

Anthropological and Ethical Bases of Global Solidarity

Dr. Cecilio Magsino

University of Asia and the Pacific, Pasig City, Philippines
Lecturer

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Global Solidarity can be understood as unity among all men such that they help each other to achieve their full development as individuals and as nations. This solidarity among all men has foundations in common aspirations and goal, which in turn are based on values or realities all men esteem as worth pursuing. When men pursue the realization of these values, their action involves thought and free decisions. They act ethically and morally. All men share in a common ethical and moral experience which give evidence for the existence of the natural law. It is suggested that this common ethical experience can be at the root of Global Solidarity. We then explore how this common ethical experience is grounded on human nature, concretely on reason which is an essential part of human nature. We go from the experience of practical goods and then move to how these practical goods become moral goods. We then explore concrete goods or values that are universal or common to all men, such as the good of life, friendship, love, justice, freedom and faith. The anthropological and ethical bases of each of these values are examined. As a result, it can be understood that these values are very possible points of dialogue and solidarity among all men.

Keywords: Natural Law, Values, Reason, Human Nature

The Proposal

Simply defined, global solidarity is the unity of the different nations or peoples of the world that is based on common interests, goals and standards. Solidarity is practiced when peoples help each other to develop and grow; or when peoples help each other in times of crises or emergency.⁶³

Acts of solidarity have their basis in altruism. And altruism arises from seeing the other as another self, such that one wishes the good for the other as one wishes the good for oneself.⁶⁴

Solidarity is based on common ethical values.

There can be an agreement among men about ethical values only if they are converted to the truth about man and what is good for him.⁶⁵

⁶³ Definition of solidarity according to Merriam-Webster Dictionary: unity (as of a group or class) that produces or is based on community of interests, objectives, and standards. Cf. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/solidarity> (Accessed 4/5/2022).

⁶⁴ Cf. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Altruism (8/31/2020). <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/altruism/> (Accessed 4/5/2022).

⁶⁵ Cf. International Theological Commission, In Search of a Universal Ethic: A New Look at the Natural Law (2009), no. 4. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20090520_legge-naturale_en.html. (Accessed 4/5/2022).

An effort to reach agreement about these values is the UN Declaration of Human Rights (1948).⁶⁶

There have been proposals to arrive at a global ethics whose content is drawn from dialogue and consensus among all peoples. Much as this is a praiseworthy effort, a possible result from this could be to base ethical values on opinions and consensus of peoples, thus relativizing them.

The proposal I am making is for all men to discover the existence and meaning of the natural moral law. It is a kind of reasoning, a moral reasoning, that is inherent in all men because reason is part of human nature. And it is a reasoning that has bases in human nature, a nature that is shared by all men⁶⁷.

The Natural Law

This is the current prevalent view about law: what is acceptable is what is legislated by the law maker who has come up with the law either by his own view or the will of a lobby group or the consensus of the majority. Some people claim that what is ethically acceptable to all is the value that has been agreed upon by at least the majority after engaging in a sincere and open dialogue. This is the viewpoint of legal positivism.⁶⁸

But we know by experience that the human laws do not have the final word in the realm of law and life in a society. If a human law contravenes an inalienable right or good, people will rebel against it. They might even fight to have it repealed or even depose the political leader.

Instead of basing ethical values on points of view, opinions, cultural elements, and dialogue, I propose objective givens (data) found in every man and woman that can serve as the bases for these values. These values in turn will be the bases of precepts (imperative statements) that are also found in all men, in their reason and conscience. This law is called the natural law. I suggest that the natural law be considered a foundation for Global Solidarity.

Natural Law is not the same as the Laws of Nature. The Laws of Nature have something in common with the Natural Law: both have their origin in the Creative Act of God who made both and imbedded them in Nature, in all things. However, there is a big difference. The Laws of Nature govern irrational creatures who follow this law inexorably. All massive bodies follow the law of gravitation, and they cannot defy it or go against it. But the Natural Law governs rational creatures who follow it knowingly and freely. And because freedom is not perfect, the rational creature can contravene the Natural Law, with inevitable consequences.

⁶⁶ Cf. UN Declaration of Human Rights. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>. (Accessed 4/6/2022).

⁶⁷ When I use the word “men” I am using it in the classical and traditional usage which is inherently inclusive. It includes women, everyone.

⁶⁸ Cf. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Legal Positivism (12/17/2019). <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/legal-positivism/> (Accessed 4/5/2022)

The Natural Law is also not the same as a human law.⁶⁹ The human law is, as the name implies, man-made and it is imposed on a man from the outside. The Natural Law is God-given, and the Creator imbedded it in human nature itself, much like the Creator imbedded the law of gravity in massive bodies.

The Natural Law is not the same as the customs of a people.⁷⁰ Peoples of different times and places have differing customs, and these define the way they live certain institutions, like for example, marriage. Though marriage is a universal phenomenon found in all cultures, each people have different customs about it. Customs seem to have arisen “naturally” in a people. But they do not constitute the Natural Law.

We can say that the Natural Law is something that exists even before both customs and human laws, because it resides in every human being as a part of human nature. And then, from human nature arise the actions and operations of the human being like the formulation and constitution of customs and human laws.

Common Values

There are some common values found in all peoples and cultures: that the good is opposed to evil; that good is what is sought after; that good should be done, that evil must be avoided; that truth is preferred over falsehood; that ignorance of the truth is a disadvantage; that peace and order in society is much desired; that people should be respected because they have dignity; that life is sacred and should not be taken away arbitrarily; that one’s freedom be respected; that vices do harm to oneself and to society; that beauty is attractive and desirable; that we must avoid suffering; and so forth.

Solidarity is the unity among different persons and peoples. What unites them are goals, values, ambitions, projects, culture, etc. that they share.

Let’s begin with the value we call “the good.” All men by nature seek what is good. Aristotle began his *Nicomachean Ethics* by writing, “Every skill and every inquiry, and similarly every action and rational choice is thought to aim at some good; and so good has been aptly described as that at which everything aims.”⁷¹

We all want what is good. This natural inclination binds all men and we agree to the proposition “good is that at which everything aims.” In the final analysis, this seeking the good is the basis for solidarity among men.

What are the anthropological bases of this seeking the good?

⁶⁹ For a discussion on human laws and the natural law, see J. Budziszewski, *Written on the Heart: The Case for Natural Law*. (1997) Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic. Chapter 5.

⁷⁰ On customs, see J. Budziszewski (1997), pp. 47-48.

⁷¹ *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk I, Ch. 1, 1094a.

Practical Goods and Reason

The “good” is something that is known by reason. Something must first be known by reason and then it must be discerned as something “good.” Only then will the acting person move to obtain that good.

The reason we speak of here is known as the practical reason as contrasted to speculative reason.⁷² Reason or the intellect is the power man has to grasp the truth. We use our speculative reason to know things about science, history, mathematics and so forth. We can call them “theoretical” truths. With this reason we get to know reality as it is. The word speculative comes from the Latin *speculum* which means mirror. Speculative reason is the power we possess to mirror or reflect reality to us and so we know the truth.

But we have another type of knowledge. We know things such as “I must not touch the flame because it will burn me.” “I must wear a life jacket so that I will not drown.” “I must be careful so that I will not fall down the cliff.” We notice here that these statements have to do with our actions, and they involve the verb “must.” They also involve things that we seek (protect life or limb) or that we avoid (getting burned, drowning, or falling down the cliff).

This reason is called the practical reason. It is the reasoning involved when we act and when we decide to choose. It makes statements that involve the verb “must” or “ought.” The truths that practical reason grasps are truths that are involved in our actions.

What is decisive for the person to act and seek or choose to do something is for the practical reason to discern that the something is good and so it is seekable. Practical reason makes the judgment, “This is good.” How do we discern the good?

We all have an awareness of ourselves, who we are, our identity and our needs. We relate very quickly our natural inclinations to ourselves and our needs. We eat when we feel hungry. We drink when we are thirsty. And so, we see food and drink as “practical” goods. These goods are “right” for us. Now, food and water are meant to preserve our life. We spontaneously know that life is worth preserving. Life is a great value. No other value or thing that we deem worthwhile will have any worth or meaning if we were dead.

Moral Goods

Practical goods become “moral” goods when they are related to the perfection of the human person.⁷³ Food is a practical good. It becomes moral if it perfects the person, for example, if it is healthy food and it is ingested with temperance. It becomes immoral if it is poisonous or too much of it is ingested and the person becomes sick. The human person is a being in progress. He is not a finished product upon coming into this world. He needs to develop to reach

⁷² For the difference between the speculative reason and the practical reason see Rhonheimer (2000), p. 25.

⁷³ On practical and moral goods, see Rhonheimer, M. *The Perspective of Morality*. (2011). Washington, DC: Catholic University Press. Chap. III.

his full measure both physically and psychologically. In his practical actions he discerns those acts that contribute to his development and those that redound to his detriment. The things and acts we see as developing us and that advance our full potential, we call good. The things we see as detrimental we call evil or bad.⁷⁴

The values of good and evil are universal values. All men have these notions as part of their natural practical reasoning processes. When these values are not recognized by someone, everyone else will conclude that the person is insane, or that he is out of his right mind.

Once we recognize true or moral goods, our practical reason makes this judgment: “the good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided.” This Thomas Aquinas says is the first principle of the natural law.⁷⁵

The grasping or understanding of this first principle of practical reason, which is also the first principle of the natural law, is immediate, spontaneous, and natural. It is not arrived at by a process of reasoning like what we do in a syllogism. Rather, it is the first premise for any practical syllogism. It is the starting point of practical reasoning.⁷⁶

We also have a first principle of theoretical reasoning which is the principle of non-contradiction. One formulation of this principle is this: a proposition cannot be true and false at the same time and in the same sense. Another formulation is this: Something cannot be and not be at the same time and in the same way. As soon as we grasp the meaning of “to be” we spontaneously realize it is not the same as “not to be.” All our statements and propositions are based on this principle. When we assert something, we at the same time are not asserting its contradiction. Otherwise, all assertions will not make sense.

The First Principle of Practical Reason

In the level of practical reasoning, we start with the first principle of practical reasoning mentioned above. We must note that the principle is stated in the form of a proposition, not a command. We typically hear the statement, “Do good and avoid evil.” This statement is in the form of a command or a precept. There is a difference between a proposition and a command in the realm of practical reasoning. The statement, “The good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided” is in the propositional form “A is B.”⁷⁷ The statement, “You shall not kill” is in the form “S ought not P.” This latter statement is better understood as the conclusion of a practical syllogism.⁷⁸ It can go like this: “Life is a great good for a person. Killing is to take

⁷⁴ Cf. Rhonheimer (2011). Chap. III, 3.

⁷⁵ Cf. S. Th., I-II, q.94, a.2, in co.

⁷⁶ On the underivability of the first principle of practical reason, cf. Rhonheimer (2000), p. 31.

⁷⁷ On the first principle of the natural law stated as a proposition cf. Grisez, Germain. The Way of the Lord Jesus. Chap. 7, Question C. What is the first principle of practical reasoning? <http://www.twotlj.org/G-1-7-C.html#Note20>. (Accessed 4/5/2022).

⁷⁸ For a discussion of the practical syllogism cf. Schiller, F. Aristotle and the Practical Syllogism. (1917). In The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods, Vol. 14, No. 24, pp. 645-653

away the life of a person. It is to deprive a person of a great good. To deprive a person of a good is an evil. Since evil is to be avoided, then we must not kill.”

The “ought” statements of practical reasoning (and also the “ought not” statements) are in effect conclusions of syllogisms (which we usually do not do explicitly). A sign that “ought” statements are conclusions of a discursive reasoning process is this: we can always ask the question, “Why?” You must tell the truth. Why? You should not steal. Why? Then, we analyze and go through the steps of our reasoning process.

If the first principle of practical reasoning were stated in the ought form, “Good should be done and evil should be avoided” then we can ask “why?” And the only way to stop the regress ad infinitum is to say because good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided.

We also realize we are different from the animals. We have the natural feeling of superiority over them because unlike them we are intelligent and free. And we can dominate them. We also know we are superior to inanimate natural things. But with our fellow men we feel ourselves as equals. We naturally have the awareness of our superiority over unintelligent beings and our equal status with intelligent beings. From these points of awareness arises the sense of dignity we have. Dignity is the quality of persons whereby they have a status superior to other beings that are unintelligent, and this quality requires that others who are our equals recognize us and our status and that we be respected.

When it comes to our relations with our equals, we have the natural inclination to require them to treat us as we deserve to be treated.

Friendship

We enter a discussion of Friendship and Justice. Aristotle thought that the natural inclination of man towards man is friendship.

From Aristotle, we read:

“After what we have said, a discussion of friendship would naturally follow, since it is an excellence or implies excellence, and is besides most necessary with a view to living. For without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods; even rich men and those in possession of office and of dominating power are thought to need friends most of all; for what is the use of such prosperity without the opportunity of beneficence, which is exercised chiefly and in its most laudable form towards friends? Or how can prosperity be guarded and preserved without friends?”⁷⁹

Friendship is a great value. It is at the base of any act or sentiment of solidarity. It can exist between persons. It can and should exist also between nations.

More from Aristotle:

⁷⁹ EN, VIII, 1, 1155a3-6. Aristotle translated by Ross, W.D. (1912) Oxford: Clarendon Press.

“We may see even in our travels how near and dear every man is to every other. Friendship seems too to hold states together, and lawgivers to care more for it than for justice; for unanimity seems to be something like friendship, and this they aim at most of all, and expel faction as their worst enemy; and when men are friends they have no need of justice, while when they are just they need friendship as well, and the truest form of justice is thought to be a friendly quality.”⁸⁰

Friendship is a kind of love. Here we see again a universal value and that is love. All men know what it is. The difference between male and female puts in each one a natural attraction which leads to love and to marriage, which is another universal value.

Friendship is the love for the other person which entails the wish or desire for the good of the other and the friendship is true and established if it is reciprocated.⁸¹ Friendship can exist only when both persons have good will. It cannot exist between two wicked persons.⁸² Some people have thought that friendships can exist in a band of thieves. If friendship means wishing the good for the others, it will be very difficult for it to exist in a group of persons who are out to seek their own good over the others. I once saw a movie where a group of highly skilled and motivated professionals were out to make a heist of a bank. Each member of the team had a specific job and skill necessary to succeed on the great theft. They agreed to divide the spoils equally among them. But in the end, each one had a plan to eliminate the others so that he can get everything. It did not end well.

Friendship must be sought for its own sake if it is to remain as friendship. It is “spoiled” by any form of self-interest or self-seeking. It ceases to exist when selfishness enters the picture, as we saw in the example of the band of thieves. Friendship is its own reward. When a friend seeks the good of the other and the other sees the good that he has received from his friend, this one in turn will be grateful and feel obliged to help when his friend is in need. The friend will receive more rewards other than the friendship itself.

Justice

We enter a discussion of Justice. The perspective of justice I present here will be different from the usual understanding of this virtue. We typically understand justice from the ego-centric point of view. In this sense justice means I have my rights and you must give them to me.

The justice I will present here is the view of Thomas Aquinas. He wrote, “Justice is a habit whereby a man renders to each one his due by a constant and perpetual will.”⁸³ The outlook of this definition is not ego-centered but other-centered. Instead of demanding my

⁸⁰ EN, VIII, 1, 1155a25-28.

⁸¹ “To a friend we say we ought to wish what is good for his sake.” (EN, VIII, 2, 1156a1)

⁸² Cf. EN, VIII, 1, 1156a4.

⁸³ S.Th., II-II, q. 58, a. 1, co.

rights and that they be given to me, I am concerned about giving to each one what it due to him. By saying that this should be done “by a constant and perpetual will” Aquinas means that this disposition of mind and will is a virtue. It is a good habit.

We have seen that each person sees some things around him as practical goods that he needs to have and use to preserve his life and his dignity. He then sees these as things he has a right to. These are his rights. These are rights that arise from the fact that we are human beings who have human dignity. We have mentioned a few examples: to preserve one’s life, to be respected, to be treated humanely. Other examples are to have things and to use them to preserve life, to be given freedom, to receive help and friendship.

We see that rights are related to goods, to true goods. True goods are those that are discerned with right reason.⁸⁴ When we use the term “reason” we typically think of the reasoning process that goes through steps like the syllogism. “A is greater than B. B is greater than C. Therefore, A is greater than C.” Indeed, practical reason goes through implicit syllogisms to arrive at decisions or propositions that express things that must be done. “It is good to eat healthy food. I must eat healthy food. This sandwich is health food. I must eat this sandwich.”

The same reason we have that goes through steps to reach conclusions is the same reason we use to grasp and know the things around us. This is what Aristotle called *nous* (usually translated as intellect).⁸⁵ The understanding of the true human goods or values are not the result of a syllogism or a reasoning process. They are rather the principles or premises of our practical syllogisms. These are spontaneous things that we know to be good and right. We see them as good as soon as we have experience of them. We have mentioned some of these goods and values: life, friendship, love, justice.

Right reason is the reason we use to know the virtues and acts that correspond to them. For example, by this reason we understand that life is a good and it is a great good and the first good. It is also by this reason that we also say that we have a right to life and that it is also a great good to preserve it. By reason we will also know that it is not good to take away the life of another person (homicide) or to take away one’s own life (suicide).

Freedom

When we pursue the goods that we want to achieve, we want the others to allow us to do so and not hinder us or stop us. We see the ability to pursue our goals as a good and a value that needs to be safeguarded. We usually call this condition “freedom.”

⁸⁴ For a discussion on right reason cf. Rist, J.M. An Early Dispute about Right Reason. (1983). In *The Monist*, Vol. 66, No. 1, pp. 39-48. Also, Gomez-Lobo, Alfonso. Aristotle’s Right Reason (1995). <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/APEIRON.1995.28.4.15/html> (Accessed 4/6/2022)

⁸⁵ On Aristotle’s idea of *nous* cf. Bowler, Michael. Thinking, Thought and *Nous* in Aristotle’s *De Anima*. (2000) chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/viewer.html?pdfurl=https%3A%2F%2Fforb.binghamton.edu%2Fcgi%2Fviewcontent.cgi%3Farticle%3D1319%26context%3Dsagp&clen=1093840&pdfilename=Thinking%20Thought%20and%20Nous%20in%20Aristotles%20De%20Anima.pdf. (Accessed 4/6/2022).

Freedom is that power we have as persons because we are intelligent. Our intelligence makes us capable of relating our decisions and actions to our goals and to the attainment of them. When we cannot attain some goal because we are hindered internally (my right arm is paralyzed, and I cannot hold my pencil to write) or externally (I'm in prison and I cannot move about) then we feel frustrated. We see freedom as a great good and people are even willing to give their lives so that they, their family, or their country will be free!

Freedom is a very tricky business because its true nature does not consist in just the ability to attain any goal. The freedom we are talking about here is the power to reach our true goods, those things that will truly contribute to our personal development and fulfilment. Freedom understood as the ability to attain any goal regardless of whether it is truly good or not, is licentiousness. And so, we understand freedom to be essentially linked to the truth about man and his true goods.

The freedom to attain our legitimate goals is personal freedom. But there are also other kinds of freedom related to the different spheres of action of men. There is freedom of speech, academic freedom, freedom to choose one's spouse or profession, religious freedom, press freedom, freedom of association, and freedom from slavery to name a few and the more common ones. Nations usually will clamor for the freedom to govern themselves.

A very clear point for Global Solidarity is to give, support, and respect the freedom of each person, family, community, and nation. At present many nations pride themselves in having erased slavery from their societies. Slavery was an institution that existed since ancient times and modern sensibility has worked to remove it. However, there are presently new forms of "slavery." There are millions of people who cannot do what they want because they are tied, enslaved by addictions or by structures of evil. There are current addictions to social media, to online pornography, to alcohol, to online or video games and to prohibited drugs. These addictions deprive people of true freedom.

There are also structures of evil, which St. John Paul II called "structures of sin." He wrote in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (36): "It is important to note therefore that a world which is divided into blocs, sustained by rigid ideologies, and in which instead of interdependence and solidarity different forms of imperialism hold sway, can only be a world subject to structures of sin. The sum of the negative factors working against a true awareness of the universal common good, and the need to further it, gives the impression of creating, in persons and institutions, an obstacle which is difficult to overcome. If the present situation can be attributed to difficulties of various kinds, it is not out of place to speak of 'structures of sin,' which, (...) are rooted in personal sin, and thus always linked to the concrete acts of individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them, and make them difficult to remove. And thus, they grow stronger, spread, and become the source of other sins, and so influence people's behavior."⁸⁶

⁸⁶ https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html. (Accessed 4/5/2022).

These structures not only influence people's behavior. They influence them for the worse so that the good they want to do, they are unable to do. Structures of sin deprive people of their true freedom.

Because of global solidarity, the evil that some people do affect others and can even affect all men. We must promote true global solidarity in the good sense. This is obtained by each one working for the common good in his own sphere and environment.

Faith

We finally will speak of a value that is dear to all men. We have somehow mentioned it when we spoke of freedom. We mentioned a kind of freedom which is freedom of religion or freedom of belief. It is the freedom to practice and obtain a great value. I will call this value faith. It is belief in God and the desire to commune with him.

Since ancient times men have been drawn to wonder at observing the vastness and the harmony of nature and the universe. Even by reason alone philosophers have reached the conclusion that the existence of the universe requires the existence of a Creator who alone can give existence and consistency to the entire universe. Also, through natural reason we can arrive at knowing God to be all-powerful, all-knowing, and provident. He takes care of the universe and since we form part of the universe, we know he also takes care of men.

Anthropology has taught us how men of all times and places have religion, that is the belief in and worship of God. Religion then is a universal phenomenon.⁸⁷ And this belief or faith is regarded as something very valuable because it provides man with answers to the essential questions about human life: Where did I come from? Where am I headed? Who created me? What is the meaning of life? What is the meaning of the world?

Faith and Religion are very dear values to men such that they would defend their freedom to practice the faith and they would even give their lives for it. Because Faith and Religion are common to all men, it can be a basis for Global Solidarity provided that the followers of the different faiths practice tolerance which is also a value worth practicing. It is unfortunate that in the past (and even up to the present) wars have been fought because of intolerance about religious beliefs.

Concluding Remarks

In this paper, I have tried to find some bases for Global Solidarity in those values that are common to all men. I have mentioned values such as: the good, moral good, friendship, justice, freedom, human dignity, natural rights, and religion. Even with just the two values of friendship and justice, if they were practiced by everyone, the whole world can live in peace and harmony.

⁸⁷ On the universality of religion cf. Winzeler, Robert. (2012) *Anthropology and Religion*. Lanham, Maryland: Altamira Press. pp.3-4.

I tried to explore here the anthropological bases of these values because I believe that since these values have their grounding in a common human nature that is endowed with reason and free will, then it becomes very possible for an open and sincere dialogue among all men which in turn can contribute to their solidarity.

Looking at the whole world, we realize that men have different cultures, traditions, histories, languages, colors of skin, beliefs, and religions. But provided that every man has a human nature with its set of common properties like reason, free will, and natural human inclinations, we can agree about what is good and true and from there move on to friendship and justice. Global solidarity is possible.

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