Global Politics and Global Ethics: Status Quo and Perspectives

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By Hans Küng

I. PARADIGM CHANGE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

I begin with three symbolic dates that, despite the questionable nature of calendar chronology, signal the new paradigm in international relations that is slowly and laboriously establishing itself: its announcement (1918), its realization (1945), and finally its breakthrough (1989).

In 1918, the First World War ended with a net result of around 10 million dead, the collapse of the German Empire, the Habsburg Empire, the Czarist Empire and the Ottoman Empire. The Chinese Empire had collapsed earlier. Now there were American troops on European soil and the Soviet Empire was in the making. This marked the beginning of the end of the Eurocentric-Imperialistic paradigm of modernity and the dawning of a new paradigm.

That new paradigm had not yet been defined, but had been foreseen by the farsighted and enlightened, and was first set forth in the arena of international relations by the United States of America. With his 'Fourteen Points,' President Woodrow Wilson wanted to achieve a 'just peace' and the 'self-determination of the nations,' without the annexations and demands for reparations some in Congress wanted.

The Versailles Treaty of Clémenceau and Lloyd George prevented the immediate realization of the new paradigm. Instead of a just peace, there emerged a dictated peace in which the defeated took no part. The consequences of this approach are well known: Fascism and Nazism (backed up in the Far East by Japanese militarism) are the catastrophic reactionary errors which two decades later led to the Second World War, which was far worse than any previous war in world history.

1945 saw the end of the Second World War with a net result of around 50 million dead and many more million exiled. Fascism and Nazism had been defeated, but Soviet Communism appeared stronger and more formidable than ever to the international community, even though internally it was already experiencing a political, economic and social crisis because of Stalin's policy.

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Again, the initiative for a new paradigm came from the USA. In 1945 the United Nations was founded in San Francisco and the Bretton Woods Agreement on the reordering of the global economy was signed. Then in 1948 came the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, along with American economic aid for the rebuilding of Europe and its incorporation into a free trade system. But Stalinism blocked this paradigm for its sphere of influence and led to the division of the world into East and West.

1989 saw the successful peaceful revolution in Eastern Europe and the collapse of Soviet Communism. After the Gulf War it was again an American president who announced a new paradigm, a 'new world order,' and found enthusiastic acceptance all over the world with this slogan. But in contrast to his predecessor, Woodrow Wilson, President George Bush had no idea what this 'vision thing' for the international order should look like. So today the question arises: over the last decade, have we again forfeited the opportunity for a new paradigm?

I am not convinced that this is the case. After all, despite the wars, massacres and streams of refugees in the twentieth century, despite the Gulag archipelago, the Holocaust and the atom bomb, we must not overlook some major changes for the better. After 1945, over and above the numerous grandiose scientific and technological achievements, the ideas set forth in 1918 that had been pressing for a new, post-modern and overall global constellation were able to better establish themselves. The peace movement, the women's rights movement, the environmental movement and the ecumenical movement all began to make considerable progress. There emerged a new attitude to war and disarmament, to the partnership of men and women, to the relationship between economy and ecology, to the Christian confessions and the world religions.

After 1989, following the end of the enforced division of the world into West and East and the definitive demystification of both the evolutionary and now also the revolutionary ideology of progress, concrete possibilities for a pacified and co-operative world have begun to take shape. In contrast to European modernity, these possibilities are no longer Eurocentric but polycentric. Despite all the monstrous defects and conflicts still plaguing the international community, they are post-imperialistic and post-colonial, with the ideals of an eco-social market economy and truly united nations at their core.

In a perceptive article on 'The Political Framework for a Global Ethic'[1], distinguished political scientists have pointed out to incorrigible pessimists that despite the terrors of the twentieth century there is 'still perhaps something like a hesitant historical progress.' Over the last century, the formerly dominant political orientations have been banished for good

For one, imperialism has no scope in global politics after de-colonialization. Moreover, since the end of the South African apartheid regime, racism, a consistent policy of racial privilege and racial discrimination, is no longer the explicit political strategy in any state. Likewise, in the lands of Western Europe from which it originated, nationalism has become a non-word and for many people is being replaced by 'European integration.'

Along the same lines, by means of empirical and statistical investigations, in Heidel-
berg a research group of political theorists have noted two unequal faces of the twen-
tieth century. The first half, a continuation from the nineteenth century, shows 362
wars, 'wars' being understood 'as clashes between at least two parties of comparable
strength carried on with organized violence which are of some duration and are marked
by high losses.'[2] By contrast, the second half shows only 98 wars (i.e. around a quarter
of the first half), although the number of states has increased more than fourfold
since 1945.

Over and above the mere statistics it is decisive that whereas the African, Asian
and Islamic worlds continue largely to be governed by traditional national power
politics, according to the Heidelberg researchers, in the Western European countries
in which imperialism, nationalism and racism originated and which have caused the
majority of wars, including the two world wars, a paradigm change can be noted.
There is a move away from the confrontational politics of national power and pres-
tige, sometimes pursued with military means, which after two world wars has clearly
failed. The movement now is toward a novel political model of regional co-operation
and integration, and is attempting to peacefully overcome centuries of confrontation.
The result, not only in the European Union but also in the whole sphere of the OECD
(Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, founded in 1948 and
developed in 1960), including all of the Western industrial countries (the European
countries, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and above all the USA) is half a
century of democratic peace. That truly is a successful paradigm change!

So after this all too brief historical tour I want to move to the fundamental defi-
nition of the new paradigm of international relations. I have received much stimula-
tion and support in a discussion within the small international group of experts which
was convened by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the UN year of 'Dialogue of
the Civilizations' 2001, an endeavour which in the autumn is to produce a report for
the UN General Assembly.

II. THE NEW PARADIGM FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND ITS ETHICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

On the basis of the experiences in the EU and the OECD, the new overall politi-
cal constellation can be sketched briefly as follows. Here, ethical categories cannot be
avoided. In principle, the new paradigm means policies of regional reconciliation,
understanding and co-operation instead of the modern national politics of self-inter-
est, power and prestige. In specific, the exercise of political action now calls for recip-
rocal co-operation, compromise and integration instead of the former confrontation,
aggression and revenge.

This new overall political constellation manifestly presupposes a change of men-
tality, which goes far beyond the politics of the present day. For this new overall
political constellation to hold, new approaches to international politics are needed.

For one, new international organizations are not enough here; what is needed is a

new mind-set. National, ethnic and religious difference must no longer be understood, in principle, as a threat but rather as possible sources of enrichment. Whereas the old paradigm always presupposed an enemy, indeed a traditional enemy, the new paradigm no longer envisions or needs such an enemy. Rather, it seeks partners, rivals and economic opponents for competition instead of military confrontation.

This is so because it has been proven that in the long run national prosperity is not furthered by war but only by peace, not in opposition or confrontation but in co-operation. And because the different interests that exist are satisfied in collaboration, a policy is possible which is no longer a zero-sum game where one wins at the expense of the other, but a positive-sum game in which all win. A practical consequence of this for the diplomatic service is that ambassadors in the new paradigm no longer have to function as elite secret diplomats in the style of Bismarck but as political advisers, crisis managers and public relations agents in the service of their land and its citizens.

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Of course this does not mean that politics has become easier in the new paradigm. It remains the 'art of the possible,' though it has now become non-violent. If it is to be able to function, it cannot be based on a random 'post-modernist' pluralism. Rather, it presupposes a social consensus on particular basic values, basic rights and basic responsibilities. All social groups must contribute to this basic social consensus, including religious believers and non-believers and members of the different philosophies or ideologies.

In other words, this social consensus, which cannot be imposed by a democratic system but has to be presupposed, does not mean a common ethical system, but a common basis of values and criteria, rights and responsibilities: a common ethic, an ethic of humankind. This global ethic is not a new ideology or 'superstructure,' but gathers together the common religious and philosophical resources of humankind. It should not be imposed by law but be brought to public awareness. To use the words of the political theorist Alois Riklin of St Gall, a global ethic is simultaneously 'orientated on persons, institutions and results.'[3]

To this degree, a global ethic does not just focus on the collective responsibility to the relief of any responsibility the individual may hold (as if only the 'conditions,' 'history,' and the 'system' were to blame for specific abuses). Instead, it is focused in a particular way on the responsibility of each individual in his or her place in society and focuses quite specifically on the individual responsibility of political leaders. Free commitment to a common ethic does not of course exclude the support of law but rather includes it, and can in some circumstances appeal to the law. Such circumstances include cases of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and aggression contrary to international law. More recently, recourse for such violations can be had

to an International Criminal Court in The Hague, specifically when a treaty state is unable or unwilling to inflict legal penalties on atrocities committed on its territory.

What positive demands does the new paradigm of international relations make on the responsible politician or statesmen? I shall now go on to describe this.

III. GLOBAL POLITICS AS GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY

. . . global politics with an ethical orientation does not mean a complete subordination of politics to ethics. . .

One misunderstanding must be avoided from the start: a global politics with an ethical orientation does not mean a complete subordination of politics to ethics, since this does not do justice to the autonomy of politics. Furthermore, it leads to a moralism which asks too much of morality; calculations of power and self-interest cannot be neglected in domestic or foreign policy. Conversely, however, a global politics with an ethical orientation is resolutely opposed to a complete detachment of politics from ethics. Such 'Realpolitik' is ultimately unrealistic: it violates the universal validity of ethics and leads to amoralism. Values, ideals and criteria must not be neglected by politics if it is to serve humankind. In the face of a largely individualistic society and any militarized foreign policy that may occur, ethical responsibility is to be emphasized.

Here political science must indeed realistically start from what is, but it must not neglect what should be. Political science must certainly begin from the highly ambivalent reality of human beings and their world. At the same time – in contrast to the 'realist' school of Hans Morgenthau, (Morgenthau was a major influence on Henry Kissinger. I have analysed both these figures at length in my book *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*), it must not lose sight of the humanity of human beings and the great unexhausted possibilities of humankind, in particular in relation to power. Also, the supreme criterion for political action may not simply be reality, which can also mean bestiality in politics, but rather the humanity in which morality is rooted. In this way and degree, ethics always goes against the facts. That ethics, for example those found in the Decalogue, are time and again flouted is not an argument against them but an argument for them. Without ethics, human beings and their world would be even more inhuman.

If a new post-modern paradigm of politics is to become established in today's world despite some general resistance it does not need unscrupulous old-style strategists of power. Rather, it needs more authentic statesmen like the great figures of post-war Europe: statesmen who show intelligence, resolution, effectiveness and steadfastness, but who at the same time have an ethical vision and concrete concepts of cooperation who, with a high awareness of their responsibilities, know how to actualise them.

So a politics based on an ethic of responsibility in the spirit of Max Weber and

Hans Jonas means a middle ground between amoral Realpolitik and moralizing Idealpolitik.

IV. DIALOGUE BETWEEN CIVILIZATIONS INSTEAD OF A CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS

'*Opus iustitiae pax,*' originally a saying of Isaiah, plays a significant role in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas and thus in the whole Christian tradition. According to this thinking, peace is a fruit of justice. This strain of thought also emerged from our historical tour: 'Versailles' is the prime example of how a peace treaty which was perceived to be unjust and unavoidable resulted in new conflicts, indeed a new world war. Potsdam, Dayton and Kosovo are further examples. The Heidelberg research group mentioned above has calculated that of the 104 wars between 1945 and 1995, no less than 79 led to further conflicts and 65 of these conflicts led to further wars.

Conversely, however, there are sufficient examples of peace treaties that have been felt to be just in all decisive aspects by all parties to the conflict and have therefore been able to create a lasting peace. The Saar agreement between Germany and France (1956), the frontier adjustments between the Netherlands and Germany (1960), the Camp David agreement between Egypt and Israel (1970), and the reunification of Germany after the two plus four negotiations (1990) are just such examples.

One does not need to have spoken personally with Jimmy Carter to know the ethical, and in the new paradigm therefore also political, will which motivated this committed Christian to achieve a peace agreement between Menachem Begin (a Jew) and Anwar al-Sadat (a Muslim) at Camp David. I would also want to mention that it was the ethical will behind Tony Blair's indefatigable political commitment to peace in Northern Ireland that led our Global Ethic Foundation to invite the British Prime Minister to give the first Global Ethic Lecture in Tübingen in June 2000.

On the other hand, an analysis, say, of the conflict in Yugoslavia shows that in its very first phase in 1992 neither President Bush nor the great European powers had any ethical and therefore political will to resist, with any credible threat of sanctions, the blatant Serbian aggression which included the bombing of a civilian population. Secondly, over past decades Catholic and Orthodox church leaders, in contrast to those in South Africa, have in no way made use of the possibilities their power gives them to work through the misunderstandings, traumatic memories and hostile stereotypes present in Yugoslavia. Church leaders could have helped by initiating and seeing through an authentic dialogue that would have held the country together in a federation based on the Swiss pattern of building up a network across divisions.

So was a 'clash of civilizations' inevitable here? The answer is no, not at all. As early as 1984 I formulated the principle 'No peace among the nations without peace among the religions.' As a theologian, not least in 1992 with my speech at the United Nations headquarters in New York on 'Global Responsibility: A New World Ethic in a New World Order,' I committed myself to ensuring that the real potential of religions to work for global politics and world peace was taken seriously. Then in the

1990s I noted with satisfaction that Samuel P. Huntington, a prominent political theorist from the 'realist' school, had come forward. Unlike other, more superficial politicians and political theorists, Huntington perceived the conscious and unconscious depth dimension of conflicts in world politics and thus drew attention to the fundamental role of religions in world politics. Huntington's Harvard colleague Henry Kissinger, however, is of a completely different view. In Kissinger's monumental work, *Diplomacy*, he does not pay the slightest attention to a religious explanation and does not so much as mention political-religious figures like Mahatma Gandhi, Dag Hammarskjöld and Martin Luther King. Moreover, politicians of modernity like Lech Walesa and Václav Havel only get a short sentence.

After Huntington's article, more and more politicians and political theorists have observed that global politics is not only multi-polar but also multi-cultural and multi-faith. In estimating potentials for future conflict we must move beyond doubt and take seriously the possibility that conflict in world politics could take place between groups and nations of different cultures. After all, it is worth reflecting that the state frontiers drawn up by the real politicians of modernity in Eastern Europe and also in Africa pale before the primeval frontiers that are now formed by different groups of peoples, religions and confessions. Lines of conflict are visible between Armenia and Azerbaijan, between Georgia and Russia, the Ukraine and Russia, and even more between different peoples in Yugoslavia, and finally also the Hutu and Tutsi within several different states in central Africa. So Huntington is not inherently wrong with his prognoses that realistically we have to reckon in the future with culturally conditioned conflicts.

Though I do not think that the principle behind Huntington's fundamental thesis is right, I still want to make three chief objections to it.

A first objection is that Huntington's clash theory is misleading in that it presents a simplistic system of co-ordinates. Huntington overlooks the fact that the oppositions within civilizations like, say, within Islam, are often greater than those between Islam and the West. The most recent wars of all have very often taken place between rivals of the same civilization. This was the case between Iran and Iraq, Iraq and Kuwait, and in civil conflicts within Algeria, Somalia, Sudan, Rwanda, and Afghanistan... Cultures or civilizations as such do not figure on the stage of world politics, nor can individual states be recognized as their main agents. There are even alliances between members of different cultures, e.g. the USA with Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, and likewise in the coalition of the Gulf War.

A second objection is that Huntington's theory of a clash encourages thinking in terms of blocs. For example, thinking that pits the West against Islam or the West against Chinese-Confucian civilization. Huntington marks out each of the seven or eight 'civilizations' from one another and connotes them as monolithic entities, as if in reality they did not overlap or often, down to the big multicultural cities in Europe and America, interpenetrated one another.

A third objection is that Huntington's clash theory overlooks the common features between and amongst civilizations. Within one Christianity, he segregates East-

ern Orthodox civilization from that of the West and Western-North American civilization from that of Latin America, everywhere bringing out the confrontations between civilizations without even considering fundamental elements that these civilizations have in common – not to mention the common features shared by Islam and Judaism.

All three objections together mean that a battle of civilizations and religions is not inevitable. In principle it seems to me questionable whether there is any unitary global model of explanation at all in today's new multi-polar world, a world after the end of the Cold War and its bipolar consolidation of fronts. A sober assessment of the global situation will indeed take the cultural and religious dimension of global politics seriously, but it will not paint over all other dimensions.

Global peace among religions and ethnic groups is the presupposition and motivating force for a global peace among nations; increased militarization is not.

Here perhaps a consensus can be found in the discussion, which I will formulate in three key steps. (a) The extra-political conflicts of the post-modern era, just like those before it, are still for the most part about territories, raw materials, trade and money, i.e. about economic, political and military power. (b) The ethnic and religious differences and rivalries are certainly not the only paradigm or system of co-ordinates that explain territorial clashes, economic rivalry and power interests of every kind. Rather, they are the constant underlying structures in light of which the political, economic and military conflicts that have always occurred and continue to occur can be justified, inspired and dramatized, but also toned down and pacified.   (c) Civilizations and religions do not form the surface dimensions of all conflicts and therefore all conflicts are not this easy to map. Rather, with their extremely different paradigms, ethnic and religious differences and rivalries form the depth dimension of many antagonisms and conflicts between and among nations, which are by no means to be neglected. However, these antagonisms and conflicts are often even more present within nations, in individual cities, schools and indeed within families.

Therefore, my conclusion is that the allegedly unavoidable global clash of civilizations prognosticated by Huntington, a Pentagon expert, at best serves as the new strategy that individual military strategists and politicians need after the Cold War. For example, Huntington's thesis serves to underpin the need for an American anti-missile shield which, to put it briefly, is unnecessary, unlikely to be operable in the near-term, and, above all, an infringement of international law and the anti-ballistic missile treaty. Moreover, such a shield serves to destabilize the Russian-American nuclear equilibrium. Nevertheless, the USA has already spent billions of dollars on it and apparently wants to spend 60 billion more, though there is not enough money for elementary needs in social and development policy within the U.S.

Such misplaced spending is also an ethical question for policy-makers, a question

with an obvious response: No. The vision for humankind that leads to the future is not a clash of civilizations but a dialogue among civilizations. Global peace among religions and ethnic groups is the presupposition and motivating force for a global peace among nations; increased militarization is not.

V. RELIGIONS IN GLOBAL CONFLICTS

Political theorists have documented the ambivalent role of religions in political conflicts at the turn of the millennium in informative articles and have presented a perceptive analysis of them in light of a global ethic.[4] Such a documentation is evident in V. Rittberger and A. Hasenclever's *Religionen in Konflikten,* and Hans Küng and Karl-Josef Kuschel's (eds), *Wissenschaft und Weltethos.* Going beyond criticism of Huntington's clash theory, the first two political scientists state that conflicts among religions are above all based on conflicts over modernization. They argue that traditional religious convictions are exploited by rising elites to build up protest movements against aspects of modernization. In other words, fundamentalist movements are reactions to the failure of the state in coping with crises brought about by the necessity for modernization and development; political radicalization of religion regularly follows economic and social impoverishment. I do not pretend to know whether this is always the case. Certainly, many militant clashes arise less from conflicts over religion and culture than from conflicts over power and economic distribution. Rittenberger has written that if it is possible at all to speak of a "clash of civilizations" in societies shaken by crises, this can be done only when this clash in turn has roots in economics, society and power politics. [5]

According to these political theorists, however, religions can play a role not only in exacerbating conflicts but also in de-escalating conflicts: in conflicts which represent a fundamentally unavoidable basic social phenomenon they can counter acts of violence with a peaceful approach. The probability that the dominant elites will opt for strategies of violence depends on two factors. On the one hand this will happen where there is the possibility of mobilizing followers who are ready for sacrifice; this mobilization is more likely in conflicts over existential values than in ordinary conflicts of interests. On the other it will happen if there is support from the social environment, by the population.

At all events the mixture of political goals of elites and the religious convictions of the masses produces a '*highly explosive combination*'. Religious symbolism heightens the claims of all parties involved, increases their readiness for sacrifice and demolishes all trust between the parties in the conflict. In light of these circumstances how can the danger of escalation be minimized? What are the possible *counter-strategies* to such mobilization and antagonism. In present-day research into peace and conflict three things above all are discussed:

For one, *strategies of development and democratization* which improve the economic and social basis of the societies concerned are fundamental. However, they presuppose a state which is capable of action, and this is not the case in many lands of

the South that are shaken by crises.

Second, there is considerable scepticism about *strategies of intimidation and oppression.* Apart from special instances, the success of such strategies is highly doubtful as seen from experiences ranging from Algeria to East Timor.

Third is the *strategy of dialogue* which has become increasingly important for peace research. This strategy attempts to reinforce the moderates in a society rather than the militant fundamentalists. Moderates in turn tend to regard the use of violence in political controversies as inappropriate and morally reprehensible and therefore refuse to support armed conflict.

Thus the strategy of dialogue aims at influencing inner attitudes in order to win the proverbial 'battle for minds and hearts' argument. Here the political theorists see 'the opportunities for the great religious communities to promote peace', very much along the lines of the global ethic. They also believe that much could be gained. In view of the many levels of religious sources and strains of traditions, some of which also propagate violence, the important strategy is to find those meanings and weightings which regard violence and faith as incompatible, and require sacrifices for peace while demanding respect for those of other faiths. None of this is happening in the Middle East at present.

The *power of religions in promoting peace* can be seen in the *protest movements* which strive for radical political reforms and at the same time obligate their adherents to strict non-violence (Gandhi, Martin Luther King, the Dalai Lama, the South African Council of Churches). As well, this power is illustrated in the *mediating actions* of religious communities in political conflicts (Central America).

According to the political theorists I have mentioned, it is evident that given the present situation, religious communities should 'agree on common rules of behavior' and then 'also practise them'. That brings us back to the global ethic and my sixth and last section.

VI. THE SCOPE AND CONTENT OF THE GLOBAL ETHIC

In 'realistic' political science, and also in world politics itself, increasing attention has been given to the problem of *global ethical responsibility.* When my book, *Global Responsibility. In Search of a New World Ethic* was published (in German in 1990, in English in 1991), I could hardly refer to any documents by global organizations on a global ethic. However, three years after the appearance of *Global Responsibility* came the proclamation of the *Global Ethic Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions* in Chicago (1993), which I had the honor and the labor of working on. Six years later, when I was able to develop what I hope is a realistic and forward-looking overall account of a global ethic, under the title *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics,*[6] additional important international documents were already available. Among them were documents produced by the UN Commission for Global Governance, the World Commission on Culture and Development, and above all the InterAction Council, an entity made up of former heads of state and government which proposed

a *Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities.*

Ten years after *Global Responsibility* many politicians and business people recognize, even without the protests in Seattle, Prague and Genoa, that *in an age of the globalization* of the economies, technology and communication, there is also a need for the *globalization of ethics* in coping with global problems. The new Director General of the IMF, Dr Horst Köhler, remarked in his inaugural address in Prague, 'Indeed, the global economy needs a global ethic (Hans Küng).'

The basic demand of the 1993 Chicago Declaration is the most elementary that can be made in this regard, yet it is by no means a matter of course. It is the demand for true *humanity.*

> 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 trampled underfoot; their dignity is disregarded. But might does not make
> right! In the face of all humanity our 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 colour, physical or mental
> ability, language, religion, political view or national or social origin possesses
> an inalienable and untouchable dignity.[7]

It is a welcome sign of the times that today even a body of experienced and utterly realistic statesmen, brought together in the InterAction Council, explicitly adopts as the two basic principles for a global ethic the principle of humanity which I have just cited and the Golden Rule: '*What you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to others.*' Both are norms for all spheres of life, not just for the individual, but also for the family, communities, and for all peoples, nations and religions.

It is not just a matter of an individual ethic, but also of a *social ethic.* Certainly, it is true that since the beginning of modern times moral forces have been at work in science, technology, business and democracy, and throughout history have safeguarded the humanitarian orientation and efficiency of these spheres. *Otfried Höffe* therefore rightly speaks of an 'initial power' and a 'controlling power' of morality. This is a morality which has so to speak entered our institutions and systems: a '*systemic morality*' which concerns all those involved in the present system of science, technology, business and politics.[8]

But what would the morality of the system be without the morality of its subjects? What would the morality of *the institutions* be without the morality of *persons?* Recent events have shown all too clearly what happens to our institutions when their most important functionaries have no conscience.

It is not just a matter of an individual ethic, but also of a *social ethic.*

Examples include, an American president who became entangled in a web of lies and perjury which brought his government to the verge of paralysis.

Also, a German chancellor who, without any sense of doing wrong has built up a

personal system of power with hidden accounts, personal dependencies and patronage in office, can bring a great political party to the edge of the abyss.

Similarly, a single speculator can ruin his big bank or cause turbulence in all the world markets.

Further, cancer researchers with forged results, heart surgeons with excessive bills, priests or pastors with child abuse or journalists with fake interviews can bring a whole profession into discredit.

The *functionality of institutions* is indeed dependent on the *integrity of persons*. Therefore, it is also important for institutions and systems to be reminded again of some irrevocable directives as stated in the two global ethic documents mentioned above. *Four such irrevocable directives* have been developed which appear in all religious and ethical traditions of humankind. Of course they must be translated for the present time, and this is done in the documents. Here I shall give just one example of each:

Firstly, a commitment to *a culture of non-violence and respect for life*. Have respect for life! Particularly at a time when even children murder children, again, we have the age-old directive: You shall not kill! Of course that also applies to child soldiers in Africa and even more to their commanders.

Secondly, a commitment to *a culture of solidarity and a just economic order*. Deal honestly and fairly! Particularly in the age of globalization there is again the age-old directive: You shall not steal! That also applies to the star analysts on Wall Street who even in the stock market crisis of December 2000 were earning millions for themselves and their firms by issuing buy recommendations in their own interest, while losing their customers billions.

The third directive is a commitment to *a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness*. Speak and act truthfully! In the face of so many political and media scandals, again there is the age-old instruction: You shall not lie! That also applies to diplomats. Diplomats do not, as I once heard from a Swiss ambassador, "sometimes have to lie". Their first 'diplomatic virtue', according to the classic work *Diplomacy* by Harold Nicolson, should be a 'love of the truth'.[9]

The fourth directive is a commitment to *a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women*. Respect and love one another! In a time when taboos are being demolished to an unprecedented degree we need even more the age-old directive: You shall not commit sexual immorality! That is also true in an age of global television and of the prostitution on television of avaricious women who publicly offer themselves as new wives for aged multi-millionaires. These, and similar spectacles, are in accordance with the rule that anything that earns money is legitimate.

But that is enough! I have come to the end. How far the ethical principles that I have mentioned will be put into action depends on people, and above all those in positions of responsibility. But at the beginning of this millennium I am more than ever convinced that the great problems of the twentieth century cannot be overcome, indeed cannot even be tackled properly, without an *ethical will*, without moral energy. Both in the sphere of politics and the sphere of business we need new structures, but

we also need *persons with integrity* and a *new sense of responsibility*. Only in this way will it prove possible to practice the responsible *politics* which seeks to achieve a precarious balance between ideal and reality, and which needs to be found anew time and again. Only in this way is it possible to think of a responsible way of *doing business* that can combine economic strategies with ethical convictions. That, however, is a topic for further thought.[10]

Notes:

[1] Cf. D.Senghaas , 'Politische Rahmenbedingungen für ein Weltethos', in Hans Küng and Karl-Josef Kuschel (eds), *Wissenschaft und Weltethos*, Munich 1998, 141f.

[2] Cf. F.Petsch, *Warum war das 20.Jahrhundert kriegerisch?*, manuscript: Südwestrundfunk lecture, 26 November 2000.

[3] Cf. A.Riklin, 'Politische Ethik. Ein Grundriss aus der Sicht der westlichen Zivilisation', in Hans Küng and Karl-Josef Kuschel (eds), *Wissenschaft und Weltethos*, Munich 1998, 129-40.

[4] Cf. V.Rittberger and A.Hasenclever, 'Religionen in Konflikten', in Hans Küng and Karl-Josef Kuschel (eds), *Wissenschaft und Weltethos*, Munich 1998,

161-200

[5] Ibid.,172

[6] Hans Küng, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*, London 1997 and New York 1998.

[7] Cf. Hans Küng and Karl-Josef Kuschel (eds), *A Global Ethic. The Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions*, London: SCM Press 1993, 22f.

[8] O.Höffe, *Macht der Moral*, Stuttgart 1996.

[9] H.G.Nicolson, *Diplomacy*, London 1939.

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