

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT BY THE COMMITTEE FOR RELATIONS WITH DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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The title of the VII Session of the Academy refers to the topic which rarely features in the debate on globalization – namely the ethical dimension of this phenomenon. In deliberately choosing this particular wording, we give testimony to the Academy's specific task – to move the discussion of globalization beyond the realm of concepts as we face up to the huge gap between the sophistication of the dominant economic model called globalization and the traditional thinking based on the nation state.

By focussing on the ethical assessment of globalization, we aim at an investigation of the morality by which human conduct, that of the principal actors of the drama called globalization, is guided and appraised. In doing this we are reminded of an ethical assessment that Hannah Arendt made of that epoch marking event which she considered in *On Revolution* where she wrote that 'the men of the eighteenth century did not know that there exists goodness beyond virtue and evil beyond vice'. For our purpose the investigation will focus on the largest segment of the human family which we call 'the developing countries'. Unashamedly we shall be concerned with the impact of globalization on the developing countries assessed as being good or evil.

The underlying assumption of this enquiry with its dominant moral dimension is the Academy's strongly held belief in a common humanity.¹ The people of the developing countries – at one time unjustly referred to as the 'Third World' – share a common humanity with the rest of the human

¹ The concept of 'common humanity' is used extensively in the treatise on moral philosophy by Raimond Gaita, *A Common Humanity: Thinking about Love and Truth and Justice*, Text Publishing Melbourne, 1999.

family. And in putting forward this proposition we argue that if 'human being' meant only *homo sapiens* then the term could play no moral role. On the contrary we believe that the good Samaritan acted the way he did because he saw the humanity of the man on the roadside. More than that, the good Samaritan perceived the commonality between himself and the man in the ditch because he and the man were capable of an inner life.

Unless we are lucid about the reality of our inner lives, we shall not comprehend fully the depth of our common humanity and a universal ethic based on a sense of the commonness of human experience. Its essence, as Herbert Schambeck argues in his paper on the ontological foundation of the law safeguarding human dignity, is the spiritual basis of fundamental human rights. The recognition of this truth might help the Academy in its task of assessing the good and evil of globalization.