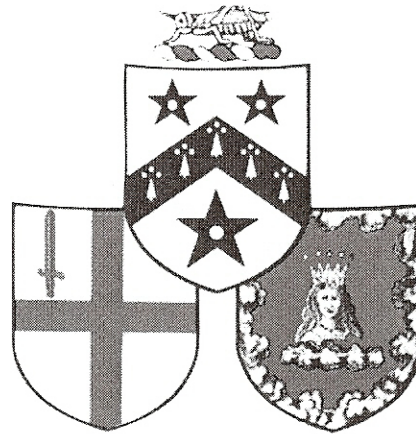


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Gresham Special Lecture

***A GLOBAL ETHIC
A CHALLENGE FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM***

delivered by

***Professor Hans Küng
President of the Global Ethic Foundation, Tübingen***

at St. Paul's Cathedral

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A Global Ethic – a Challenge for the New Millennium

Hans Küng

I. We need a realistic Global Vision

I come here as a foreigner, but not as a stranger. Having been in this country already as a student more than fifty years ago, I came back as a young professor of theology forty years ago for the publication of my first book in English, *The Council, Reform and Reunion*, just before the opening of the Second Vatican Council.

And of course, I am still deeply grateful for having been invited to St. Paul's Cathedral twenty years ago to speak on my then recent book *Does God Exist?*, just after the most difficult times of my life connected with the withdrawal of the ecclesiastical teaching permission. But retrospectively those dark days proved to be days of grace: Had I not been liberated from faculty meetings, examinations, and a lot of academic pomp and circumstances, I would not have had time to open my view up to new horizons to such an extent. My university helped me to keep my chair, and my Institute of Ecumenics became an autonomous university institution independent from the Faculty of Catholic theology. In the meantime I had learnt to drive my car in catholic theology also without a Roman licence, and my lectures were often attended by nearly a thousand people until I became an emeritus in 1996 and President of the Global Ethic Foundation.

Here I am now in St. Paul's again in the year 2000. Yes, it was "a long long way" – not to Tipperary, but to a Global Ethic, "and my soul is (still) marching on". And I can assure all those who might like to ask these kind of questions: Yes, I am still not only a professor of ecumenics, but also a truly Catholic theologian and a Catholic priest in good standing, allowed to preach and say mass, but considered dangerous for students of Catholic theology. Thus I survived, despite all the troubles and travels, problems and worries, and kept my health, my humour, my spirit, and, thank God, my faith. Speaking now on a Global Ethic I do not deny anything I wrote in my earlier works:

- on justification of the sinner and the foundation of Christian existence in the fifties,
- on the church, the council, ecumenism and infallibility in the sixties,
- on being a Christian, the existence of God and eternal life in the seventies,
- on world religions and world literature in the eighties,
- arriving finally at a Global Ethic in the nineties.

Throughout these five decades I tried to keep the Christian centre of my theology and at the same time to respond to the challenges of our time, **therefore constantly expanding my vision**: from churches to religions and eventually to nations.

Let me therefore speak of my vision of a better future, a vision which still sustains me today and can perhaps sustain others as well. In the face of the crisis of social orientation at the beginning of this millennium **we need a basic orientation**. Indeed in this information age we do not simply need more information; we are already now overflowed by the daily torrent of media information. What we need is orientation, basic orientation to enable us to put these innumerable pieces of information in order: For that we need a realistic vision or a view of the whole which gives us the outlines of a (relatively) better world, of a more peaceful, just and humane world.

Granted, in a global perspective we are facing today **unprecedented problems**. But we should not complain as if they were insuperable obstacles on the way towards the future. There are enough prophets of doom who barricade the way to the future. We should rather take the problems seriously as a great challenge, in particular for the younger generation which is not so burdened as the generations of the First World War, of the Nazi and Stalinist regimes, the Second World War or the post-war period.

It often happened that what seemed impossible in the short term became possible in the long term through patience and persistence. Sometimes when the time is ripe – as we witnessed in the case of John XXIII and again thirty years later with Gorbachev – a fundamental change is possible so to speak overnight.

The vision I would like to draw should of course not simply be proclaimed but backed up with arguments; this I have done in many books, thick and thin ones. Let me therefore go straightforward with my view of the whole, in the light of which it will be easier to decide on strategies and tactics, a realistic vision of hope, unfolded in three concentric circles.

The First Circle: The Christian Churches

As far as the **Christian churches** are concerned: I am fully aware of the fact that also in Britain organised religion has been declining since the 1950s. Celebrating the beginning of the third millennium since the birth of Christ, a poll conducted by the Opinion Research Business in December 1999 shows that only a minority (48%) claims to adhere to a particular religion: a rapid decline of the membership of the Church of England from 40% in 1990 to 27% today; a stagnating number of Catholics (9%), and halved in numbers also Baptists, Methodists and other Nonconformists, representing now only 3% of the national population. In times of such a dramatic decline in Church membership Rome finds it still important to quarrel with the Anglican Church on controversial issues of the 16th or the 19th century. Surprisingly, a common commission recently found an Anglican interpretation and justification of the Roman doctrine of infallibility granting also to the Anglican bishops some sort of infallibility – of course not with regard to the Anglican orders, the validity of which is still infallibly denied by Rome.

Despite the unrealistic narrow-mindedness of many church representatives in Rome and elsewhere, who are so far away from the realities of life, and the academic pedantry of many theologians, I am still hopeful about the renewal of the Christian churches, and about their increasing mutual understanding, reconciliation, and yes, their ultimate unity. To achieve this we do not need a uniform organization in the upper floors of the different church towers. What we do need is the abolition of all excommunications down in the church nave, so that Christians can freely participate in each other's worship, preaching and teaching of religion.

I believe that even within our life-time – God willing – under a new Pope a new ecumenical council may be called. Then, as it began with John XXIII and Vatican II, long overdue reforms will be carried out with regard to family planning, celibacy, divorce, lay preaching, and the ordination of women ... A pope who would travel less and study more, could look at history without dogmatic prejudices, would take into account the result of modern research and would certainly be prepared to acknowledge the validity of Anglican orders. Taking seriously the three documents of the Anglican-Roman-Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) he will also see that not a jurisdictional primacy of domination, but only a pastoral primacy of service can help the Catholic church and Christianity today and overcome the division between Rome and Canterbury. Most Catholics, Protestants, and Anglicans want these reforms. The unification of Europe, now almost achieved by the peoples of Europe after so many wars, should surely also mean that the Christian churches, almost 500 years after the Reformation, could realize unity too!

But I find it much more depressing that, according to the same poll only a minority of Britons now believe in the tenets of Christianity. In my whole life as a theologian I fought for a concentration on the **Christian essentials**, based on the biblical message and interpreted according to the state of present day scholarship, not to be confused with some “fundamentals” of fundamentalists. The Christian essentials: faith in God, in Christ, in eternal life, of which the quoted poll tries to take the temperature.

- **Faith in God:** Two thirds of the British population (65%) still believe in God. But not even one third (28%) believes in a **personal** God.

Therefore: in the light of a great evolutionary cosmic vision we should make it unambiguously clear what “personal” does not mean and what could be its true meaning.

- **Faith in Christ:** The great majority of Britons keeps a positive view of Jesus. But less than half of the population (45%, compared with 71% forty years ago, according to a Gallup poll of 1957) believes that Jesus was the Son of God.

Therefore: in the light of the advanced Jewish-Christian and also Muslim-Christian dialogue we should be able to explain what “Son of God” cannot mean and what it could mean, even in a specific Jewish context.

- **Faith in eternal life:** Slightly more than half of the population (53%) still believes that there is life after death. But surprisingly, this figure remained unchanged over the last forty years (1957: 54%).

Therefore: in the light of our immensely deepened scientific insight into the empirical world, where beyond the big bang and beyond the subatomic particles the dimension of infinity opens up, we should again become receptive to the traces of transcendence we can find in the macrocosm and in the microcosm, in physics, in music, art and in human love and compassion.

It is indeed a positive result of this most recent poll that, despite the decline of Church membership, a quarter of the population (25%) still claim that they go to Church at least once a month, and nearly half of the population (48%) claim to attend religious services at least once a year. More than a quarter (27%) claim to be “religious”, exactly the same percentage claims to be “spiritual”. More than half of the population pretends therefore to be religious or spiritual. This leads us from the first circle of the Christian Churches to the second and wider circle of the world religions.

The Second Circle: the World Religions

After forty years of study and experience, I believe that I am aware of the weaknesses and dark sides of all religions. Yet, I still do not think that it is useful to propagate, in the style of Samuel Huntington, the clash of civilizations and cultures, simply because we no longer have the old East-West confrontation. Nor is it useful to present Islam as a force against which we must pit ourselves in a confrontational way:

- Huntington’s well known and world wide disputed “clash theory” is **too simplistic**: It fails to notice that antagonisms within one religion or civilization in many cases tend to be stronger than those between religions. Tensions within Islam are often bigger than tensions between Islam and the West. The most recent wars were fought between rivals belonging to the same civilization: Iran-Iraq, Somalia, Rwanda, Ireland, Ethiopia-Eritrea.
- The “clash theory” promotes a **thinking in blocks**: It delimits the seven or eight “civilizations” from each other as if they were monoliths and did not in most situations overlap, interact and even intermingle, as it is the case in British, continental European and North American cities. Islam is erroneously taken as a block, anti-western, a substitute-enemy.
- This “clash theory” takes no **notice of the commonalities**: Everywhere it emphasizes the antagonisms of cultures without even thinking of basic commonalities, let alone commonalities e.g. between Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

I therefore **disagree** with Huntington’s **main conclusion of an unavoidable “clash of civilizations or religions”**. I strongly argue and passionately work for an **alternative**: a **dialogue** of civilizations on the basis of the **project of a “Global Ethic”** (*Projekt Weltethos*) for which I laid the foundation almost two decades ago (in the book *Christianity and the World Religions*, 1984) under the slogan “No world peace without religious peace”. This project pursues a strategy which aims at preventing a “clash of civilizations”.

I am of course also depressed by the fact that the world religions often do not function as the great midwives of a new world era as they could, but rather as the great hinderers and disturbers of world peace. Yet, despite all this, I have never abandoned the hope that **peace** between the religions is possible. It is the prerequisite for peace among the nations of the world. I do **not** mean the **unity** of the world religions. Unity among the Christian churches is possible on the basis of the common belief in Jesus Christ. But, as for example, the basis of Judaism is the Torah, and of Islam the Koran, each of the world religions has a very different basis; they cannot build a unity. The world would however be much improved if the world religions would live in peace together, in dialogue and solidarity with one another. The new constructive relationship between Christians and Jews can be exemplary for other religions. For **there will be no peace between the nations and civilizations without peace between the religions**.

Sure, we live in a world and a time in which peace is threatened in many countries by every possible kind of religious fundamentalism, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist or Hindu, a fundamentalism which is often less rooted in religion than in social misery, in reaction to Western secularization and in the need for a basic orientation in life.

My response to this challenge is: **There will be no peace between the religions without a dialogue between the religions!** Peace (shalom, salam, eirene, pax) is a central feature in the programme of most religions. Their first task in our age should be to make peace with one another. By every means, including those now offered by the media, in cases like former Yugoslavia priority should be given to implementing measures which create trust, specifically:

- clearing up misunderstandings,
- working on traumatic memories,
- dissolving hostile stereotypes,
- coming to terms with conflicts caused by guilt in societies and individuals,
- breaking down hatred and destructiveness,
- reflecting on what is held in common,
- offering positive models.

The Third Circle: The Nations

This leads to the **third** and widest of the circles: the **nations**. I have perceived with a critical eye the “Realpolitik” of the nations, ever since, as a ten-year-old boy I became an avid reader of the newspapers, terrified when the German army marched into Austria and we in Switzerland were terrified that our little country could be next. The war in Yugoslavia, heavily marked by religious loyalties, revealed to many the churches’ failure, as well as the weaknesses of politics and diplomacy. We witnessed a great deal of diplomacy, without any ethical will, and a politics of interests, beyond all morality. It has been world politics, devoid of a world ethos. Its consequences have been ever-repeated acts of injustice, new crises, new conflicts, no genuine, lasting peace until this very day. Yet there are still encouraging examples of the opposites of all this, as in Northern Ireland, where statesmen and stateswomen are motivated by a basic ethical position to work with persistence and tenacity, despite all opposition. They have planned with exactitude the politics of peace and they work energetically to implement it too.

I am therefore convinced:

- The **new world order cannot** be realized on the basis of “**Realpolitik**” *à la* Richelieu, Bismarck, Palmerston or Kissinger: a mere ethics of success, for which the political goal “hallows” all means, even immoral ones like lying, deceit, betrayal, political murder and war. Neither diplomacy nor the secret services, neither the army nor the police are above morality.
- But I am at the same time convinced that the new world order can **neither** be realized – this was the unjustified reproach to President Woodrow Wilson in Versailles – on the basis of “**Idealpolitik**”: a mere conviction ethics, which thinks all too little about the real balance of power, the possibilities of concrete implementation or possible negative consequences.
- The new world order can only be realized on the basis of an **ethic of responsibility** which presupposes a moral conviction, but realistically seeks the predictable consequences of a particular policy. The art of politics in the new paradigm consists in combining sharp political calculation with a well reflected ethical judgement. A good example in Versailles was John Maynard Keynes who protested and finally resigned as head of the British Treasury delegation.

The same dimension could be developed with regard to the **economic order**:

- **No ethic of conviction** based on idealistic views about economics: To make moral demands devoid of any economic reality a general principle, and not to take note of laws of economy, is not morality but moralism. Pursuing one’s own interests and seeking profit is legitimate if it does not violate higher goods.

- But neither a **realist ethic of the economy** devoid of moral conviction: To put forward economic views devoid of any ethical norms is not economics but economic reductionism, economism. In no way can the primacy which is due to the ethics be granted to success. Perception of one's own interests and any business activity must be ethically responsible, even if in the specific instance of the pressure of competition this may be asking too much.
- The only ethic that is of use for the new world economic order is a **responsible ethic of realist economists with idealist horizons**. We have to insist, first, on the primacy of politics over economy and, second, on the primacy of ethics over economy and politics. The responsible way of doing business in the new paradigm is convincingly to combine business strategies with ethical judgement: whether business dealings are compatible with the needs of the whole society, the environment and the future. We need a balance between a stable currency and a stable society, between open markets and social justice, between a policy of savings and structural reforms.

Is this perhaps the famous Third Way? But who invented this Third Way? I was quoted in *The Times* as an "early spokesperson for the Third Way". In fact already in 1990 in my book *Global Responsibility* I had pleaded in favour of **an ecological and social market economy beyond capitalism and socialism**.

Of course, I had not invented all this myself:

- In Britain already at the beginning of the 20th century there were the "ethical liberals" (T. H. Green, L. T. Hobhouse) who argued for an economic competition that presumes community and co-operation on an ethical base.
- In Germany after the Second World War there were the economists of the Freiburg school of "Ordo Liberalism" ("regulated liberalism" of W. Eucken, A. Rüstow, W. Röpke. In Geneva they had already in 1941 published a book on the Third Way with the title *Die Gesellschaftskrisis der Gegenwart*); they elaborated the theoretical basis for the "social market economy" (L. Erhard, father of the German economic "miracle", A. Müller-Armack) which combines the principle of freedom in the market with that of social equilibrium.
- In my student years in Rome I was myself trained in the doctrine of "solidarism" (H. Pesch, G. Gundlach) which placed itself between liberalism and socialism and which is based on three ethical principles: personality, solidarity and subsidiarity, which can hold an individualistic society together and which inspired, long before any "communitarianism", the Catholic social teaching.

All this means: the Third Way was not invented by one individual. That virtue lies in the middle between two extremes was after all already known by the Greek philosopher Aristotle. And in view of the build-up of problems and the stalemate with regard to reforms in Europe, it would be highly desirable that **all democratic parties** would vouch for the fact that the third way between an old-fashioned capitalism and a bloated welfare state is a sensible, yes, is today the only realizable way. If we want to overcome the enormous problems in Europe, we need not only a savings programme, but a social vision of the future, a basic ethical orientation, yes, and a **new political and social consensus** between the various parties and social groups, on the basis of which the concrete solutions will have to be democratically worked out.

I agree with Anthony Giddens who says in his new book on *The Third Way and its Critics* (Oxford, 2000): "Markets respond to the desires of consumers, but as they do so can compromise other wants or needs. Markets can breed a commercialism that threatens other life values. Without external controls, markets have no restraining mechanisms – there is nothing in market exchange that limits what might be marketed. In addition, ethical standards, or standards of taste, have to be brought from the outside – from a public ethics, guaranteed in law." (p. 36)

We should however not ignore: A new ethic is important not only for international business, but also in our own backyards where it seems that we are living, as it is described in an excellent article in the *Financial Times* (23/4/2000), in an “age of moral confusion”. Who would question the fact that we are witnessing a vacuum of meaning and of orientation? Facing an unprecedented increase of juvenile crime, abuse of children, corruption, lies and deceit in politics and economy, a new societal consensus is needed. We need to recall a basic core of humane values, attitudes and standards, in other words: we need an ethic for humankind:

II. We need a Global Ethic

Where can we find common values, standards and attitudes? It would be foolish to reinvent the wheel of ethic again! Common values, standards and attitudes are easily found in the age-old religious, ethical, philosophical traditions of humanity as we find them reassumed in different documents. Efforts to establish a global ethic have received widespread international backing in recent years. **Two documents** are of particular relevance:

- On 4 September 1993, for the first time in the history of religion, delegates to the **Parliament of the World’s Religions** in Chicago adopted a “Declaration Toward a Global Ethic”.
- On 1 September 1997, again for the first time, the **InterAction Council** of former heads of state or government called for a global ethic and submitted to the United Nations a proposed “Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities”, designed to underpin, reinforce and supplement human rights from an ethical angle.
- In addition, the third Parliament of the World’s Religions, which was held in Cape Town in December 1999 issued “A Call to Our Guiding Institutions”, based on the Chicago Declaration.

1. What is the Global Ethic?

The **framework of ethical orientation** in the Declaration Toward a Global Ethic and in the Declaration of Human Responsibilities in some respects extends beyond human rights. The Declaration of Human Rights does not explicitly raise such a comprehensive moral claim. A Declaration of Human Responsibilities must extend further and begin at a much deeper level. Indeed the two basic principles of the Declaration Toward a Global Ethic already offer an ethical orientation of everyday life which is as comprehensive as it is fundamental: the basic demand, “**Every human being must be treated humanely**” and the Golden Rule, “**What you do not wish to be done to yourself, do not do to others**”.

On this basis four irrevocable directives are developed, four imperatives of humanity (extensively in the Declaration of the Parliament of the World’s Religions, in a more condensed and juridical form in the proposal of the InterAction Council):

1. Have respect for all life! The ancient precept, especially urgent in a time of children killing children: “You shall not kill”! That means today the responsibility for a culture of non-violence and respect for life.
2. Deal honestly and fairly! The very old commandment, important more than ever in the age of globalization: “You shall not steal”! That means today the responsibility for a culture of solidarity and a just economic order.
3. Speak and act truthfully! The ancient axiom, valid also for politicians and the media: “You shall not lie”! That means the responsibility for a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness.
4. Respect and love one another! The age-old directive, even more important in an age which seems to be without taboos: “You shall not abuse sexuality, nor commit sexual immorality”! That means the responsibility for a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women.

Let me emphasize what a global ethic means and what it does not mean:

- Global ethic is not a new ideology or superstructure;
- it will not make the specific ethics of the different religions and philosophies superfluous; it would be ridiculous to consider Global Ethic as a substitute for the Torah, the Sermon on the Mount, the Koran, the Bhagavadgita, the Discourses of the Buddha or the Sayings of Confucius.
- Global Ethic is nothing but the **necessary minimum of common values, standards and basic attitudes**. In other words:
 - a minimal basic **consensus** on binding values, irrevocable standards and moral attitudes, which can be affirmed **by all religions** despite their undeniable dogmatic or theological differences and should also be supported **by non-believers**.
 - This consensus of values will be a decisive contribution to **overcome the crisis of orientation** which has become a real global problem.
 - Global Ethic is therefore a **project** which needs more than a decade to be fulfilled; it calls for a change of consciousness which has already made great progress in the last decade. Anyone who is interested in seeing human rights fully respected and more effectively defended throughout the world should surely also be interested in achieving a **change of consciousness** concerning human obligations or responsibilities. Such a change of consciousness is already a reality in at least three fields: We all changed our mind with regard to economy and ecology, disarmament and peace, the partnership of men and women.

Do perhaps all those who advocate a concrete global ethic cherish illusions? No, they are the true realists. Having been a senior academic adviser for all three declarations, responsible already for the draft of the first Declaration, I completely identify with them. Such Declarations are truly not products of naivety but fruits of an intellectual effort, a demanding effort, which is especially important in the age of globalization.

2. What does Globalization call for? For a Globalization of Ethic

The three Declarations are not isolated documents. They respond to the **urgent call by important international bodies** for global ethical standards made in long chapters of the reports both of the UN Commission on Global Governance (1995) and the World Commission on Culture and Development (1995). The same topic has also already been discussed for a long time at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos and similarly in the UNESCO Universal Ethics Project. Increasing attention is also being paid to it in Asia where they often find it problematic to speak about human rights without speaking at the same time on human responsibilities. Mahatma Gandhi, who was consulted about the UN Declaration of Human Rights, wrote: “The Ganges of rights originates in the Himalaya of responsibilities”.

The contemporary background to the questions raised in these international and interreligious bodies is the fact that the globalization of the economy, the technology and the media has also brought a **globalization of problems**, from the financial and labour markets to ecology and to drugs and organised crime. If there are to be **global solutions** to them, they therefore also call for a **globalization of ethic**: no uniform ethical system (“ethics”), but a necessary minimum of shared ethical values, basic attitudes and criteria (“ethic” or “ethos”) to which all regions, nations and interest groups can commit themselves. In other words there is a need for a common basic human ethic. **There can be no new world order without a world ethic, a global ethic.**

We should not forget: Globalization is much more than an economic concept. Globalization differs from previous forms of world economic development facilitated by free-trade agreements: the dynamics generated by the rapid expansion of technological progress is unprecedented. For almost all national economies, and many parties within these economies, this has changed the problems to be dealt with, the number of players involved, and some of the rules of the game. All actors who operate internationally are affected by and must respond to these changes. To ensure that economic performance is subordinated to human and social goals, globalization needs political underpinnings and an ethical framework.

Of course, there are no easy and certainly no quick solutions to the complicated problems linked with globalization. And certainly, there is no alternative apparent to the free and social market economy. But recent experiences all over the world show that market economy functions effectively only if it is based on a sound democratic civil society rooted in fundamental values and basic ethical standards.

First example: **Russia**. The magic potion recommended by Western advisers and the IMF – “free prices” and “free exchange of goods” – led to a relatively chaotic situation in which Russia is no longer an important player in the global economy. A conversation with a former adviser of President Yeltsin, Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs, confirmed my opinion. The market economy cannot be successful, as Sachs said, if **first** there is not even one public personality with moral integrity with whom people can identify – not the president, not the Prime Minister, no single member of parliament, no scientist, no writer: Sakharov had died, and Solzhenitsyn was out of the picture. Neither can the market economy be successful if, **second**, there is not one public institution that is morally trustworthy – not the government, or the State Duma, the High Court, the central bank or the church.

Another example: **China**. Even an official Chinese magazine recently published an article strongly criticizing the Communist Party’s crackdown on the Falun Gong spiritual movement, saying that the tenacity of the organization underscores a moral vacuum in China: “The questions posed by Falun Gong are questions that cut to the heart of China’s modernisation process as a whole,” the article said. “Falun Gong is the biggest challenge to China’s ruling party since the founding of the People’s Republic of China. This is because in today’s China, the most profound challenge is not unemployment, inflation nor corruption. The most profound challenge is that there is no effective ideology.” The article concludes: “This is a time when beliefs totally collapse. Tradition has become the garbage of history. There is not a legitimate ideological system.” The article said that a way out of the trap set by Falun Gong was “to rebuild China’s spiritual home,” by lifting bans on religions and religious groups and by allowing non-governmental organizations more freedom. “It is a mistake to think of religions as an alien force,” the article said. (IHT, 14/4/2000).

Certain guidelines for a fair dealing with conflicts and a just reconciliation of interests are recognised throughout the world by most religions and philosophies. But you may ask:

3. Does this lead to Moralism? No, to Morality

I am pleading for the rediscovery and reassessment of **ethic** in politics and economics. I am all for **morality** (in the positive sense). But at the same time I am **against moralism** (morality in the negative sense). For moralism and moralising overvalue morality and ask too much of it. Moralizers make morality the sole criterion for human action and ignore the relative independence of various spheres of life like economics, law and politics. As a result they tend to absolutise intrinsically justified norms and values (like peace, justice, environment, life, love) and also to exploit them often for the particular interests of an institution (e.g. a party, church or interest group).

Moralism manifests itself in a one-sided and overpowering insistence on particular moral positions (especially in questions of sexual behaviour, contraception, abortion, euthanasia and similar issues) which makes a rational dialogue with those of other convictions impossible. That is the reason why we fought successfully against mentioning such issues in the three Declarations, because there is no consensus, neither among the religions nor within each single religion. Speaking out for a few common ethical standards we therefore do not want to support fundamentalists in Rome or elsewhere nor opportunist politicians who practise the emotive language of today’s “therapeutic ethos and politicking” in order to avoid action.

But let us not forget the reverse of the medal: **The law needs a moral foundation!** Security in our cities and communities cannot be bought simply with money nor with more police and prisons. In other words: The ethical acceptance of laws (which provide the state with sanctions and can be imposed by force) is the presupposition of any social culture. What is the use of constantly new laws, if a significant part of the population or powerful groups or individuals have no intention of observing them? If they find easily ways and means of irresponsibly imposing their own interests? **Quid leges sine moribus?** runs a Roman saying: what are laws without morals?

And you can add: what are rights, human rights, without human responsibilities? If human rights are not realized in many places where they should be implemented, this is in most cases due to a lack of **political and ethical will**. There is no disputing the fact that “the rule of law and the promotion of human rights depend on the readiness of men and women to act justly”. Nor will any of those who fight for human rights dispute this.

A Declaration of Human Responsibilities, as proposed by the InterAction Council, supports and reinforces the Declaration of Human Rights from an ethical perspective, as already stated programmatically in the preamble: "We ... thus renew and reinforce commitments already proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: namely, the full acceptance of the dignity of all people; their inalienable freedom and equality, and their solidarity with one another."

Of course it would be wrong to think that the legal validity of human rights depends on the actual realization of responsibilities. Human rights cannot be considered as a reward for good human behaviour. This would in fact mean that only those who had shown themselves worthy of rights by doing their duty towards society would enjoy rights. Such an absurd idea would clearly offend the unconditional **dignity of the human person**, which is itself a presupposition of both rights and responsibilities. No one has claimed and will claim that certain human responsibilities must be fulfilled first, by individuals or a community, before one can claim human rights. These are given with the human person, but this person is **always at the same time one who has rights and responsibilities**: All human rights are by definition directly bound up with the responsibility to observe them. Rights and responsibilities can certainly be distinguished neatly, but they cannot be separated from each other. Their relationship needs to be described in a differentiated way. They are not quantities which are to be added or subtracted externally, but **two interrelated dimensions** of being human in the individual and the social sphere.

No rights without responsibilities! As such, this concern goes back to the "founding period" of human rights. Nearly half of the French Revolutionary Parliament of 1789 who voted for the Declaration of Human Rights voted also for a proclamation of human responsibilities. Otherwise, in the end everyone would have only rights, which they would play off against one another, and no one would any longer know the responsibilities without which these rights cannot function. This remained a matter of continuing debate. It is significant that also the **Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 itself, in Article 29**, contains a definition of the "duties of everyone towards the community" and speaks of the "just requirements of morality, public order and general welfare in a democratic society".

We live in fact largely in a society in which individual groups all too often insist on their **rights against others** without recognising their own **responsibilities**. This is certainly not because of codified human rights as such, but because of certain false developments closely connected with them. In the consciousness of many people these have led to a preponderance of rights over responsibilities. Instead of the culture of human rights which is striven for, there is often an unculture of exaggerated claims to rights which ignores the intentions of human rights. The necessary balance of freedom, equality and fraternity (participation) is not simply given, but has to be realized afresh time and again. After all, we indisputably live in a "society of claims", which often presents itself as a "society of legal claims", indeed as a "society of legal disputes". This makes the state a "judiciary state". Does this not suggest the need for a new concentration on responsibilities, particularly in our over-regulated constitutional states with all their justified insistence on rights?

Despite the UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, we still face the reality of severe violations of human rights which spans the world. This shows how much a declaration and explanation of human rights comes up against a void wherever people, particularly those in power, adopt one of the following attitudes to human rights: They ignore them ("What concern is that of mine?"), or neglect them ("I have to represent only the interests of my firm"), or fail to perceive them ("That's what churches and charities are for"), or simply pretend falsely to fulfil them ("We, the government, the board of directors, are doing all we can").

The "weakness of human rights" is in fact not grounded in the concept itself but in the lack of any political and moral will on the part of those responsible for implementing them. To put it plainly: **an ethical impulse and a motivation to accept responsibilities is needed for an effective realization of human rights**. Many human rights champions active on the fronts of this world who confess their "Yes to a Global Ethic" have already explicitly endorsed that point of view. Therefore those who want to work effectively for human rights should welcome a new moral impulse and framework of ethical orientation and not reject it to their own disadvantage.

Conclusion

The Global Ethic Project is an ongoing process. It has made tremendous progress in a very short period of time. It seems timely to advance the project with the help of all concerned people. Concretely: We should start preparing for the year 2001, the UN Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, by strengthening one indispensable basis for the dialogue among civilizations, namely a minimum of shared ethical values, standards and attitudes.

Let me repeat **my very realistic vision** in four phrases:

- There will be no peace among nations without peace among the religions.
- There will be no peace among religions without dialogue among the religions.
- There will be no dialogue among religions without a minimum of common ethical standards.
- Finally there will be no survival of our globe without a global ethic.

I wish to conclude this lecture with some phrases of a revered Jewish friend of mine who shared my convictions and died last year five days before we were supposed to have lunch together, Lord Yehudi Menuhin:

“We should at least agree on the one obvious truth, and on the one axiom, that humanity will never progress in a humane way, if we do not all admit the fact that human rights can never exist without human responsibilities. They are the two sides of the one coin. It is the one and only universal currency for a genuine human exchange. It is strong and stable. It protects us from wars, from civil wars, from the exploitation of people, from misery and from economic catastrophe. And it will indeed strengthen human rights, to say nothing of human trust, human thought, human happiness.

As we are possessed by the Infinite and the Eternal, as every cell and every atom is for ever propelled and attracted to an ever higher enlightenment, the acknowledgement of obligation in return for the freedom of learning and giving draws us to our innermost religious nature – compatible with religious expression, whether Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, animist, or even pagan, as in Greece. Man is by definition a religious, a moral animal, even in madness, but redeemable.”

The shift in consciousness necessary for this will be the task for the new millennium. At home, in our families, and in our schools and communities, we should begin to realize the vision we want to be implemented in the whole world. It is above all the new young generation which will achieve with strong purpose the unity of the Christian churches, peace between the religions and the community of the nations.

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