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OF GLOBAL JUSTICE AND EAST  
ASIAN PHILOSOPHY

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## FOREWORD: NO LONGER “JUST US”

Deep and powerful accounts of justice that continue to challenge, inform, and edify all who engage them have been developed in the course of the Western philosophical tradition. Justice has been conceived in terms as different as what is best overall, to what is demanded by fairness, frequently understood as what ideal rational agents would choose under conditions of uncertainty about their own place in the world. But every account of justice, at some level, depends upon what kinds of goods and states of affairs, what kinds of lives, are valuable and worth protecting, advancing, or distributing; at the end of the day, that is what justice aims to do. In recent years, under the combined pressures of such concerns as having a greater understanding of other cultures, the dominance of “non-ideal theory,” and incorporating more accurate, empirically based views of human nature, in all its subtle complexity and impressive plasticity, philosophers, political theorists, and others working on justice across a range of disciplines have come to recognize the provincialism and poverty of those theories wholly spun from the comfort of an armchair. This has led many to realize that a viable account of justice must be crafted on firm empirical foundations and employing a new, broad form of reflective equilibrium, one that reaches not only across disciplinary but also cultural boundaries, that seeks to discover, analyze, and incorporate the best *doxa* and practices that one can find by looking as widely as possible and drawing upon such sustained and challenging inquiry to develop new accounts of justice that are sensitive and responsive to the irreducibly diverse and wonderfully variegated world of human values. The essays in this volume make an impressive, valiant, and historically unprecedented effort toward this end, and this effort itself is a fundamental expression and component of a more viable and satisfactory conception not only of justice, but its near neighbor: respect.

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September 3, 2022

## CHAPTER SIX

# Confucian *Junzi* as *Homo Agathos*: On Transcultural Legitimation of a World Order with Chinese Characteristics

JANUSZ SALAMON

### GLOBAL SOVEREIGNTY AND AGATHOCRATIC SOLIDARISM: A CHINESE ALTERNATIVE TO LIBERAL AND REALIST ACCOUNTS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Nearly a decade ago, in *Spheres of Solidarity* (Salamon 2016), I put forward a thesis about the inevitability of global sovereignty. The thesis argues that, given the growing global consensus about the essentially agathocratic function of politics (as aimed primarily at citizen's good—to *agathon* in classical Greek), securing the wellbeing of humanity, as it is moving with accelerating speed into the “global condition” of unprecedented interconnectedness and interdependence, will require termination of the international anarchy by establishing global sovereignty. An agathocratic exercise of global sovereignty would entail shifting the focus of international politics from the security of states to the agathological security of all inhabitants of the planet. Establishing global sovereignty is also the key to addressing the problem of global collective action in response to the growing list of existential threats facing humanity. Considering the above, global sovereignty—understood as a transnational layer of sovereignty shared by all sovereign states and exercised jointly in analogy to the “pooling” of sovereignty by the member-states of the European Union—would require a significantly greater degree of binding consensus than what is possible under the current effectively anarchic United Nations regime.

However, neither liberalism (i.e., comprehensive liberalism or cosmopolitanism) nor realism (structural realism being the most plausible form of it) provides a suitable conceptual template for a global political philosophy that could produce transculturally valid justification for such a new form of sovereignty and guide its exercise in an

agathocratic manner. Solidarity, rather than liberal autonomy or individual freedom restricted solely by the harm principle, appears to be the most viable candidate for the central transcultural normative concept of a global normative theory that might resonate across all major normative traditions of humanity and yield legitimacy to a new global sovereign order.

Solidarism—an alternative political ideology that puts agathological solidarity in the center of both domestic and international politics—differs from realism in that instead of conceptualizing all political relations within the international system as essentially competitive, with cooperation being a function of competition, solidarism conceptualizes all political relations as ultimately agathocratic—i.e., aimed at promoting the good of all inhabitants of the planet, with competition perceived as a function of agathological efficacy. Solidarism differs also from liberalism in that, while the latter assumes universality of a range of fundamental norms applying to all persons at all times and places, the former is predicated on the affirmation of irreducible global agathological pluralism—i.e., a plausible diversity of the conceptions of the good life and of the related visions of the proper social order that make such life possible. Solidarists perceive the individualistic anthropology presupposed by liberalism as too parochial for a transculturally valid global normative theory and search for a more inclusive philosophy of human agency that could guide the exercise of global sovereignty in an agathologically diverse world. Solidarism would, among other things, advocate bridging the economic gap and political gulf between the educated and working classes that has been growing steadily across the planet under economic globalization and is likely to widen even more dramatically in the global economy driven by AI.

Taking all this into account, the present chapter argues that a solidaristic interpretation of the recent Chinese proposals for the overhaul of the international system might provide them with the most promising path to achieve transcultural legitimation and global recognition. It would do so by characterizing Chinese solidarism as a more holistic geopolitical alternative to the false dilemma between realism and liberalism, both grounded conceptually in the Western atomistic worldview that may prove to be unable to deliver agathological security to humanity in the Global Age. The traditional Chinese philosophical formula that prescribes seeking “harmony in diversity” does capture rather well the contrast between solidarism, on the one hand, and liberalism and realism, on the other.

Moreover, drawing attention to the novelty of the key geopolitical proposals entailed in the white paper, *A Global Community of Shared Future: China's Proposals and Actions*, presented in September 2023 by The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China as a culmination of a decade-long search for the proper expression of China's blueprint for a just world order, as well as in the work of the leading Chinese theorists of the Tianxia model of international order, such as Zhao Tingyang and Yan Xuetong, it will be suggested that they risk theoretical incoherence and practical irrelevance without embracing the idea of termination of international anarchy by establishing global sovereignty.

Considering both the Chinese scholarly and governmental pronouncements on a future world order with Chinese characteristics seems beneficial in view of the scholarly voices being more explicit in calling for overhauling the international system in a way informed by the Chinese normative tradition. The Chinese official pronouncements on long-term foreign policy commitments point in a broadly similar direction while being formulated more cautiously. The former provides an outsider to the Chinese debates with

an insight into the elaborate arguments behind the recent geopolitical proposals, while the latter indicates which of these proposals may be practically feasible.

At the most general level, focusing on theorizing the conditions for a genuinely global legitimation of a consensual world order, whatever its characteristics, Chinese or otherwise, the paper is a case study in a transcultural legitimation of any global political philosophy.

However, given the ages-old Chinese tradition of seeing the world through the lenses of the tributary system, which presupposed hierarchical rather than egalitarian relations between peoples and states, the bar is high for the Chinese proponents of a strategy for reforming and improving international governance to show that we are not dealing here with a smoke screen for a realist pursuit of comparative advantage dressed in high-minded rhetoric. For this reason, while interpreting the proposals for a world order with Chinese characteristics, I will assume that they contain a genuinely novel and transculturally valid vision of international order that goes well beyond a monocultural offer to replace Pax Americana with Pax Sinica. This vision would have to be set within a realistic perspective of a pluralistic global society of peoples governing themselves in a republican manner within their sovereign states while at the same time sharing a global layer of sovereignty, exercised according to global normative principles agreed in an ongoing all-inclusive transcultural normative discourse, conceived theoretically along the lines of Habermas's discourse ethics. I believe such a paradigm of solidaristic and agathocratic global politics is either implied in the recent Chinese geopolitical proposals or, at the very least, is compatible with them.

The imperative of terminating international anarchy in the name of the global good and establishing global sovereignty exercised in a consensual manner follows from the recognition that all normative traditions of humanity are expressions of various agathological strategies for the realization of the individual and communal potentialities for a good life. As such, they are also strategies for dealing with the problem of collective action, by coordinating interaction between individual members of human communities through an imposition of shared norms on individual consciousness. These agathological strategies, evolved in history by various communities living under diverse conditions, with different agathological constraints putting their stamp on the patterns and norms of interpersonal engagement, may be thought about as a transcultural normative toolkit for dealing with the problem of global collective action, a collaborative effort of humanity to respond to global challenges to the agathological flourishing of all.

Such a picture of global normative pluralism implies that the only methodologically plausible way of assessing the normative alternatives is by reference to their agathological efficacy—i.e., by way of agathological rather than metaphysical verification or falsification of the underlying norms. The global diversity of political ideologies and comprehensive worldviews requires metaphysically neutral justification of globally shared norms. In *Spheres of Solidarity*, I argued that *agathological hermeneutics*, grounded in the phenomenology of the first-person agathological consciousness, is the lowest global common philosophical denominator and thus, the most promising philosophical candidate to frame the global normative discourse that could yield transcultural justification of the norms of global coexistence.

The idea of solidarism as a global normative alternative to liberalism arises from hypothesizing that the apparent inability of liberalism to gain global normative traction has an agathological explanation, and it has little to do with the failure of the majority of humanity to proceed in the right direction of the Hegelian end of history.

Indeed, all three prominent Western predictions about the direction of global development formulated at the end of the Cold War—by Fukuyama, by Huntington, and by Rawls—are likely to be proven wrong precisely because they were all predicated on the assumption of liberalism and realism (Marxism by then considered defunct) being the only promising ways of theorizing international relations. Given its applied nature, theorizing a just world order is bound to reflect the current geopolitical trends; therefore it is unsurprising that the first wave of global justice theory, coinciding in time with the short-lived American hegemony of the 1990s, was dominated by the internal Western debates between the advocates of broadly cosmopolitan and anti-cosmopolitan visions of post-Cold War international relations. With the hindsight of what has transpired since then, one might be tempted to admit that despite the implausible assumptions of his theory, Samuel Huntington (1996), who in his clash of civilizations hypothesis captured the pessimism of the anti-cosmopolitan camp, diagnosed the state of international affairs at the turn of the millennium with greater accuracy than Francis Fukuyama (1992), whose Hegelian enthusiasm about the ultimate triumph of American-style liberalism made him overlook persistent global agathological pluralism. However, Huntington's hypothesis may yet be falsified by the future development of the international order, which is what would happen should global sovereignty be established. John Rawls (1999) might have been the most careful of the three theorists; therefore, while a liberal in domestic politics, he was acutely aware of the diversity of political cultures to the point of denying the possibility of a consensual global arrangement that might give rise to robust positive duties of justice, such as the duty of redistribution across borders. Hence, from the point of view of the levels of global coordination required by the collective response to global challenges such as climate change or regulation of AI, Rawls's Law of Peoples appears today as utterly minimalistic, merely an agreement to disagree on ideological matters and respect the right of peoples to determine their domestic political order (and putting responsibility for the outcomes squarely on the shoulders of each people and its political culture). In the unique context of the 1990s, in view of the unparalleled position of the U.S. in the international system and before the emergence of genuine multipolarity, the post-Cold War anarchic status quo might have appeared sustainable over a long period of time, hence Rawls might have seen no reason to consider some novel ways of structuring the global order. In the absence of global sovereignty, the future development of the multipolar world order is unpredictable, since the emergence of new major powers in the international system is determined by a complex combination of factors (economy, demography, geography, etc.), and it is increasingly taken for granted that imposition of any single political culture on humanity at large is not a realistic scenario, and the future world order will need to be shaped consensually by politically diverse peoples. What has changed in three decades, since Rawls drafted his *The Law of Peoples*, is that nonliberal peoples are no longer a minority—in terms of the balance of global power—to be tolerated by the dominant liberal peoples and, as time passes, will be increasingly dominating the normative conversation about the direction of global politics.

A somewhat different philosophical question that Rawls failed to address has to do with the realization by the peoples that have not yet been subjected to comprehensive liberal acculturation that the Global Age dawning upon humanity is likely to include such agathological constraints on human flourishing that will make the liberal anthropology (predicated on the strong normative assumptions of individual autonomy, self-development, and self-responsibility) inadequate for the purpose of guiding individuals and societies in reaching the human agathological potential. In other words, it is not

excluded that at least certain versions of liberalism may prove to be agathologically deficient, and not just for societies that were always illiberal but also for those who are currently liberal. To put it differently, Churchill's bon mot that liberal democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others that have been tried, may yet be proved wrong on agathological grounds, failing to provide agathological security to all under the unprecedented conditions of the Global Age. What is, thus, needed is creative thinking out of the box about the possible future political arrangements, transcending the binary liberal vs. illiberal distinction. For this reason, solidarism avoids conflating the universal human appreciation of the value of civic freedoms with comprehensive liberalism as just one of the political ideologies capable of providing a conceptual and institutional framework for securing freedom. The longing for freedom manifested by people living under illiberal regimes has been confirmed in a spectacular manner in the study of the political beliefs held by Muslims across the planet and across various sections of Muslim societies done by John Esposito and Dalia Mogahed based on a massive worldwide Gallup poll (Esposito and Mogahed 2007).

Freedom, however, is just one of the important values that define various agathological paradigms of a good life. Due to the global agathological skepticism (i.e., the impossibility of identifying just one globally valid paradigm of the good life), clinging to more communal forms of ordering the realms of human meaning and agency may be interpreted as a manifestation of a reasonable resistance—since done in the name of agathological efficacy—to all-out liberalization of the great communitarian normative traditions, like the ones associated with the world religions.

Joshua Greene's (2015) application to the case of moral cognition of Daniel Kahneman's theory of two modes of thought—System 1 or the “automatic mode” of thinking “fast,” instinctively, with our evolutionary brains in the driving seat vs. System 2 or the “manual mode” of thinking “slow,” in a conscious, deliberative, and logical manner—may confirm rational plausibility on the communal forms of imposition of normative order on individual consciousness. Greene provides empirical data confirming that the automatic mode of decision making is a reliable strategy for dealing with the problem of collective action only in a local or in-group context. Communal normative strategies that expand the group—sometimes to the borders of a nation, a worldwide religious community, or a civilization defined by the shared norms of interpersonal engagement—within which the automatic mode of decision making may be still functional as a tool for dealing with the problem of collective action within a large population, might, under particular social circumstances, yield superior agathological outcomes than may be expected in societies in which interaction is based on the principle of strong individual autonomy.

The suggestion that limited global receptiveness to the dominant Anglo-Saxon variant of liberalism may be explained by reference to the objective agathological efficacy of the diverse local agathological traditions does not entail a commitment to cultural essentialism, and it does not, therefore, presuppose a static vision of agathological traditions (although it does presuppose a rejection of the possibility of strictly “private agathology,” to paraphrase Wittgenstein, since assigning agathological meanings is possible only in the context of interpersonal relations and in the context of the communal application of normative concepts). The current author firmly endorses the anti-essentialist (and anti-Huntingtonian) argument developed by Amartya Sen (2006) whose critique of “the solitarist illusion of identity” that one's identity is best defined by reference to just one domain, such as religion or ethnicity, leads him to the affirmation that everyone has multiple identities, influencing each other, ever-evolving, open to rational criticism and

freedom of cultural choice. Agathological traditions are merely de facto traditions since they have evolved over time under particular social, economic, and cultural/semantic conditions, and at a given point in time, they may or may not suit optimally a given agathological community, thus requiring or not requiring a revision, depending on their actual agathological efficacy.

It follows, therefore, that a suggestion that Chinese solidarism may provide a promising blueprint for novel ways of thinking about a just world order does not essentialize Chinese identity or Chinese ways of social interaction as timelessly valid. If Chinese solidarism, at some point in the future, turns out to provide a conceptual template for a plausible alternative to liberalism and realism, it will not be because it is essentially Chinese but because it happens to serve well as a problem-solving theoretical framework under new global conditions.

In light of the above, it should also be clear that agathology as a philosophical basis for agathocratic solidarism is pluralistic but not relativistic. The ever-evolving human condition, impacted by environmental changes which in turn influence the dispositional dimensions of the human psyche, calls for agathological adaptation, and different agathological strategies are being invented in response to new demands, but this adaptation has a character of inventing socially shared meanings and institutions of social life in response to the human needs we ultimately do not invent.

By the same token, agathological progress can be coherently explained, even if global agathological pluralism excludes the existence of one universal agathological standard. It can be construed in terms of agathological self-transcendence—i.e., overcoming of the agathological limitations that can be identified as such from within the agathological tradition by the members of the agathological community. This can be made sense of by reference to the central binary phenomena of agathological consciousness, namely the phenomenon of *pleion* (more and better, in classical Greek) or the desire for an ever greater good, and the concomitant phenomenon of *dukkha* identified in the Buddhist tradition as a universal sense of agathological dissatisfaction. The fundamental criteria of agathological success are, thus, not cultural, but *sui generis* agathological, pertaining to human agathological flourishing, which is determined by the universal phenomena of agathological consciousness that are *given*, not defined entirely by the culture of the time and place.

To the extent that institutionalization of social norms is, at least since the times of Thomas Hobbes, considered an essential factor of agathological progress—Steven Pinker (2011) identifies the efficient exercise of state sovereignty as the most important factor contributing to the decline of violence over the last four centuries—it is plausible to think that no significant future agathological improvements on a global scale can take place without termination of international anarchy and establishment of global sovereignty. Structural realists agree that terminating international anarchy by establishing some form of global sovereignty would neutralize the security-related factors that motivate the unlimited zero-sum competition for power among states, but they rarely engage in identifying how such a post-anarchic world order might look, considering it an unlikely scenario. Thus, liberals are typically considered as the main contenders to offer a comprehensive vision of a global rule-based order. For this reason, references to the plausible aspects of the communitarianism of the Confucian, Islamic, Hindu, and Russian Conservative political traditions that resist the offer of comprehensive liberalism and express normative support for a solidaristic substitute to both liberalism and realism were among the pillars of the argumentative strategy of *Spheres of Solidarity* in support of

solidarism. It is, thus, of major significance for the scholarly debate about the matter that *Shared Future* (if I may, for convenience's sake, abbreviate in such a way the title of the Chinese governmental white paper, and as GCOSF in the references) points in the same direction, namely towards some new, "third way" of theorizing about international relations.

In order to appreciate that recommending a solidaristic framework for the transcultural legitimation of the recent Chinese geopolitical proposals is not an unjustified imposition, it suffices to note that the term *tuán jié* (团结) is used in the Chinese original of *Shared Future*, a relatively short document, some fifteen times and rendered—in the official English translation—seven times as "solidarity," six times as "unity," "united," or "unite" (referring always to the coordinated action with a shared purpose), and once as "cooperation and coordination." The variety of contexts in which *tuán jié* as conceptually equivalent to "solidarity" is mentioned testifies to its semantic centrality in the normative vision of a reformed world order presented in *Shared Future*. By comparison, freedom is mentioned only twice, in just one section (IV.5) of the document, in both cases squeezed among a litany of "universal values," and accompanied on both occasions with a decisive caveat that such values lend themselves to plural legitimate interpretations. Here are the two relevant fragments of *Shared Future*: "China advocates peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom, the common values of humanity. With an open mind, China understands that different civilizations have different understandings of the nature of these values, and respects the efforts of people in different countries to explore their own development paths." The next paragraph reads: "Democracy and freedom are the common goals of humanity. There is no single model of democracy that is universally applicable, far less a superior one. Democracy is not Coca-Cola, tasting the same across the world as the syrup is produced in one single country. Democracy is not an ornament, but a solution to real problems. Attempts to monopolize the "patent" of democracy, arbitrarily define the "standards" of democracy, and fabricate a false narrative of "democracy versus authoritarianism" to provoke confrontation between political systems and ideologies are practices of fake democracy."

The pushback against liberal presuppositions that cosmopolitans would espouse could not be more clearly elucidated than in these two statements, making it clear that individual freedoms and a liberal conception of democracy are not the most suitable candidates for transcultural conceptual bridges that the authors of *Shared Future* would recommend as conceptual cornerstones of a global normative theory. The more important it is, therefore, to take note that proclaiming democracy as a kind of agathological strategy, "a solution to real problems," implicitly acknowledges that the focus on the human good might serve as a conceptual meeting point of various normative traditions of humanity.

From the point of view of our attempt to give the Chinese proposals for a new world order a solidaristic interpretation as a condition of its global legitimation, it is also important to notice how the unity of global collective action is systematically contrasted, in *Shared Future*, with the competitive realist approach to international relations. The conceptual tension between Confucian philosophical anthropology and liberalism, which comes in more and less individualistic variants, is a matter of contention (as referenced extensively in other contributions to the present volume devoted to the discussion of "idealist" interpretations of the Confucian political tradition). However, the contrast between Confucian solidarism and Western political realism is undeniable and has to do with the fundamental presuppositions of the Confucian social ontology with its preference for harmony over conflict, much stronger than acknowledged in the Western philosophical

tradition, which—from Empedocles to Hegel—takes conflict rather than harmony to be the driving force of progress. *Shared Future* affirms this distinctive feature of the Chinese way of thinking about managing social difference by reference to the Chinese normative tradition: “Harmony is the core concept of Chinese culture, which values the primacy of harmony and harmony within diversity, pursues the ideal of harmony and solidarity towards common progress, and embraces cultural diversity and global harmony” (III.1). Another way to capture this solidaristic response of the Chinese political tradition to the challenge of agathological competition would be to say that the Chinese prefer to encapsulate the unavoidable agonistic element in the social dynamics within the structural framework that ensures harmony. In contrast, the Western political intuition, going as far as Roman republicanism, expects *agon* to produce a desirable equilibrium of the balance of power, in a way reminiscent of Adam Smith’s expectation that some invisible hand will guide the development of social reality toward the optimal state, and will do so precisely because of the absence of the top-down comprehensive management of society that in the Chinese tradition has sometimes been perceived as a viable solution to the all-important problem of social disorder.

Such divergence of normative intuitions, with their intellectual genealogy going back centuries or even millennia, is one of the key reasons why the two modes of philosophizing—monocultural and cross-cultural—that have dominated the discourse of global justice theory, are methodologically incapable of facilitating the global normative consensus that must accompany the exercise of global sovereignty. Monocultural theorizing—i.e., philosophizing within the bounds of one philosophical tradition—may generate new ideas about global justice but these would then have to be epistemically justified through a transcultural normative discourse to be consensually adopted without a sense of epistemic violence being performed by one normative culture on another (Brooks 2023).

The case of cross-cultural or comparative methodology is more complex because the contribution of cross-cultural scholarship to understanding non-Western normative moral and political traditions cannot be overestimated. Still, it seems that even the most sophisticated and careful comparison of any two philosophical traditions is incapable of bridging normative intuitions from various normative cultures unless there is already a preexistent semantic overlap which comparative study only lays bare. Aaron Stalnaker’s brilliant comparative study of East Asian and Western “images of communal order” in the current volume (cf. also Stalnaker 2006) is a point in case. Stalnaker begins with an affirmation of “the need to seriously engage non-Western traditions of thinking about justice in order to enrich research on global justice and avoid the charge of neocolonial hegemonic thinking masquerading as true universalism.” Moreover, he voices hope for normative cross-cultural consensus as he writes: “Comparative ethical analysis of ideas about justice provides an excellent way to highlight oversights and obsessions in various traditions of thought, thereby opening up the possibility of critical revision through debate, in order to pursue a more truly universal ethical universalism.” However, a painstaking comparison of the Confucian and American models of political order leads Stalnaker to a conclusion that the East Asian insistence “that unified authority structures are required for effective administration of justice is in direct contradiction to long-standing Western republican ideas about the need for a ‘separation of powers’ to combat potential tyranny, which is always incipient given human nature (as Westerners since Calvin and Hobbes tend to see it).” Thus, having conducted a thorough comparative analysis of what he sees as two diametrically opposed “images of communal order” that imply very different understandings of political authority and very different mechanisms

of reproduction of social order (top-down in East Asia versus bottom-up in America), he states: “Serious comparative analysis of these fundamental issues of justice seems the only way to avoid charges of ‘hegemonic,’ ‘neo-colonial,’ or ‘imperialist’ thinking. And if there were any philosophical area that deserved special caution and mutual respect about such charges, it would be reflections on global justice. Perhaps some global synthesis regarding unified or separated authority structures will be possible; perhaps not. But only substantive analysis and debate over such issues will help any contemporary analyst discern possible ways forward on these fundamental issues; and even if no particular synthesis carries the day, mutual respect can nevertheless be cultivated through this procedure, and that is no small thing.”

Mutual respect is, no doubt, a necessary condition of international cooperation; however, overcoming the growing mess of the current anarchic international system by establishing global sovereignty will require a far greater degree of consensus on both normative principles and concrete global policies than is required by mutual respect. For this purpose, a genuinely global—i.e., transcultural—methodology needs to complement the invaluable contributions of monocultural and cross-cultural normative theorists by forging an all-inclusive normative discourse in which participants are capable not only of sharing normative intuitions about justice and injustice but also pushing together relentlessly for consensually acceptable answers to the normative questions that simply cannot be left unanswered due to the agathological urgency of the subject matter under consideration.

### AGATHOCRACY AND AGATHARIANISM: RECONCILING STRATEGIC RATIONALITY OF *HOMO OECOMICUS* WITH AGATHOLOGICAL RATIONALITY OF *HOMO AGATHOS*

In the light of the above, there is nothing paradoxical about both liberalism and realism being outgrowth of the same anthropological presuppositions explicitly affirmed in Hobbes as both a realist and a liberal but arguably implicit already in the ancient Greek (or perhaps even Mesopotamian and Egyptian) discovery of an individual which impregnated the Western agathological tradition with the seeds of individualism and with the concomitant spirit of *agon*, competition for power and for glory (classical Greek *kléos*). The genealogical proximity of realism and liberalism helps to explain why both are foreign to the core of the Chinese normative tradition which aims at overcoming the realist strife with harmony by deflating the importance of an individual.

It would take too much space to document here the uniquely Western philosophical and theological genealogy of the dark Hobbesian view of human nature, emerging from the “nominalist revolution” of the late Middle Ages (Gillespie 2008). While the term *homo oeconomicus* is recent, owing its aura of intellectual respectability to John Stuart Mill, the Anglo-Saxon anthropology underlying this model of human agency that portrays persons as agathologically isolated rational self-interested agents is firmly present in the proto-Protestant theology of Ockham. Dostoyevsky was familiar with its nineteenth-century English incarnation and considered it par excellence anti-Christian due to its individualism which he viewed as standing in opposition to the biblical commandment of neighborly love. What matters for our purposes is that the anthropology underlying the *homo oeconomicus* model, grounded as it is in a secularized philosophical variation on

the radical version of the Christian theme of fallen human nature, has no rational or empirical-psychological basis, certainly no more so than the alternative model of human agency that I dubbed *homo agathos*. The latter interprets human agency as always directed toward realization of the human good but also irreducibly other-oriented and therefore social. *Homo agathos* acknowledges that her good is inclusive of the good of others, and that agathological flourishing of an individual is conditional on the agathological flourishing of the community.

As such, *homo agathos* is a model of human agency contrasted with that of *homo oeconomicus*, and agathological rationality of *homo agathos* is contrasted with strategic rationality of *homo oeconomicus*.

Agathological ethics as an ethics of agathological solidarity—or *agatharianism* as it might be called to highlight that we are dealing with a nonutilitarian consequentialist alternative to utilitarianism—is grounded in intersubjective perspective on the experiences of good and evil, not as physical experiences of pleasure or pain but as “thick” agathological experiences that include a semantic layer of meanings ascribed to these experiences, thus creating a space for and explaining the phenomenon of irreducible agathological pluralism. The contrast between the normative intuitions behind the two models of human agency—*homo oeconomicus* and *homo agathos*—may themselves be interpreted as an expression of agathological pluralism. In any case, agatharianism, while consistent with the philosophical assumptions of solidarism as a political rather than an ethical theory, does *not* presuppose that the model of *homo oeconomicus* does not capture anything that is true and important about the nature and dynamics of human agency, only that the motivational structure of human agency is bipolar and the normative preference of one pole over the other, which is one respect in which the liberal and nonliberal normative traditions differ, is a normative, not an empirical issue.

The bipolarity of moral motivation has been famously acknowledged by Adam Smith in his theory of moral sentiments and in his theory of capitalism in a way that promises a possible reconciliation between the two poles (Fleischacker 2021).

Amartya Sen’s admiration for Adam Smith’s moral philosophy of an impartial spectator and Sen’s objection to the plausibility of the *homo oeconomicus* model is also well known and significant (Sen 2009).

In his theory of communicative rationality, Habermas (1996) presupposes an analogical distinction between strategic (competitive) and communicative (solidaristic) rationality and, while assigning a proper place to both, puts communicative rationality at the heart of his vision of deliberative democracy.

The normative model of *homo agathos* is, arguably, central to all mainstream normative traditions of humanity and needs to be acknowledged and recovered in the global normative theory, not as some relict of a past mythical age of innocence, superseded by a more rationally mature *homo oeconomicus*, but as an ethical paradigm that the vast majority of humanity is brought up with as the proper way of thinking about one’s obligations toward others and oneself. At the end of book I of Plato’s *Republic*, Trazymachus puts his infamous definition of justice as “the advantage of the stronger” in terms consistent with the logic of *homo oeconomicus*. It is just that Plato spends the next few hundred pages refuting it as normatively unacceptable. Other major normative traditions of humanity, Confucian, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, or Christian Orthodox, also acknowledge the existence of strategically minded self-interested agency as one of the two poles between which the inner deliberation of agents about the course of action typically takes place. However, they point to the other pole, that of *homo agathos*, as normatively

preferable and more fundamental. Indeed, we are dealing here with a philosophically fundamental disagreement over the nature of the motivational structure of human agency, as driven primarily by the will-to-power (*homo oeconomicus*) or principally by the will-to-good (*homo agathos*). I call politics driven by the will-to-good, *agathocracy*.

The Chinese agathological tradition provides a good example of relating these two normative poles in a realistic manner, by ascribing to the agathological rationality of *homo agathos* the role of moderating and correcting the strategic rationality of *homo oeconomicus* that may be agathologically efficacious only within the broader framework of the commitment to agency aimed at the common good. Otherwise, interpreted as normatively valid on its own, the model of *homo oeconomicus* stands in direct conceptual conflict with the Confucian normative tradition that envisages as realistic a possibility of a well-ordered society in which individual person can by means of education in childhood and youth, and self-cultivation in adulthood, become *junzi* (君子), a cultivated person, a noble person, a virtuous person, a person whose consciousness and character took shape defined by virtues perceived as conducive of human agathological flourishing within the communal setting.

Nearly all occurrences of the term *tuán jié* (团结) in *Shared Future*, as well as semantically related terms (like *hé hé gòng shēng* (和合共生), also translated in the official English version as “solidarity,” though it could be equally well rendered as “symbiosis” since it includes reference to male-female complementarity), presuppose the contrast between the solidaristic attitude of simultaneous pursuit of one’s good and the good of others, on the one hand, and the competitive view of human relations, on the other. Here are some such relevant quotations: “At yet another crossroads in history, we have to choose between unity and division, between opening up and closing off, between cooperation and confrontation” (Preface I); “Standing at a crossroads, humanity is faced with two opposing options. One is to revert to the Cold War mentality that deepens division and antagonism and stokes confrontation between blocs. The other is to act for the common wellbeing of humanity, strengthen solidarity and cooperation, advocate openness and win-win results, and promote equality and respect. The tug of war between these two options will shape the future of humanity and our planet in a profound way” (II.a); “Through the Global Security Initiative, China seeks to work with the international community in upholding the spirit of the UN Charter, and calls for adapting to the profound changes in the international landscape through solidarity, addressing traditional and non-traditional security risks and challenges with a win-win mindset, and creating a new path to security that features dialogue over confrontation, partnership over alliance, and win-win results over zero-sum game” (V.2).

The idealistic tone of the above quotations, reminiscent of Wilsonian idealism, might mislead one into thinking that there is nothing genuinely new here that would merit the attention of a normative theorist of international relations in search of a potentially new vision of world order. However, if one remembers that in other places of *Shared Future* the liberal anthropological presuppositions that Wilsonian idealism presumes as normatively valid for the entirety of humanity are being resisted as incompatible with the Chinese normative tradition, and moreover what is proposed in the white paper is clearly not a mainstream Marxist or Leninist view of the international system, one realizes that what is hinted at must be something that has not yet been tried. If not the zero-sum logic of the competitive anarchic system as analyzed by structural realists, and not the universal and inalienable rights of individuals proclaimed by liberal cosmopolitans are meant to ground the future global order, then something else must be a source of the coherence of

the vision of *Shared Future*. My explanatory hypothesis suggests that we are dealing here with an alternative theory of international relations that I proposed to label *solidarism*.

Solidarism can be functional in practice only within the framework of global sovereignty exercised in the spirit of global agathological solidarity. Only when institutionalized in a form of an efficient international regime capable of yielding predictable outcomes (which the current UN system fails miserably to deliver), can agathological solidarity translate into agathological security for all people and peoples, while making space for agathological pluralism, thus creating conditions for perpetual peace without presupposing the Kantian ethical universalism which stands in tension with global agathological pluralism. To paraphrase Woodrow Wilson, the world must be made safe for solidarity, and that can be achieved only by way of establishing the global layer of shared sovereignty exercised by all peoples. Only within such a distinctly novel global order capable of providing agathological security for all, in a comprehensive manner hinted at by Hobbes in his portraying Leviathan as a “mortal god,” could global agathocracy that employs global sovereign power with the aim of promoting the global good be feasible.

There are at least two good reasons to believe that the authors of *Shared Future* are aware of the radical novelty of the world order with Chinese characteristics enunciated in such strongly anti-realist terms, although in what is still a policy paper to be read by other foreign policymakers, they may prefer to dress the revolutionary message in a language of merely full compliance with the UN Charter. The first such reason is that the coherence of *Shared Future* is at stake. Under the heading, “The new era calls for new ideas,” the document calls for what would constitute a major overhaul of the entire international system: “We can no longer interpret the reality we are living in or find satisfactory solutions to the conundrums we are facing by means of traditional approaches to international relations. It is increasingly obvious that the idea that ‘all strong countries will seek hegemony,’ the obsession with superior strength, and the zero-sum mentality are in conflict with the needs of our times . . . The strong preying on the weak is not a way for humans to coexist. If the law of the jungle is imposed on human society, and the idea that ‘might makes right’ prevails, the principle of sovereign equality will be fundamentally undermined, and world peace and stability will be severely endangered. In the age of globalization, all countries are interdependent and interconnected. Therefore, the law of the jungle and the winner-takes-all mindset will lead nowhere—inclusive development for the benefit of all is the right path forward . . . The zero-sum game in which one wins by causing others to lose is doomed to fail . . . No country should hope for others to fail. Instead, it should work together with other countries for the success of all. China consistently aligns its development with global development and aligns the interests of the Chinese people with the common interests of all peoples around the world. When the world thrives, China thrives, and vice versa.”

Statements like the above would amount to an exercise in political rhetoric, without presupposing a profound change within the motivational structure of the current international system. One cannot, in a coherent manner, claim that the current international system is unsustainable and hold that the change is imminent while having in mind only a change of heart of the political leaders. The present state of international affairs is a product of the structural constraints of the international system, with the actors behaving, most of the time, rationally, in accordance with the internal logic of that system; therefore only a deep structural transformation of that system, by introducing a global layer of sovereignty and terminating the international anarchy, could bring about a change that *Shared Future* calls for: “All countries are equals. The big, the mighty, and the

wealthy should not bully the small, the weak, and the poor. We should uphold multilateralism and reject unilateralism. We should replace the outdated mindset of winner-takes-all with a new vision of seeking win-win outcomes for all. We should forge global partnerships at both international and regional levels, and embrace a new approach to state-to-state relations, one founded on dialogue rather than confrontation and that seeks partnership rather than alliance.”

Since while engaging in strongly solidaristic and agathocratic rhetoric, the authors of *Shared Future*, for reasons that are not difficult to fathom, prefer to avoid calling for what would be effectively a new world order, it may be helpful to appeal to influential Chinese theorists who do so openly, especially that *Shared Future* itself is manifestly a fruit of much intellectual effort of numerous Chinese scholars over a period of a decade and more. Among these, Zhao Tingyang’s modern elaboration of the Confucian Tianxia (天下, all-under-heaven) vision of world order, presented first in Chinese in 2003, and recently in a new English translation as *All under Heaven: The Tianxia System for a Possible World Order* (Zhao 2021), stands out as advocating a radically novel geopolitical option, with the postulate of “world institution” at its core which I take to be an equivalent of what I call global sovereignty. Most importantly, his vision is neither liberal/cosmopolitan, nor realist/anti-cosmopolitan, and as such, is broadly consistent with the message of *Shared Future*. Zhao recommends a thoroughgoing reform of the current international system, which he sums up in an evocative phrase: “a failed world” (also “a non-world”)—i.e., a global system which, in analogy to “a failed state,” fails to fulfill its basic functions. It would be hard to express more directly the urgency of the task to construe and implement a very different world order from the present one. Zhao’s vision of a world system aimed at promoting universal wellbeing has strong solidaristic and agathocratic overtones. Zhao’s work carries also echoes of the Chinese Republican slogan: “The World is For All” (*Tianxia wei gong* 天下为公), which drew as much on the native cultural sources as on the Wilsonian idealist attitudes that attempted to balance the national interest with generosity toward other nations. Still, the most characteristic features of Zhao’s Tianxia system are unmistakably Chinese, like the all-inclusive nature of the proposed international system, with no states outside of the system, hence no danger of all-out competition between any member-states within the system. Thus, Tianxia aims at the intra-system harmony and stability that eschews the strong competitive element constitutive of Western liberalism and realism.

At its most ambitious, Zhao’s Tianxia system advocates the unification of humanity based on shared values and their normative appeal capable of winning hearts and minds. Humanity sharing a common world beyond the current divisive global political landscape marked by the power struggle between self-seeking nation-states is the normative ideal underpinning Zhao’s blueprint for a reformed world order. As such Zhao’s is a model of agathocratic global politics par excellence (Wang 2017).

Yan Xuetong, a professor at Tsinghua University, while taking issue with Zhao’s interpretation of the classical Tianxia model, and presenting his own alternative, ultimately agrees with Zhao on what in the bigger scheme of things is essential, namely the rejection of a realist zero-sum logic that underpins the hegemonic international system, and recommendation of “humane authority” that embodies moral leadership in service of the common good and social justice. Both Zhao and Yan prioritize the common global good over national self-interest. However, as a political scientist rather than a philosopher, Yan pays close attention to the realpolitik aspect of the international system and advocates combining agathocratic leadership with strategic alliances for the management of

international conflicts (Yan 2013). Yan's nonrealist understanding of the role of international strategic alliances is a highly instructive example that shows that agathocratic solidarism does not entail political naiveté but may incorporate realist, as well as liberal, considerations within a broader solidaristic framework. Indeed, agathocratic solidarism presupposes, in addition to the institutionalization of global sovereignty, an informal covenant of all people of goodwill to promote global good and resist global evil. As there cannot be a democracy without democrats, so global agathocracy is possible only with agathocrats taking charge of international affairs and leading in an agathocratic manner.

Zhao's proposal has been subjected to criticism, sometimes harsh, not least by his Chinese colleagues (Wang 2017). Zhao has been also subjected to scrutiny by several contributors to the present volume. However, from the point of view of the aims of the present chapter, the supposed weaknesses identified by Zhao's critics are largely irrelevant. When they concern Zhao's supposed misreading of the Tianxia model in its historical context of the Chinese tributary system, they have no bearing on the future global applicability of the Tianxia system. When they allege the utopian character of Zhao's call for the establishment of "a world institution," I believe they are wrong, since, as I have explained, if conceived along the lines of what I call global sovereignty, it is not difficult to imagine its exercise in analogy to the shared sovereignty exercised jointly by all member-states of the European Union (something that hardline realists still dismiss as a partial and temporary departure from the pure realist zero-sum model of international relations). On the other hand, it appears that Zhao's critics overlooked what is perhaps the most significant weakness of Zhao's and of all other geopolitical proposals that have emerged recently from the People's Republic of China, namely the challenge of transcultural legitimation. I purport that Zhao's consequentialist gesture to appeal to the global maximization of human wellbeing may be insufficient as a strategy for the global legitimation of his Tianxia system since it ignores global agathological pluralism, which makes monocultural philosophizing about the global norms implausible. Thus, one of the main risks of the Chinese geopolitical proposals under consideration is that they may end up as methodologically monocultural, thus deserving no greater or lesser recognition than parallel proposals emerging from other normative monocultures (say, American liberal, Russian Conservative, or Islamist). Zhao's implicit appeal to utilitarianism as a philosophical bridge to the West is thus not a methodologically promising move. At least since John Stuart Mill, utilitarians struggled with the problem of identifying in a convincing way the currency of utility, or what it is that is worth maximizing. The very fact that after two centuries of the evolution of utilitarianism, we have ended up with the conception of preference utilitarianism, which values actions that satisfy to the highest degree personal interests of the greatest number of persons, proves that the assessment of any global collective action would have to be made in a consensual manner, and therefore in a transcultural manner.

Thus while I concur with Zhao that the appeal to the human good (I call it "agathological justification") is the most promising justificatory strategy in the global pluralistic normative environment, I propose—drawing inspiration from the discourse ethics of Jürgen Habermas (1996)—that a globally inclusive normative discourse open to contributions from all great normative traditions, as they are interpreted by their contemporary adherents, is the only context in which globally applicable norms that would inform a legitimate world order under global sovereignty could be justified. Given the pace of global changes, driven by the technological and economic development in all parts of the planet, there cannot exist one universal set of norms valid for all times and places that could be available for discovery apart from the actual global normative discourse

that would take into account considerations that may be entirely novel and unique. In such a discourse, the Tianxia model if interpreted in a conservative manner as bringing back the specter of global hierarchical governance in the style of the ages-old Chinese tributary system, be it updated for the Global Age, with China as the “Central State” (*Zhongguo* 中國), would certainly fail the test of transcultural legitimation. Any world order with Chinese characteristics can be legitimized transculturally only when interpreted as open to calibration in the light of the contributions from all other participants of the all-inclusive global normative discourse.

There is, however, no reason to believe that a progressive reading of the recent Chinese geopolitical proposals, aimed at tackling future global problems, is not plausible. In her insightful analysis of the official political rhetoric of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) of the reform era, Zhang Shanruo documents the gradual transformation of the CCP’s discourse from a more orthodox Marxist terminology to the one colored with Confucian overtones, like a change from “class struggle” to “harmonious society.” Another memorable example of Confucianization of the rhetoric of the CCP was “Putting People First” (以人为本) as the manifesto of the administration of Hu Jintao (2002–12), which echoes Mencius’s idea of what we might call *agathocracy* (仁政). She concludes that while the conservative nature of Confucianism, with its focus on meritocratic political hierarchy and social harmony, lends itself to pragmatic adaptations in the context of a hierarchical political system, for the purpose of boosting political legitimacy and smoothing the authoritarian aspects of the top-down political system, there is no evidence of the CCP’s endorsement of the revival of conservative Confucianism. Zhang quotes President Xi Jinping admonishing Confucian scholars during a meeting with them that “Confucius should be interpreted through the Party’s prism, ‘using the past to serve the present’ so that the sage’s thoughts ‘can be made to play a positive role in the conditions of the new era’” (Zhang 2015: 194).

Ultimately, whatever the proportions of the Marxist, Pragmatist, and Confucian ingredients in *Shared Future*, it remains abundantly clear that the white paper calls for a new vision of international order, which would be able to appreciate agathological efficacy of both the liberal normative traditions which stress individual autonomy as the source of a person’s inalienable dignity and the normative traditions which conceptualize the human good as central in nonliberal ways. Confucian *junzi* and *homo agathos*, both represent such nonliberal conceptualizations of human flourishing as achieved by doing good, hence the title of the present chapter.

Despite its focus on the development of virtues of character and becoming a *junzi*, and on the pursuit of the ideal of social harmony and agathological solidarity, the Chinese normative tradition is nothing but idealistically naive. If anything, the Chinese agathological worldview, as attested by the Chinese Classics (with the philosophically notable but culturally marginal exception of Mohism), comes across as a good deal more pragmatic and realistic in tone than most other major agathological traditions. It is, however, a kind of *agathological* realism, that has little to do with the philosophical presuppositions of the realist theory of international relations. Chinese agathological realism is free of the nihilist overtones with which Thomas Hobbes infused the Anglo-American liberal tradition, to the degree that could not be entirely erased by the more optimistic anthropological outlook represented by John Locke.

Hobbes is, indeed, a central figure to be considered in the current analysis of the relationship between Chinese solidarism and Western realism. Hobbes’s position in this context is somewhat paradoxical, since while being an arch-realist, he also points the way

out of the global realistic predicament, since his vision of domestic sovereignty being exercised effectively points to the possibility of global sovereignty that would bring an end to international anarchy akin to the Hobbesian state of nature.

More significantly, however, Hobbes's constructivist (or "inventivist," as I will prefer to call it to prevent radical relativistic associations) approach to politics is reminiscent of his closest Chinese intellectual counterpart, Xunzi, like Hobbes a statist and a pragmatist. Xunzi's thought looms large in the background of the recent Chinese geopolitical proposals, explicitly in Zhao Tingyang's work (2019), and implicitly in the governmental *Shared Future*.

Xunzi, writing nearly two millennia before Hobbes, anticipated his strikingly modern, anti-metaphysical methodology, as well as his materialistic outlook on human reality (Tan 2017). They both looked at politics as an art (Hobbes used the term "artifice"), as centered on inventing institutional order which would, on the one hand, constraint human agency in a desirable manner, while, on the other, generate unprecedented agathological possibilities, conditional on the security provided by an efficient state.

This inventivist methodological move is crucial to making space for our solidaristic interpretation of the world order with Chinese characteristics since solidarism as a transcultural normative political theory cannot be, for obvious reasons, predicated on any metaphysical assumptions about the nature of reality. Fortunately, it does not have to be, and Xunzi and Hobbes show the way. They presuppose that human agency may be strongly impacted by the agathological constraints and possibilities produced in a rationally controlled process, and normatively identified desirable social behavior may be guided in a predictable manner to prevent agathologically grossly suboptimal social outcomes. These agathological possibilities and constraints include semantic possibilities and constraints—i.e., availability of meanings that allow agents to conceive of agathological options as meaningful hence attractive, and capable of motivating action. These, too, are subject to human invention, typically meshed with the narratives of identity.

From this point of view, Aristotelian-style empiricism which is sometimes echoed in the realist argument against the possibility of overcoming international anarchy that holds that if a global sovereignty would be possible in principle, it would already have been established long ago, is entirely misguided since in political theory we are dealing with the normative, not factual realm. Certain solutions have not been implemented in the past because nobody thought about them in the first place, and thus has not tried to implement them. Both Xunzi and Hobbes reject such pseudo-empiricist conservative methodology (Sato 2003). In fact, Hobbes sees his refutation of the Aristotelian approach to politics as the reason why he considers himself the first political scientist. While both Xunzi and Hobbes believed in the "psychological given" of human nature (in the case of Xunzi that meant the correlation between the ways of "the human" and the ways of "heaven"), they realized that there is no "political given"—i.e., that the political order needs to be invented and adapted to the particular circumstances, with the outcomes in the form of desirable social behavior in mind (Stalnaker 2006). The only politically relevant "given" are human needs and dispositions, which may change over time due to environmental factors (some future societies with economies transformed entirely by AI may serve as an imaginary example of such impact), and agathocracy as politics of the good may be conceived as an institutional response to these evolving human needs in the name of agathological security of all.

There are, however, limits to the analogies between Hobbes and Xunzi, and these are of the utmost importance to our analysis of the Chinese political tradition as essentially solidaristic, since they pertain to different social ontologies presupposed by the two

authors. Hobbes embraces radical individualism of the kind that has been exported to America by the Puritans, laying the ground for the most extreme individualistic society evolved so far by humanity, while Xunzi remains a Chinese communitarian, whose vision of an orderly society shaped by the constraints of human-made institutions capable of instilling citizens with civic virtues, is infused with the traditional Chinese correlative thinking about society (Cua 1985).

Xunzi's dependence on the Chinese tradition limits his inventivism, but an important distinction needs to be made between holding on to certain traditional normative beliefs and the grounds on which these beliefs are held. To make this distinction clear, it will be helpful to present an example of Chinese normative thinking that is heavily invested in metaphysical commitments. Chen Lai of Tsingua University, in his comprehensive and lucid study of the "values of Chinese civilization," argues that the current "divergence between the value preferences of Chinese civilization and modern values" can be accounted for by the impact of traditional Chinese social ontology, rooted in turn in traditional Chinese cosmology. According to Chen, "Through development over the two millennia following the Axial Age, Chinese civilization fixed its own value preferences, the principal four of which are 'the priority of responsibility to freedom,' 'the priority of duty over rights,' 'the community being higher than the individual,' and 'harmony being higher than conflict,' along with the unity of heaven and human (*tian ren he yi* 天人合一) being higher than the subject-object distinction" (Chen 2017: 41–2). The logic of fixing these preferences as normatively binding is, according to Chen, metaphysical. The rightness of these particular models of social relations is identified by reflection on the nature of the cosmos, the Chinese cosmology marked by correlative imagery (everything being interconnected in a harmonious totality), with *yin-yang* complementation of the opposites dissolving into harmony, the Universe undergoing a continuous process of generative transformation according to "natural heavenly patterns" (akin to the laws of nature), with the resulting unification of humans and heaven which generates natural ethical duties for humans to function in harmony with all-under-heaven (Chen 2017, ch. 1).

Such a metaphysically grounded comprehensive normative vision as presented by Chen Lai may have its own impressive internal coherence, as well as a degree of plausibility, at least for those who subscribe to these metaphysical beliefs about the nature of the Universe as the source of the normative order. However, to be considered in the global transcultural normative discourse as potentially contributing to a consensually adopted global normative framework, these traditional Chinese normative beliefs would need to be detached from their metaphysical basis. One way to achieve such a result is exemplified by Xunzi and Hobbes—that is, by applying consequentialist logic and providing for the already acknowledged social norms an alternative justification, pointing to agathologically beneficial outcomes for the entire population under consideration. But here we are again back to the need for transcultural communication and metaphysically neutral, agathological verification of the proposed norms.

Space constraints do not allow for developing here at any length an alternative explanatory hypothesis put forward in *Spheres of Solidarity*, according to which instead of metaphysics being a guide to morals—to use Iris Murdoch's phrase—agathology often serves as a guide to metaphysics, in that prior agathological commitments may generate metaphysical beliefs as when, to give a straightforward example, one's agathologically motivated belief in the desirability of supernatural providence generates a metaphysical belief in the existence of a providential God. Similarly, it might be argued that the traditional Chinese normative intuitions have given rise to cosmological beliefs about

reality being so ordered as to make sense of these normative intuitions rather than the other way around.

However, the inclusion of such metaphysically grounded traditional normative beliefs as equal participants in the global normative discourse is possible without challenging their epistemic status quo, in a manner hinted at above. There exists an alternative way of relating these two levels of normative thinking—local and global—without reducing one to the other, namely by using the metaphor of bilinguality or multilinguality with typically only one language being one’s local or mother tongue with which one was brought up and is intimately familiar, even when one is also proficient in other languages. In such a scenario, a proficient user of more than one language is capable of efficient communication in more than one language, even though in different languages different conceptualizations of various aspects of reality, including social reality, “are caught in grammar” (Nisbett 2003), so that a proficient user of more than one language effectively functions in more than one conceptual framework, grasping the same reality in more than one way. The metaphor of bilinguality or multilinguality can be extended to the use of “normative languages” as systems of normative concepts shared by participants of a given local normative tradition in which children are raised and adults typically function without subjecting them to rational scrutiny.

In light of the above, the requirement of legitimation of global norms in the context of global normative discourse presupposes the creation of a transcultural lingua franca—i.e., a *conceptual* lingua franca (communicable in more than one natural language) which would function as a “second” normative language to all or those persons who would be involved in the process of legitimizing the globally shared norms underlying the exercise of global sovereignty.

Formation of normative lingua franca presupposes identification of the already existing candidates for “transcultural concepts” (solidarity is one such candidate) or invention of new transcultural concepts (like agathocracy). A robust global normative discourse will require a broad range of transcultural concepts. Here, I can limit myself only to indicating, by way of example, in what way “solidarity” or “agathological solidarity”—i.e., solidarity in pursuit of the good of all—is a suitable candidate for a transcultural concept. First, the Chinese phrase *tuán jié* (团结) captures a range of meanings that are associated with the term “solidarity” as used in numerous European languages, drawn from the original Latin *obligatio in solido*, signifying a joint obligation of the members of a collective bound by the relation of mutual responsibility for their agathological security (as paradigmatically in the case of a young man in ancient Rome taking a loan to start a family). *Tuán jié* refers to mutual support within a group, safeguarding the common interests of the members of a group, unity of heart and mind in action aimed at a common good or interest, voluntary/unforced cooperation, working in concert, especially in times of difficulty encountered by the members of the group, friendly attitude to the members of the group, as well as the desire to be in harmony with other members of the group. As such, *tuán jié*, like “solidarity,” refers both to the inner attitude or even virtue of character developed habitually over time, and also to the type of relationship characterizing a group. The richness and universality of human concerns captured by the terms *tuán jié* and “solidarity” make it unlikely that transcultural communication would be subject to significant misunderstandings that could prevent normative transcultural deliberation aimed at a genuine and unforced global normative consensus. However, the above example calls also for the employment, in the context of transcultural lingua franca, of an idea of “conceptual clusters” (somewhat akin to the Wittgensteinian concept of semantic family resemblance), because given the cultural genealogy of all languages and conceptual frameworks, there will rarely be a

reason to expect a perfect semantic match between two singular concepts employed in two different languages (say, *tuán jié* and “solidarity”). Indeed, the Latin term *solidum* clearly captures an additional shade of meaning, namely solidarity providing a solid ground for one’s agathological security, and this particular meaning does not have to be implied in *tuán jié*, and vice versa. What will be sufficient for transcultural lingua franca to perform its discursive function is that there will be a significant semantic overlap between two conceptual clusters, rather than between two singular concepts. A transcultural lingua franca with transcultural conceptual clusters should be capable of making successful transcultural communication and global normative deliberation possible.

The possibility of transcultural communication and deliberation, analogized by reference to the phenomenon of bilinguality or multilinguality, creates a semantic space for someone thinking about the Chinese or any other local normative tradition along the lines of Chen Lai, to perceive one’s normative mother tongue as drawing validity from one’s metaphysical beliefs, while at the same time engaging with other participants of the global normative discourse by presenting the norms from one’s own tradition and considering the norms from other normative traditions as detached from any metaphysical, cultural, or historical justification, but considering them solely on their agathological merits—i.e., their potential efficacy to bring about human good and prevent evil.

Such a two-tier approach might also fruitfully be applied to the search for a normative consensus regarding the principles of global justice. Given the irreducibility of global agathological pluralism, it may well be the case that an effort to arrive at one set of global principles of justice sufficiently detailed to be meaningful in practice may be futile. Therefore, centering global political discourse on the thinner and more fundamental transcultural concept of “agathological solidarity,” implying the “agathological recognition” of every person, may be a necessary and sufficient condition for the transcultural legitimation of global sovereignty. The resulting two-layer picture of global normative discourse presupposes a conceptual division of labor between global justice (encompassing the globally pluralistic realms of rights and obligations, enforced by legal means only within the societies that consensually accept the relevant principles of justice) and global solidarity (defining the globally shared and globally enforced ethical redlines or globally obligatory limits of permissible agathological pluralism).

Such a flexible conceptual framework for thinking about post-hegemonic global order can be shown to be compatible with the recent Chinese proposals for a new world order. An imposition of the least favorable interpretation on these proposals may be rationally defensible but serving as masters of suspicion is not the primary obligation of normative philosophers who prefer to speculate on what might be the most desirable way to conceive of a world order for the Global Age, considering in an impartial manner all plausible suggestions, wherever they come from.

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