in a way that benefits the good that is done to us;
8) Self-improvement: We should develop or at least sustain our distinctively human capacities;
9) Enhancement and preservation of freedom: We should contribute to increasing or at least preserving the freedom of persons;
10) Respectfulness: We should treat other people respectfully. (Audi 2004: 187–195)

These duties could serve as moral guides in our everyday life. They are principles of *prima facie* duties and not of absolute duties.[5] They are very useful as a kind of middle axioms that Henry Sidgwick was talking about in his excellent book *The Methods of Ethics* (Sidgwick 1907). They are general enough that we can argue for them as basic moral reasons. We can derive further, more specific duties from them. The derived duties can play the role of subsidiary rules that further specify basic *prima facie* duties. E.g. if we take Ross's *prima facie* duty of non-maleficience we could roughly understand it as a duty to restrict from injuring others. We can further observe that one can speak of injury in the physical, psychological and social sense. All of the three groups could be fairly well delimited in the descriptive way, taking into account the openness and vagueness of the terms mentioned that are inherent to moral language. One could therefore formulate the following sub-principles: "Do not kill!", "Do not frighten!", "Do not hurt people's feelings!", "Do not embarrass!", etc. (Cf. Audi 2004: 161–174).

These listed *prima facie* duties are also expressed in thick moral terms, which means that some form of circumstantial relativism is allowed for. The list is open for revision and amendment. *Prima facie* duties identify universal morally relevant features of our actions. *Prima facie* duty always offers a good moral reason, but not a conclusive one. Our actual duty or overall deontic status of our actions cannot be simply deduced from this relatively closed set of *prima facie* duties since a *prima facie* duty only identifies universal morally relevant features. It does not give us the actual direction what to do and neither the fixed absolute importance of particular features of our actions in actual moral situations (Ross 1930; Ross 1939). This theory is pluralistic in the sense that it posits a plurality of basic and mutually irreducible moral principles, duties or grounds of obligations that do not come in a strict order of importance.

The proposal of pluralist universalism could be considered as a basis for world ethics. The unification of moral theory enables us then to have it both ways: to argue for it in terms of *good moral reasons* we could all accept and to offer an adequate *philosophical understanding of their origins.*

6. Two-level global ethics

What we get is a kind of two-level global ethics. We get to this model if we adapt R. M. Hare's model of two levels of moral thought. Very briefly, Hare posited two levels of our moral thinking, namely the lower, intuitive level, where we more or less routinely follow common, everyday moral principles and rules, and upper, critical moral level, that comes into play when we face some difficult moral decision or when we want to justify our moral judgment or when our intuitions conflict (Hare 1978).

Now, if we adapt this model for the purposes of the model for global ethics, the upper, critical level would consist of a common moral framework – in the proposed case that would be "pluralist universalism" or some other possible candidate. The lower, intuitive level would consist of more specific moral principles that have room also for local moral traditions, variability and circumstantial relativism. Notice again that the above mentioned list of basic duties mostly consists of thick moral terms and therefore requires interpretation, understanding and moral sensitivity.

Usually, what is in play is the lower level. In the case of conflict or disagreement one must turn to the upper, crucial level and re-think its moral position and consequences that follow from it in the light of the most general principle that specifies basic moral values.

What is then the difference between my proposal and the proposal of Will Kymlicka? Firstly, in his proposal the upper level of global ethics is a minimalistic project that encompasses some minimal core of agreement about basic normative issues. One aspect of such minimal core would be to simply find what is common to all moral traditions and then proclaim this for global ethics. I instead propose that the upper, critical level should be a maximal project that would include considerations of moral theory. Secondly, Kymlicka's distinction between upper and lower level is based on the range of application of moral principles; we find absolute and universal moral principles on the upper level and multiplicity of different moral traditions and moral rules in the lower level. My proposal differentiates between moral principles of both levels on the basis of differences of the role they play in ethical thought and moral decision making. The upper level is not fixed; on the contrary, it is the upper level that enables moral dialogue, exchange and learning

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"I suggest '*prima facie* duty' or 'conditional duty' as a brief way of referring to the characteristic (quite distinct from that of being a duty proper) which an act has, in virtue of being of a certain kind (e.g. the keeping of a promise), of being an act which would be a duty proper if it were not at the same time of another kind which is morally significant. Whether an act is a duty proper or actual duty depends on all the morally significant kinds it is an instance of. The phrase '*prima facie* duty' must be apologized for, since (1) it suggests that what we are speaking of is a certain kind of duty, whereas it is in fact not a duty, but something related in a special way to duty. […] (2) 'Prima' facie suggests that one is speaking only of an appearance which a moral situation presents at first sight, and which may turn out to be illusory; whereas what I am speaking of is an objective fact involved in the nature, though not, as duty proper does, arising from its whole nature."(Ross 1930: 19–20)

for each other. It is this upper level that could gradually develop into a core for global ethics.

My thesis in this paper is conditional. I don't claim that the project of world ethics is plausible and sound in all of its aspects, but I just try to give some plausible conditions that underlie it, pointing especially on the role moral theory plays.

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Globalizacija, globalizirana etika i moralna teorija

Sažetak

Jedan od izazova, koji proizlaze iz globalizacije kao multidimenzijskog fenomena, je mogućnost moralne integracije svijeta ili barem pronalaska vjerodostojnog zajedničkog temelja za smisleni etički dijalog. Prevladavanje moralnih fragmentacija modernog svijeta je još teže u svjetlu raznolikosti pogleda u moralnoj teoriji. Je li globalna etika uopće moguća imajući u vidu mnoga neslaganja o metaetičkim i normativnim pitanjima? Moralna teorija stoji pred izazovom pružanja upotrebljivog okvira za moralnu raspravu kao preduvjeta za moralnu integraciju.

U svojoj posljednjoj knjizi, Robert Audi predlaže model pluralističkog univerzalizma kao kombinacije većine povijesno utjecajnih moralnih teorija, točnije, etike vrijednosti, kantovske etike i utilitarizma. Tri središnje vrijednosti koje se zagovaraju su sloboda, pravda i sreća. U radu razmatram ovaj prijedlog i ukazujem na ulogu koju u njemu igra pluralistički intuicionizam.

Ključne riječi

globalizacija, globalna etika, moralna teorija, neslaganje, pluralistički univerzalizam, intuicionizam

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Globalisierung, globalisierte Ethik und Moraltheorie

Zusammenfassung

Eine der Herausforderungen, die aus der Globalisierung als einem multidimensionalen Phänomen hervorgehen, ist die Möglichkeit einer moralischen Weltintegration, oder geringstenfalls die Möglichkeit zur Entdeckung einer glaubwürdigen gemeinsamen Grundlage für den sinnreichen ethischen Dialog. Die Überwindung moralischer Fragmentationen der Gegenwartswelt wird noch schwieriger im Lichte der Ansichtsvielfalt in der moralischen Theorie. Ist eine globale Ethik überhaupt noch möglich, behält man die vielerlei Unstimmigkeiten über metaethische sowie normative Fragen im Auge? Die Moraltheorie steht vor der Herausforderung zur Lieferung eines nutzbaren Rahmens für die Moraldiskussion als Vorbedingung der Moralintegration.

In seinem jüngsten Buch schlägt Robert Audi das Modell des pluralistischen Universalismus vor – als eine Kombination aus dem Großteil historisch einflussreicher Moraltheorien, genau genommen aus der Wertethik, kantischen Ethik sowie dem Utilitarismus. Die drei befürworteten Zentralwerte heißen Freiheit, Gerechtigkeit und Glück. In meiner Arbeit greife ich diesen Vorschlag auf und deute auf die Rolle hin, die darin der pluralistische Intuitionismus spielt.

Schlüsselwörter

Globalisierung, globale Ethik, Moraltheorie, Unstimmigkeit, pluralistischer Universalismus, Intuitionismus

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Globalisation, éthique globalisée et théorie morale

Résumé

L'un des défis liés la globalisation, vue comme un phénomène multidimensionnel, est la possibilité d'une intégration morale du monde, ou du moins de l'invention d'un fondement commun plausible pour un dialogue éthique crédible. Surmonter la fragmentation morale du monde moderne est d'autant plus difficile si l'on tient compte de la diversité des points de vue dans la théorie morale. Une éthique globale est-elle possible compte tenu de nombreuses divergences en matière de questions métaéthiques et normatives ? La théorie morale fait face au défi de fournir un cadre utile au débat moral, condition préalable d'une intégration morale.

Dans son dernier livre, Robert Audi propose un modèle d'universalisme pluraliste en tant que combinaison de la plupart des théories morales dominantes, plus précisément de l'éthique de la vertu, de l'éthique kantienne et de l'utilitarisme. Trois valeurs centrales sont défendues : liberté, justice et bonheur. Dans ce travail, j'examine cette proposition et je souligne le rôle qu'y occupe l'intuitionnisme pluraliste.

Mots-clés

globalisation, éthique globale, théorie morale, divergence, universalisme pluraliste, intuitionnisme