

Module 4
Global Ethics and Religions:

Towards an Interfaith Perspective

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1. To contemplate the world we have built, is to be conscious that we are living in a world with violence; our world is unbalanced and unsustainable.
2. All of our efforts contribute to building a common home, in effect we are moving towards developing a global ethics.
3. The religions contribution towards a global ethics, working together in order to build a fairer and more harmonious society.

Welcome, this module is about the global ethics.

In this module, we will analyze the important of the common ethics:

- * To focus on the same values the religions share.
- * To communicate with a shared ethical framework.
- * To understand what constitutes an ethical issue, and how we mitigate it's affects.

Our starting point of reference will be the Declaration published by the Parliament of World Religions in 1993.

- * We will discuss where and who wrote this Declaration.
- * The parliament of the world religions
- * We will review the definition of ethics and its global necessity.

This declaration: was an attempt to establish a shared ethical framework for all peoples across religious lines. It was Drafted by Dr. Hans Küng and promulgated by the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, the document was presented to the second Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in September 1993, where over 200 religious authorities from more than 40 faith traditions signed their agreement. It has since been signed by thousands of religious leaders and individuals across the world. The basic points of the proposed ethics are non-

violence, economic justice, tolerance, and equality.

We mentioned that this document was drafted by Dr. Hans Küng. But who is Hans Küng?

Hans Küng was born 19 March 1928 and he is a Swiss Catholic priest, theologian, and author. Since 1995 he has been President of the Foundation for a Global Ethics. Since 1979 he has remained at the University of Tübingen, Germany as a professor of ecumenical theology, serving as an emeritus professor since 1996.

And the II Parliament of the world's religions event?

There have been several meetings referred to as a **Parliament of the World's Religions**, the first being the **World's Parliament of Religions** of 1893, which was an attempt to create a formal global dialogue of faiths between east and west. The event was celebrated by another conference on its centenary in 1993. This led to a new series of conferences under the official title (Parliament of the World's Religions). In the II parliament of the world religions was introduced the document called "*The Building a common home. Towards a global ethics*". Before we talk about the ethics briefly we must define what is the meaning of ethics?

Ethics is a term that comes from the Greek word which means "custom, habit" sometimes known as moral philosophy, it is a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct, often addressing disputes of moral diversity. Ethics seeks to resolve questions dealing with human morality—concepts such as good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice, justice and crime.

Philosophical ethics investigates what is the best way for humans to live, and what kind of actions are right or wrong in particular circumstances.

Ethics may be divided into three major areas of study:

1. Meta-ethics, about the theoretical meaning and reference of moral propositions and how their truth values may be determined
2. Normative ethics, about the practical means of determining a moral

course of action

3. Applied ethics draws upon ethical theory in order to ask what a person is obligated to do in some very specific situation, or within some particular domain of action.

Why the religious communities write a global ethics? In 1993 they see that the world needs a change. In fact, the challenges that they saw are the same in our society. They said that the world is experiencing a *fundamental crisis*: A crisis in global economy, global ecology, and global politics. Three dimensions. Hundreds of millions of human beings on our planet increasingly suffer from unemployment, poverty, hunger, and the destruction of their families. There are tensions between the sexes and generations. Children die. More and more countries are shaken by corruption in politics and business. It is increasingly difficult to live together peacefully in our cities because of social, racial, and ethnic conflicts, the abuse of drugs, organized crime

Even neighbors often live in fear of one another. Our planet continues to be ruthlessly robbed. A collapse of the ecosystem threatens us. Time and again we see leaders and members of *religions* incite aggression, fanaticism, hate, and xenophobia. Religion often is mis-used for power political goals, including war. The religious of the parliament of the world religions condemn these blights and declare that they need not be.

Also they declare: the *ethics* already exists within the religious teachings of the world which can counter the global distress. We all know that this ethics provides no direct solution for all the vast problems of the world, but it does supply the moral foundation for a better individual and global order:

They confirm that there is already a consensus among the religions which can be the basis for a global ethics. More exactly a minimal *fundamental consensus* concerning mandatory values, binding *standards*, and *fundamental moral attitudes*.

The document.

In general, the document is complete in the many aspects of the fundamental principles that give our emerging Global Ethics both insight and wisdom.

We are going to analyze it:

With the title: *No new global order without a new global ethics!* The document opens with the convictions which we hold in common, believers and non-believers: We women and men of various religions and regions of Earth therefore address all people, religious and non-religious. We wish to express the following convictions which we hold in common:

- We all have a responsibility for a better global order.
- Our involvement for the benefit of human rights, freedom, justice, peace, and the preservation of Earth is absolutely necessary.
- Our different religious and cultural traditions must not prevent our common involvement in opposing all forms of inhumanity and working for greater humaneness.
- The principles expressed in this Global Ethics can be affirmed by all persons with ethical convictions, whether religiously grounded or not.
- As religious and spiritual persons we base our lives on an Ultimate Reality, and draw spiritual power and hope therefrom, in trust, in prayer or meditation, in word or silence. We have a special responsibility for the welfare of all humanity and care for the planet Earth. We do not consider ourselves better than other women and men, but we trust that the ancient wisdom of our religions can point the way for the future.

As religious communities this part is a declaration about the commitment with the other. We cannot stay impassive. We have to abandon the history for become a new life. They thinking that today we possess sufficient economic, cultural, and spiritual resources to introduce a better global order.

But old and new *ethnic, national, social, economic, and religious tensions* threaten the peaceful building of a better world. A part of the technological progress than ever before, yet we see that worldwide poverty, hunger, death of children,

unemployment, misery, and the destruction of nature have not diminished but rather have increased.

In such a dramatic global situation the religions claim that the humanity needs a *vision of peoples living peacefully together*, of ethnic and ethical groupings and of religions sharing responsibility for the care of Earth.

Their vision rests on hopes, goals, ideals and standards. But all over the world these have slipped from our hands. Yet we are convinced that, despite their frequent abuses and failures, it is the communities of faith who bear a responsibility to demonstrate that such hopes, ideals, and standards can be guarded, grounded, and lived. This is especially true in the modern state.

This point is important for demonstrate the responsibility that the communities have with the world. They cannot elude it. Also the document said that: *the Guarantees of freedom of conscience and religion are necessary but they do not substitute for binding values, convictions, and norms which are valid for all humans regardless of their social origin, sex, skin color, language, or religion.*

We are convinced of the fundamental unity of the human family on Earth. We recall the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations. What it formally proclaimed on the level of *rights* we wish to confirm and deepen here from the perspective of an *ethics*: The full realization of the intrinsic dignity of the human person, the inalienable freedom and equality in principle of all humans, and the necessary solidarity and interdependence of all humans with each other.

Only remind that as you know the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a declaration adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948 in Paris. The Declaration arose directly from the experience of the Second World War and represents the first global expression of rights to which all human beings are inherently entitled.

The Declaration consists of thirty articles which have been elaborated in subsequent international treaties, regional human rights instruments, national constitutions, and other laws.

Statements:

On the basis their history the communities have learned:

- that a better global order cannot be created or enforced by laws, prescriptions, and conventions alone;
- that the realization of peace, justice, and the protection of Earth depends on the insight and readiness of men and women to act justly;
- that action in favor of rights and freedoms presumes a consciousness of responsibility and duty, and
- that therefore both the minds and hearts of women and men must be addressed;
- that rights without morality cannot long endure, and
- that *there will be no better global order without a global ethics.*

Now the text remarks the danger of a global ethics. What is its limit? A global ethics we do not mean a global ideology or a single unified religion beyond all existing religions, and certainly not the domination of one religion over all others. By a global ethics we mean a fundamental consensus on binding values, irrevocable standards, and personal attitudes.

*The heart of the document is expressed with a fundamental demand: **Every human being must be treated humanely***

They recognize that everyone is fallible, imperfect, exist men and women with limitations and defects. Is for this reason they feel force for the sake of global welfare to express what the fundamental elements of a global ethics should be:

1. for individuals as well as for communities and organizations,
2. for states as well as for the religions themselves.

Follow saying that they trust that often millennia-old religious and ethical traditions provide an *ethics* which is *convincing and practicable for all women and men of good will*, religious and non-religious, believers and non believers. At the same time they tell that

the ethical traditions often offer very different bases for:

what is helpful and what is unhelpful,

what is right and what is wrong,

what is good and what is evil.

Also they do not ignore the serious differences among the individual religions.

However, they said that they should not obstruct them from proclaiming those things which they already hold in common and which they jointly affirm, each on the basis of their own religious or ethical grounds.

It's known that religions cannot solve the environmental, economic, political, and social problems of Earth. However they can provide a *change* in the inner orientation, the whole mentality, *the 'hearts' of people*, and a conversion from a false path to a new orientation for life. They think that the Humankind urgently needs social and ecological reforms, but it needs *spiritual renewal* urgently as well. As religious or spiritual persons they commit themselves to this task. The spiritual powers of the religions can offer a fundamental sense of trust, a ground of meaning and ultimate standards. *This is the sensation, the deep feeling about the spirituality*. But they need to be credible and only occur it when they eliminate those conflicts which spring from the religions themselves, dismantling mutual arrogance, mistrust, prejudice, and thus demonstrate respect for the traditions, holy places, feasts, and rituals of people who believe differently.

They confirm that now as before, *women and men are treated inhumanely* all over the world. They are robbed of their opportunities and their freedom; their human rights are crashed; their dignity is unknown. So all the religious and ethical convictions demand that *every human being must be treated humanely!*

This means that every human being without distinction of age, sex, race, skin color, physical or mental ability, language, religion, political view, or national or social origin possesses an inalienable and *untouchable dignity*, and everyone, the individual as well as the state, is therefore obliged to honor this dignity and protect it. Humans must always be the subjects of rights, must be ends, never mere means, never objects of

commercialization and industrialization in economics, politics and media, in research institutes, and industrial corporations.

No one stands 'above good and evil'— no human being, no social class, no influential interest group, no army, and no state. On the opposite: Possessed of reason and conscience, every human is obliged to behave in a genuinely human fashion, it is the intention of this Global Ethics to clarify what this means. In it they wish to recall unconditional ethical norms. These should not be chains, but helps and supports for people to find and realize once again their lives' direction, values, orientations, and meaning. There is a principle which is found and has persisted in many religious and ethical traditions of humankind for thousands of years:

What you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to others.

Or in other words: *What you wish done to yourself, do to others!*

This should be the unconditional norm for all areas of life, for families and communities, for races, nations, and religions.

This sentence is considering the flag, the light of the global ethics. From here they develop all speech and the repercussion.

They follow to tell:

Every form of egoism should be rejected: All selfishness, whether individual or collective, whether in the form of class thinking, racism or nationalism

They condemn these because they prevent humans from being authentically human.

But attention!

Self-determination and self-realization are thoroughly legitimate so long as they are not separated from human self-responsibility and global responsibility, that is, from responsibility for fellow humans and for the planet Earth. This principle implies very concrete standards to which we humans should hold firm.

From it arise *four broad, ancient guidelines* for human behavior which are found in most of the religions of the world.

The directives, ancient guidelines

From the sentence *What you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to others, arise four guidelines*

1. *Commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life*
2. *Commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order*
3. *Commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truth=fulness*
4. *Commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women*

We are going to review and discover in more detail each sentences and what the communities of this 2ond parliament of the world religions want to tell us.

Each sentence an explication includes:

1. the great ancient religious and ethical traditions of humankind directive,
2. the consequences,
3. how to applied this recommendation for the new generation, the young people, the future,
4. the responsibility
5. and from religious and ethical traditions what it means.

Commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life

Numberless women and men of all regions and religions strive to lead lives not determined by egoism but by commitment to their fellow humans and to the world around them. Nevertheless, all over the world we find hatred, envy, jealousy, and violence, not only between individuals but also between social and ethnic groups, between classes, races, nations, and religions.

Many places still are ruled by an extreme fear 'from above'; dictators oppress their own people, and institutional violence is widespread. Even in some countries where laws exist to protect individual freedoms, prisoners are tortured and hostages

are killed. In the great ancient religious and ethical traditions of humankind we find the directive: *You shall not kill!* Or in positive terms: *Have respect for life!* Let us reflect anew on the consequences of this ancient directive: All people have a right to life, safety, and the free development of personality insofar as they do not injure the rights of others. No one has the right physically or psychically to torture, injure, much less kill, any other human being. And no people, no state, no race, no religion has the right to hate, to discriminate against, to 'cleanse', to exile, much less to liquidate a 'foreign' minority which is different in behavior or holds different beliefs.

Of course, wherever there are humans there will be conflicts. Such conflicts, however, should be resolved without violence within a framework of justice. This is true for states as well as for individuals. Persons who hold political power must work within the framework of a just order and commit themselves to the most non-violent, peaceful solutions possible. And they should work for this within an international order of peace which itself has need of protection and defense against perpetrators of violence. Armament is a mistaken path; disarmament is the commandment of the times. In other words: There is no survival for humanity without global peace!

Young people must learn that violence may not be a means of settling differences with others. Only thus can a *culture of non-violence* be created.

A human person is infinitely precious and must be unconditionally protected. But likewise the *lives of animals and plants* which inhabit this planet with us deserve protection, preservation, and care. Limitless exploitation of the natural foundations of life, ruthless destruction of the biosphere, and militarization of the cosmos are all outrages. As human beings we have a special responsibility – especially with a view to future generations – for Earth and the cosmos, for the air, water, and soil. They confirm that each one of us depends on the welfare of all. Therefore the dominance of humanity over nature and the cosmos must not be encouraged. Instead we must cultivate living in harmony with nature and the cosmos.

To be authentically human in the spirit of the great religious and ethical

traditions means that in public as well as in private life we must be concerned for others and ready to help. We must never be brutal. Every people, every race, every religion must show tolerance and respect – indeed high appreciation for every other. Minorities need protection and support, whether they be racial, ethnic, or religious.

Commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order

Numberless men and women of all regions and religions strive to live their lives in solidarity with one another and to work for authentic fulfillment of their vocations.

Nevertheless, all over the world we find endless hunger, deficiency, and need. Not only individuals, but especially unjust institutions and structures are responsible for these tragedies. Millions of people are without work; millions are exploited by poor wages, forced to the edges of society, with their possibilities for the future destroyed. In many lands the gap= between the poor and the rich, between the powerful and the powerless is vast.

We live in a world in which the capitalism have destroyed many ethical and spiritual values. A materialistic mentality breeds greed for unlimited profit and a grasping for endless sack. These demands claim more and more of the community's resources without obliging the individual to contribute more.

In the great ancient religious and ethical traditions of humankind we find the directive: You shall not steal! Or in positive terms: Deal honestly and fairly! Let us reflect anew on the consequences of this ancient directive: No one has the right to rob or dispossess in any way whatso-ever any other person or the commonweal. Further, no one has the right to use her or his possessions without concern for the needs of society and Earth.

Where extreme poverty reigns, helplessness= and despair spread, and theft occurs again and again for the sake of survival. Where power and wealth are accumulated ruthlessly, feelings of envy and rebellion inevitably well up in the disadvantaged and marginalized. This leads to a vicious circle of violence and counter violence. Let no one be deceived: There is no global peace without global

justice!

Young people must learn at home and in school that property, limited though it may be, carries with it an obligation, and that its uses should at the same time serve the common good. Only thus can a just economic order be built up.

If the situation of the poorest billions of humans on this planet, particularly women and children, is to be improved, the world economy must be structured more justly. Individual good deeds, and assistance projects are not enough. The participation of all states and the authority of international organizations are needed to build just economic institutions.

A solution which can be supported by all sides must be searched for the debt crisis and the poverty of the dissolving second world, and even more the third world. Of course conflicts of interest are a reality. In the developed countries, a distinction must be made between necessary and limitless consumption, between socially beneficial and nonbeneficial uses of property, between justified and unjustified uses of natural resources, and between a profit only and a socially beneficial and ecologically oriented market economy. Even the developing nations must search their national consciences.

Wherever those ruling threaten to repress those ruled, wherever institutions threaten persons, and wherever might oppresses right, we are obligated to resist whenever possible nonviolently.

To be authentically human in the spirit of our great religious and ethical traditions means the following:

- We must utilize economic and political power for service to humanity instead of misusing it in ruthless battles for domination. We must develop a spirit of compassion with those who suffer, with special care for the children, the aged, the poor, the disabled, the refugees, and the lonely.
- We must cultivate mutual respect and consideration, so as to reach a reasonable balance of interests, instead of thinking only of unlimited power and unavoidable competitive struggles.

- We must value a sense of moderation and modesty instead of an unquenchable greed for money, prestige, and consumption. In greed humans lose their 'souls', their freedom, their composure, their inner peace, and thus that which makes them human.

Commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness

Numberless women and men of all regions and religions strive to lead lives of honesty and truthfulness. Nevertheless, all over the world we find endless lies, and deception, swindling and hypocrisy:

Politicians and business people who use lies as a means to success;

Mass media which spread ideological propaganda instead of accurate reporting, misinformation instead of information, cynical commercial interest instead of loyalty to the truth;

Researchers who give themselves over to morally questionable ideological or political programs or to economic interest groups, or who justify research which violates fundamental ethical values;

Representatives of religions who dismiss other religions as of little value and who preach fanaticism and intolerance instead of respect and understanding.

In the great ancient religious and ethical traditions of humankind we find the directive: You shall not lie! Or in positive terms: Speak and act truthfully! Let us reflect anew on the consequences of this ancient directive: No woman or man, no institution, no state or church or religious community has the right to speak lies to other humans.

This is especially true for those who work in the mass media, to whom we entrust the freedom to report for the sake of truth and to whom we thus grant the office of guardian. They do not stand above morality but have the obligation to respect human dignity, human rights, and fundamental values. They are duty bound to objectivity, fairness, and the preservation of human dignity. They have no right to intrude into individuals' private spheres, to manipulate public opinion, or to distort reality;

for artists, writers, and researchers, to whom we entrust artistic and academic freedom. They are not exempt from general ethical standards and must serve the truth;

for the leaders of countries, politicians, and political parties, to whom we entrust our own freedoms. When they lie in the faces of their people, when they manipulate the truth, or when they are guilty of venality or foreign affairs, they forsake their credibility. Inversely, public opinion should support those politicians who dare to speak the truth to the people at all times;

finally, for representatives of religion. When they stir up prejudice towards those of different belief, or even incite religious wars, they deserve the condemnation of humankind and the loss of their adherents.

Let no one be deceived: There is no global justice without truthfulness and humaneness! Young people must learn at home and in school to think, speak, and act truthfully. They have a right to information and education to be able to make the decisions that will form their lives. Without an ethical formation they will hardly be able to distinguish the important from the unimportant. In the daily flood of information, ethical standards will help them discern when opinions are portrayed as facts, interests veiled, tendencies exaggerated, and facts twisted.

To be authentically human in the spirit of our great religious and ethical traditions means the following:

- We must not confuse freedom with arbitrariness or pluralism with indifference to truth.
- We must cultivate truthfulness in all our relationships instead of dishonesty and opportunism.
- We must constantly seek truth and incorruptible sincerity instead of spreading ideological half-truths.
- We must courageously serve the truth and we must remain constant and trustworthy, instead of yielding to opportunistic accommodation to life. Commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women. Numberless men

and women of all regions and religions strive to live their lives in a spirit of partnership and responsible action in the areas of love, sexuality, and family. Nevertheless, all over the world there are condemnable forms of patriarchy, domination of one sex over the other, exploitation of women, sexual misuse of children, and forced prostitution. Too frequently, social **inequities** force women and even children into prostitution as a means of survival particularly in less developed countries.

In the great ancient religious and ethical traditions of humankind we find the directive: You shall not commit sexual immorality! Or in positive terms: Respect and love one another!

Observe the consequences of this ancient directive: No one has the right to degrade others to mere (mia) sex objects, to lead them into or hold them in sexual dependency. We condemn sexual exploitation and sexual discrimination as one of the worst forms of human degradation. We have the duty to resist wherever the domination of one sex over the other is preached even in the name of religious conviction; wherever sexual exploitation is tolerated, wherever prostitution is fostered or children are misused. Let no one be deceived: There is no authentic humaneness without a living together in partnership!

Young people must learn at home and in school that sexuality is not a negative, destructive, or exploitative force, but creative and affirmative. Sexuality as a life affirming shaper of community can only be effective when partners accept the responsibilities of caring for one another's happiness.

The relationship between women and men should be characterized not by patronizing behavior or exploitation, but by love, partnership, and trustworthiness. Human fulfillment is not identical with sexual pleasure. Sexuality should express and reinforce a loving relationship lived by equal partners.

Some religious traditions know the ideal of a voluntary renunciation of the full use of sexuality. Voluntary renunciation also can be an expression of identity and meaningful fulfillment.

The social institution of marriage, despite all its cultural and religious variety, is

characterized by love, loyalty, and permanence. It aims at and should guarantee security and mutual support to husband, wife, and child. It should secure the rights of all family members. All lands and cultures should develop economic and social relationships which will enable marriage and family life worthy of human beings, especially for older people. Children have a right of access to education. Parents should not exploit children, nor children parents. Their relationships should reflect mutual respect, appreciation, and concern.

To be authentically human in the spirit of our great religious and ethical traditions means the following:

We need mutual respect, partnership, and understanding, instead of patriarchal domination and degradation, which are expressions of violence and engender counter violence.

We need mutual concern, tolerance, preparation for reconciliation, and love, instead of any form of possessive lust or sexual mis-use.

Only what has already been experienced in personal and familial relationships can be practiced on the level of nations and religions.

From these four statements I have four questions for you:

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- What ethical changes can be considered to influence the economy of violence?
 - What ethical changes can be considered to influence the selfish greed to selfless prosperity?
 - What ethical changes can be considered to influence honest, balanced, information ?
 - What ethical changes can be considered to influence ethical behavior between genders ?
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We can discuss these questions in our forum.

The last part of the document is the Transformation of Consciousness. The expectation about our future in a positive way.

They tell about the Historical experience demonstrates that Earth cannot be changed for the better unless we achieve a transformation in the consciousness of individuals and in public life.

This is a call for us.

The possibilities for transformation have already been **glimpsed**= in areas such as war and peace, economy, and ecology, where in recent decades fundamental changes have taken place. This transformation must also be achieved in the area of ethics and values!

Every individual has intrinsic dignity and rights, and each also has an responsibility for what she or he does and does not do.

All our decisions and deeds, even our omissions and failures, have consequences.

They affirm that: Keeping this sense of responsibility alive, deepening it and passing it on to future generations, is the special task of religions.

We are realistic about what we have achieved in this consensus, and so we urge that the following be observed:

A universal consensus on many disputed ethical questions (from bio and sexual ethics through mass media and scientific ethics to economic and political ethics) will be difficult to attain. Nevertheless, even for many controversial questions, suitable solutions should be attainable in the spirit of the fundamental principles we have jointly developed in the document. In many areas of life a new consciousness of ethical responsibility has already arisen.

Therefore we would be pleased if as many professions as possible, such as those of physicians, business people, journalists, and politicians, would develop up-to-date codes of ethics which would provide specific guidelines for the bother questions of these particular professions.

Above all, they claim that urge the various communities of faith to formulate their very specific ethics:

What does each faith tradition have to say for example, about the meaning of life and death, about compassion and joy? These will deepen, and make more specific, the already discernible global ethics.

This is also another proposal that we can develop in our forum?

In conclusion, we appeal to all the inhabitants of this planet. Earth cannot be changed for the better unless the consciousness of individuals is changed.

They invite us to work for such transformation in individual and collective consciousness, for the awakening of our spiritual powers through reflection, prayer for a conversion of the heart.

Without a pleasure to take risks and a preparation in order to sacrifice there can be no fundamental change in our situation!

Therefore they commit us to a common global ethic, to better mutual understanding, as well as to socially beneficial, peace-fostering, and Earth- friendly ways of life.

They invite us whether religious or not, to do the same!