ETHICS FOR THE 21st CENTURY

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REPORT
Report

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1. Introduction and Opening Session

The challenges of the world in the 21st Century with its new set of problems and situations are increasingly complex in nature and multiple in dimension. The threat to the environment and the constant depletion of resources, the ever-widening gap between the rich and poor, the societal changes introduced by scientific progress, the process of globalization on economic, cultural and political levels; these features of today's society are all united by the fact that they are global in character.

This condition, coupled with the unprecedented level of interconnectedness and interdependence among people from all regions, is being described as 'uncertainty', or a 'crisis' in the beliefs and values that hitherto founded societies. Humanity is far from reaching the solutions needed to confront the trans-boundary issues and problems that accompany the emerging global community. What seems certain however is that the conditions of such a community demand reflection on the basic elements needed to maintain a peaceful and productive community of the world.

As in any community, there must be a minimum level of understanding and accord on the policies or rules that will govern the global, and such regulations must be founded on a guiding set of basic principles that could mentor such a process. But unlike other communities, the global community has neither an over-riding constitution, nor tradition of customs to serve as a reference. What is lacking, in short, is a global structure for governance and an ethical framework as its reference. This connection between ethics and governance on a global scale can be heard strongly from the United Nations. As expressed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, the circumstances of today's events makes us all aware "[... ] perhaps more sharply than ever before, of the strains and stresses that accompany globalization and the need for shared global values and effective global institutions to underpin the global market". But how will the search for such values be conducted, and how will its effectiveness for global governance be implemented?

One thing seems clear. If there is to be a search by the international community for a common ground, there must be a space for an intercultural dialogue on ethics. The international community must make an active effort to begin this process of dialogue and understanding, and to provide a space within which inter-civilizational exchange can occur.

The need for international cooperation and action on the ethical responses which must accompany today's problems are reflected in the various ethical projects conducted by major international agencies. Today, one witnesses unprecedented efforts all over the world to promote reflection on the ethical dimensions of contemporary society. These

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1 Speech delivered at the United Nations, 14 December 1999
efforts conducted inside and outside the United Nations system call for the international community to recognize the need for responsibility and to think together about common values.

The vast majority of the various efforts deal with specific and specialized domains, from biology, business and environment to information technology, economics and development. These concern ethical issues within a particular field. They are concerned with the profound societal and ethical ramifications of transformations and developments such as in technology or science, requiring thinkers to search for new solutions to unprecedented problems and situation. But they are not necessarily intended to cover the field of ethics as a whole. In fact, it is difficult to imagine how one sectoral ethic could create an umbrella for the other branches of ethics, as well as to provide the foundation for global ethical problems which contemporary society faces.

What is lacking in connection to the various calls for ethical reflection are the fundamental questions: what is responsibility? What constitutes values? What is a notion of a community? What do these notions entail, assume and project? What is missing, in fact, is a coordinating agency to provide a space where underlying conceptual problems related to these calls can be worked out. What is needed is an agent who can organize fruitful interaction and dialogue among those who are involved and who can inspire the different groups to discuss and address the fundamental aspects of ethics. And this is where UNESCO must take a leading role.

The aim of this expert meeting was to wind up the Universal Ethics Project by addressing problems and analyzing the contribution the project can make to the international discourse on ethics (Annex I – The Program of the Meeting). UNESCO, because of its ethical mandate, should serve as the focal point for all efforts concerning ethics both at national and international levels, with the participation of thinkers, policy makers and representatives of the civil society (Annex II – List of Participants).

On behalf of the Director-General, the Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences of UNESCO delivered a welcoming speech stressing the importance of ethical reflection in the international arena (Annex III). This was followed by H.E. Mr. R. Carazo Odio, former President of Costa Rica, who stated the necessity for ethics on the road to international peace. He emphasized that disarmament is not enough for the building of peace. The foundations of a peaceful society must be based on values, such as respect and tolerance and must be motivated by a sense of common responsibility by the world community. For him, this ‘planetary age’ is in need of a ‘common faith’, built on solidarity and pluralism.

A message by the Secretary-General of the UNHCR was read. In his message, Prof. Lubbers marked the necessity of a dialogue on ethics in relation to the future of global democracy and a sustainable and participatory society. He also pointed to the initiative of the Earth Charter which seeks to realize a “shared vision of basic values that will provide an ethical foundation for the emerging world community”.

Dr. R. Muller, Chancellor Emeritus of the UN Peace University in Costa Rica, noted the importance of ethical reflection in solving the various ‘categories of human problems’ that the world faces in the 21st century. He spoke of his own experience of
war and violence, and of his belief in the power of the human being to make ways for peace and solidarity.

Dr. I. Eide, former President of the Norwegian National Commission for UNESCO, stressed the importance of a free and open dialogue for ethics, and the necessity for a space where different views could be exchanged freely in the spirit of cultural diversity.

**Session I**
*A Common Framework for the Ethics of the 21st Century: A Point of Departure for Ethical Dialogue*

The first session was chaired by Prof. F Dallmayr. The first presentation was given by Prof. Y. Kim, former Senior Director of the Division of Philosophy and Ethics at UNESCO, and currently the Secretary-General of the Korean National Commission for UNESCO. Prof. Kim argued that today's society gives rise to common problems, such as environmental problems or issues related to technological and scientific progress. For such common problems, traditional solutions are inadequate to create any type of sound solutions. The basis for solutions to contemporary problems must be based on ethics, or what he calls a 'global civil ethic'. He explained that this was the initial reason why, when he was the Senior Director of the Division of Philosophy and Ethics, he launched the ‘Universal Ethics Project’, and published the ‘Common Framework for the Ethics of the 21st Century’ to mark the beginning of UNESCO’s activities in activating international dialogue on common shared values.

**Roundtable Discussion:**
Many participants acknowledged the need for ethics on a global scale, but raised several questions as to the authority with which a document such as the ‘Common Framework’ would be presented to the world. Whether it is possible to make a difference in the world through such a document was raised. For some, the task to ‘define’ common general values is in itself problematic. Defining values is a long process that cannot be resolved simply by selecting them. What seems the most reasonable course of action is to take an empirical approach, i.e., the problem-solving approach in a given field. While there could be various opinions and interpretations of a general value, there is a possibility for a solid convergence between various values. There is a need to include the relevance of religions in such a document. It is important to involve the people from all over the world in the dialogue on ethics, because it is not possible to impose doctrines that suppose participation.

Overall, two main problems with the document were noted. One concerns the premises of the document. The other concerns the application of such a document. The latter problem seems particularly important, since the different aspects involved in applying such a document should be distinguished. The first concerns ‘translation’. How is it possible to translate values or norms into the language of different cultures? The second concerns the nature of normative guidelines. What is the meaning of normative guidelines in reference to specific problems? The third concerns the practical dimension.
How can the education of ethics be utilized to help resolve questions of conduct related to responsibilities?

Another issue related to the “Common Framework” includes the distinction to be made between morals, ethics, and law. There needs to be an analysis not only of the foundation of ethical norms, but also on its epistemological and axiological specificity. No ethical text should be final. It should be a ‘work in progress’ that could be adapted to include contributions stemming from open discussion and reflection. In addition, the question of the audience of such a document is not clear. In conclusion, the role of UNESCO in the promotion of ethical reflection was noted with satisfaction.

Session II
The Role of Ethics in the 21st Century

From the Perspective of Scientific and Technological Transformations

Session II, chaired by Prof. A. Honneth, opened with a presentation by Prof. H. Atlan. Prof. H. Atlan stated that today, the world bears witness to the limitations of scientific and technological domains which are confronted with problems with ethical ramifications that they cannot respond to by themselves. By referring to specific problems within science and technology that require ethical and philosophical reflection on the conduct of researchers and on the direction of research itself (question of gene endowment, patent of genes, etc.). For Prof. Atlan, there needs to be a double approach to the ethical reflection within the transformations of science and technology. First, ethical reflection should be geared towards particular situations in problem solving, and second, there needs to be what he calls a ‘distanciation’ in ethical reflection. This latter relates to the necessity to be open to other cultural traditions. In order to arrive at ethical solutions to particular situations, references must be made to the world tradition of wisdom and thought. For Prof. H. Atlan, philosophy can be the bridge to arrive at ethical solutions to deal with specific problems that science and technologies face today. This must be done, however, not by constructing categories of moral imperatives, but by considering what defines human fulfillment in relation to nature.

From the Perspective of Globalization

The second presentation was given by Prof. N. Dower. He made a distinction between different types of globalization; economic globalization, political globalization, social globalization, and globalization through technological change. He stated that within these different types of globalization, there has to be a serious consideration by the world community of the importance of values that are either inherent or emerging. In his view, there are two types of ethics that relate to globalization; the first is one that relates to the power structure and underlies economic globalization, founded on the ethics of the liberal market and of the sovereignty of States. The second is one that relates more to civil society and its social responsibilities. These two types of ethics and the dynamic between them describes the state of ethics today. The 21st Century and the globalization process give the possibility of an ethics founded on a high level of consensus amongst those who think globally. In fact, the emergence of the global civil
society, of the advocacy of global democracy, of patterns of global governance and citizenship all point to an emergence of a ‘globalization of ethics’.

**From the Perspective of Socio-Cultural Transformations**

The third presentation was given by Prof. P. Caws. By comparing moral theory to natural or scientific theory, he asked if it is possible to have ethical principles that are not culturally linked, but pertain to each individual “before and beneath cultural determinations”, much like in the theories of the natural sciences. This kind of universality would be the ideal. For him, the challenge is to see how ethics in the 21st Century can contribute to peace and to the quality of life. Ethics does not become practical unless it engages with the individual who performs actions. While there are no universal end values, it is possible to argue that there are universally necessary instrumental values, which are simply freedom of individual action. Freedom is a necessary value whatever the end value is. This leads to one moral rule; that no act should be done whose foreseeable consequences involves a diminution of freedom for any member of the moral community. If one wants morality to do the work of law, then ethics is a useful intermediary. The basic question which needs to be addressed is; who are the members of the moral community who’s freedom is to be guaranteed (fetuses, the brain-dead, etc.).

**The Role of Ethics and Cross-Cultural Encounters**

The fourth speaker was Prof. F. Dallmayr. For him, ethics is an overcoming of egocentrism. On this intuitive level, there is commonality between different traditions, religions or cultures. Hence, a basic requirement of ethics is an openness to the ‘other’: individuals, cultures, perhaps the ‘otherness’ of the divine. Ethics means that one allows oneself to be called into question, thereby to be ‘de-centered’, away from egocentrism. With Ricoeur, Heidegger, and St. Augustin, one can say that the self is always ‘other’ to itself. This view leads to the notion that ethics is related to ‘dialogue’ with the ‘other’. Perhaps at first as an internal dialogue, but certainly one that cannot remain as such. In the era of globalization, this dimension of cross-cultural ‘mitsein’ or co-being is of crucial importance. The interactions between different cultures provides an unprecedented impulse for a new kind of self-transcendence or ego de-centering. It calls into question the customary notions of identity, on the societal or cultural level. But one observes today that this opening up to the other is accompanied by forms of rigid self-enclosure, or lapses into neo-tribalism, manifest in ‘ethnic cleansing’ or xenophobia. In this context, education is ever more crucial for the survival of humanity. This education has to be about the ‘other’, other cultures, other traditions, in order to promote greater understanding about other cultures, which does not exclude education of one’s own tradition. If global ethics means dialogue, then each partner has to bring something to this dialogue. This is not a universalism of absolute principles, but one that is a ‘hope’, or a ‘promise’. This is the area of work for UNESCO, because its mission is to educate people for the future of our global society with the aim of conflict prevention.
Discussion:

Several points were debated during the discussion:

(i) *Overlapping consensus*: The idea of Charles Taylor that we do not have to agree on values, but on arrangements was debated. Could this position be considered as one that can ground common ethics? For some, this cannot anchor a philosophical position, since when the context changes, its consequences also change. For others, the issue is not about different values and common arrangements, but about the shared core of values and different theories relating to them. The lowest common denominator should not be aimed but one should look for an area of convergence of values.

(ii) *Dialogue*: The participants agreed that dialogue and exchange is the key to international understanding.

(iii) *Difference and diversity*: Universal values cannot ignore diversity. There is no incompatibility between cultures. It is for UNESCO to play the leading role in the exchange of ethical perspectives and to reflect on various approaches throughout the world.

(iv) *'People-based' approach*: The everyday reality should be reflected upon when discussing ethics. A ‘universal ethic’, should be applicable to everybody. Perhaps this entails finding questions that everybody can about his or her actions and its consequences.

(v) *The universal as a ‘promise’*: If universalism is not perceived as a possibility, then the world would seem to function according to darwinian principles. The notion of ‘promise’ is not to be understood in the sense of a social contract, but as a ‘promise’ that one makes to oneself, or as a promise to come.

(vi) *Importance of the knowledge of cultures*: Education was highlighted as of paramount importance, even at the primary level. Young people should be approached through their sense of integrity, vision and perception. While education of traditions of other cultures is necessary, equally important is the knowledge of one’s own culture, and the teaching of empowerment to each human being.

(vii) *The distinction between universal ethics and global ethics*: For some, this distinction seems important. Universal ethics implies a search for moral norms are believed to be true for everyone, and everyone has the respective rights and obligations connected to this universal morality, while global ethics refers more to the relations between States and the citizens. But others noted that what is important is not what we call ethics, whether global or universal. A claim on a certain moral value is a claim that concerns all human beings. For example, freedom from torture is not a ‘western’ claim, but a claim for everyone. One problem which needs to be addressed is that in certain parts of the world, that which is named ‘global’ is not globally determined. ‘Global’ should mean determined by everyone on the globe and not just by few countries or a few bodies. It was also pointed out that while international instruments are important, they are always agreed on and established by governments. Ordinary people have not participated and therefore there are no consequences on ethical terms, hence they have not ‘global’ in the true sense of the term.
(viii) **Question of the 'other':** Does the idea of “opening to the other” entail something like moral norms? If no substantive norms are introduced in the ‘openness’ to the other, it is not something that can be considered as a moral theory or a kind of universal morality. There has to be certain moral principles extracted from such a starting point.

**The Role of Ethics and Democracy**

The second half of the afternoon session began with a presentation by Prof. A. Etzioni. He argued that unless we come up with new concepts for dealing with the tension between identity, the Nation-State and the world community in relation to the notion of sovereignty, we will not be able to make progress on some of the most crucial problem of today. The essence of modernity has been marked by technological and economic forces, leaving behind moral institutions. The challenge is to find ways for the moral and political institutions to catch up with this global reality. Without institutions that parallel the scope of the global technology and economy, there will be no sound solutions for the future. Today, people’s deepest sense of national identity is challenged by globalism. Thus we need to reflect on the underlying dynamics of separating identity from Nationality, to see how it is possible to preserve culture, language, traditions and identity without continuing to invest the concepts in the old institutions of the Nation-State. For him, this issue is connected to the notion of ‘diversity within unity’, or ‘pluralism within unity’. He noted that although we have lost today the understanding that a community must be based on some sort of shared values that are universal, diversity must nevertheless be bounded by something which unifies. For example, when it comes to cross-cultural dialogue, within the diversity of viewpoints and opinions, there are certain elements which mark a unity within diversity. There are certain rights, like freedom of speech, which are not conditional but are universal. There are in this way elements of the society which unites difference and divergence. There cannot be a community unless there are some shared values, and therefore all future dialogue must carefully draw a line between diversity and universal rights. For Prof. Etzioni, the end point of intercultural conversation has to be the convergence of rights and responsibilities, liberty and community. The beauty of a dialogue of civilizations is that each participant brings to the table a profound concept.

**Human Rights and Global Ethics**

Prof. I. Kuçuradi presented the idea that ethical problems are directly related to the life of the individual. There is no decision, attitude, or actions which are indifferent to ethics or values. According to Prof. Kuçuradi, there is a distinction to be made between the ethical problems that an individual faces in everyday situations, and the ethical problems that a philosopher deals with. There are different epistemological specificities, which should not be confused. The two questions “what is right action?” and “what is right to do now in this given situation?” are different. While the first can be answered by a conceptualization of the term ‘right’, the second has to be figured out by the individual in a concrete situation. This second one, for Prof. Kuçuradi, has nothing to do with philosophy. Different still are ethical problems in professional ethics, which try to look for norms of conduct and action. There are different kinds of ethics which are being used in contemporary society without much distinctions. In the recent attempts to arrive at a ‘universal ethics’, there seems to be two problems; one is a confusion
between the usage of terms ‘ethical norms’ and ‘ethical values’; the other is a confusion between the terms ‘universal’ and ‘global’.

Her interest is to develop the future international role of ethics in connection to human rights which are attempts to introduce ethical concerns in public affairs and politics, both at the national and international level. For Prof. Kucuradi, in order for ethics to play a legitimate role in the international sphere, there must be decision-makers who have the sincere will to protect human dignity. The recent interest in ethics or human rights has to be nurtured by the knowledge of ethical values and human rights, as well as by the knowledge of political history. And in order for ethics to play an important role, there must be people capable of acting ethically. If our actions and decisions are to be effected by ethics, we need knowledge of ethics. Knowledge is necessary for people to take actions towards an ethical life, whose main constituent is each individual’s contribution to the protection of human rights of others and consequently, of own human dignity. This is why we need ethics education.

For Improving the Universality of Human Rights

Prof. D. Bell began by stating that there is a need for more than one ‘document’ to solve the world’s social and political problems. There is a need for many dialogues and documents. The idea of many human rights activists and theorists that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is the only document for humanity and that our thinking should just be devoted to ways of implementation is not helpful. Prof. Bell argued that there should be a plurality of approaches and asked what which ideas would help humanity to move towards a consensus on global values. First, there needs to be more dialogue, and that it is desirable to agree on some constrains beforehand as to what can be talked about, in order to produce a constructive outcome. The second issue concerns participation: who should participate in this dialogue? It should be more inclusive. But oftentimes, there seems to be an implicit constraint in many of these types of dialogues (that the participants should be English speakers or that they should be on the political left, no religious fundamentalists). The biggest issue for Prof. Bell, is that we may all agree upon ethical documents with no practical results. The question is to see how this can be improved. There is a need to allow for many kinds of enforcement mechanisms, and not to stick strictly to traditional mechanisms as the only legitimate ones. If other means, like mediation or public education, can achieve good results, these new channels should be explored. If the language of duties or responsibilities can achieve the same purpose or protecting global values, it seems dogmatic to insist on rights language. Thus other modes of implementation should be reflected upon.

Universalism in Ethics and Cultural Pluralism

Prof. G. Bexell stated that universalism in ethics means that ethics is not bound to cultural, national or religious boundaries, but can be lined intercultural, inter-religious, and international horizons. It also means that there is a set of shared values and agreements on moral norms, values and virtues. The concept of global ethics should be compared with universal ethics, but there are some specific implications in the present understanding of the notion of the ‘global’. Some refer to states and citizens, while others refer to global problems. But the distinction between descriptive and normative meanings of universalism is important. Universalism in ethics, in a
descriptive meaning, implies that there exists moral agreements, such as in empirical investigations. Universalism in meta-ethical claims, for example, can have such claims. Another important distinction is between abstract universalism and contextual universalism. The first implies that universalism is understood above one's own culture or religion as abstract and generalized principles. ‘Contextual’ means that universalism is seen as shared values within one’s own culture and morality. An important point is that commonalities in ethics are possible, with divergence in the wider moral landscape, entailing different motives and the justifications. Bell agrees with Charles Taylor that morality is always in some sense ‘thick’. But we can accept that these justifications can differ, and that we can agree on a moral level. There are two risks for the future of ethics, which have to be avoided. One is the risk of diversity, and the other, the risk of universalism. There should hence be a search to find a position that combines renewed ethical universalism and cultural diversity which expresses cultural and moral difference but not fundamental disagreements. We must find diversity in unity.

Discussion

The following points were highlighted during the discussion:

(i) **An active role of ethics in society**: It was noted that ethics has to get right into the process of the society, and not wait for things to take place. Many participants mentioned the urgency in trying to find ethical solutions for the improvement of human society.

(ii) **The question of human dignity**: For many, the concept of human dignity is the background for ethics. This concept involves questions on the concept of man and the meaning of life in light of modern technology. This means that we have to construct or reconstruct the notion of human dignity, rather than to receive it ready-made;

(iii) **Overlapping consensus**: Some participants, like Prof. Kuçuradi, challenged the concept of overlapping consensus according to what Prof. Bell and Prof. Bexell said. For her, consensus does not make a norm universal or ethical. For example, there is a wide consensus on the golden rule (do not do to others what you do not wish done to you). But this is not an ethical norm. This is a pragmatic norm, which can be used to protect your own interests, but not by which we can protect human dignity, albeit the wide consensus. Prof. Etzioni pointed to the difference between something that is morally satisfactory and morally sufficient. One must realize that an overlapping consensus is morally lacking and deficient. Consensus is very similar to overlapping consensus. It is very practical, but not necessarily ethical. There has to be a different basis, an ontological basis for ethics. There are certain self-evident truths, but these are not based on a vote. For others, like Prof. Atlan, this 'overlapping consensus', though it is misleading, is the basis for what he calls a 'progressively built universalism'. In the biomedical field, there has to be solutions to concrete problems. The best way to deal with these problems is on a case by case analysis and a convergence on practical arrangements and local decisions in spite of different beliefs. But this convergence should not be raised to the status of an ethical principle. It is a pragmatic minimum to start with in order to begin a dialogue on different conflicting beliefs. Furthermore, for Prof. Atlan, consensus is
not reached simply by a vote, but is reached precisely by shared values which are not necessarily explicit or conscious.

(iv) Relativism: It was debated whether it is possible to avoid relativism in ethics. For some, there is a theoretical way to do this, through a distinction between norms, moral judgments and values. Through this distinction and the clarification of concepts, one can go beyond relativism and absolutism.

(v) Rights versus values: For some, common norms must be expressed in the form of rights in order to give a concrete force to ethical norms which would otherwise be abandoned for individual liberty.

(vi) The possibility of shared values: There was a consensus among the participants that a minimum of shared values should be recognized by all, and that diversity is not an obstacle to this task. It was also agreed that the search for values that make communities cohesive in different ways must begin in the sphere of the international community.

(vii) Pragmatism: Some pointed to the danger of sticking to a purist notion of ethics, that one should not limit oneself to theoretical abstract discourses. There must be a consideration of pragmatic importance and relevance.

(viii) The positive force of 'negative values': Negative values constitute for some participants a very powerful basis for a strong responsible global ethic.

(ix) UNESCO as the ideal place to realize the 'promise' of shared values: Rather than focusing only on theoretical distinctions, it was noted that the search for ethics must be seen in light of questions of concrete relevance such as; how can we prevent crime against humanity, or how can we contribute to the fight against torture, to eradicate poverty, to abolish war.

(x) Ethics education: It was emphasized that ethics education is crucial in forming human beings to become autonomous moral agents in the moral community. This is the challenge for UNESCO.

Session III
Different Approaches to Ethics

Global Values and Ethics

Dr. R. Kidder focused his presentation on how to move beyond theory to 'praxis'. One of the challenges for ethics today is to drive the question of ethics higher on the public agenda. But this cannot happen unless it is relevant to the public. At the Institute for Global Ethics, there have been efforts to create a forum for public discourse on ethics. Awareness can be raised by using examples such as Chernobyl, a calamity produced by the unethical decision of engineers, whose consequences would have been different 50 years ago. This is a way technology leverages our ethics in ways that were not possible in the past and causes unprecedented damage to society. We are in a situation where we may not survive the 21st Century with the ethics of the 20th Century. The other way is to help people understand why they can make a difference with the understanding of ethics. We need a language of public discourse, which allow us to talk freely about ethics. Dr. Kidder said that the core values that emerge again and again
from the research being conducted by the Institute are honesty, responsibility, respect, fairness and compassion. A core set of values provides a metric, as well as a way to think about ethics. People can begin to reflect on their own ethical values. This is the first step towards ethical conduct of an individual or a community. What is needed is a serious communication effort around the idea of ethics, to explain the benefits of a public attention to ethics. There also needs to be a promotion of ethics education which can, effect the practical aspects and inspire some change on a grass-roots level. Unless this happens, UNESCO is missing a great opportunity.

Comparative Analysis of Approaches to Ethics

Dr. P. Morales analyzed and compared different global documents, namely, the Earth Charter, Our Global Neighborhood, Our Creative Diversity, the Global Compact, and the UN Millennium Declaration. She worked in collaboration with Dr. Ruud Lubbers, and chose documents from two groups: international organizations, and documents of the global society. These documents are all ethical in nature, and aim to realize a project for humanity and nature. If we compare the history of the UN documents on ethics and human rights, we can see an evolution. For example, the ethical documents no longer refer simply to human rights, but to human rights in relation to the future generation. Before, the responsibility for human rights was on the Nation States. Today, ethical documents are not only based on the responsibility of the Nation States, but also that of the civil society and business leaders. What is needed is a solid collaboration between all international efforts concerning ethics. There are common goals among these documents: to achieve a sustainable and participatory society. When consider the two reports of “Our Global Neighborhood’ or “Our Creative Diversity”, we see that they both focus on the notion of global ethics as a goal. Different actors – business leaders, policy makers, the civil society and NGO’s are all trying to realize a project for human rights; not only for the present generation, but also for the future generations. Other initiatives, for instance, the “Millennium Declaration”, state that we need to have global ethics. We should invite different groups – those working on the Earth Charter, UN declarations, etc. to work together with UNESCO in direct relation to its ethical mission within the UN system, and its role in education, communication and culture. We should explore the possibility of establishing a forum for a continuous dialogue on ethics and we should support coordination of all ethical efforts, as well as educative efforts on ethics and human rights.

Rationalism and Ethics

Prof. A. Honneth made a proposal for a universal ethics which puts forth some anthropological premises that would not normally be accepted neither in a procedural ethics nor a Kantian ethics. He proposed an ‘ethics of recognition’, and claimed that all moral norms are related to the recognition of human beings. He examined this ‘ethics of recognition’ first through a negative procedure, by asking what moral injury is. For him, all moral injuries consist of forms of disrespect and the denial of the recognition of the ‘self-concept’ of the person. He then asked what are the kinds of self-relationship which moral injury denies, and distinguished three layers of self-relationship; (1) self-confidence, (2) self-respect, and (3) self-esteem. What he calls an ‘ethics of recognition’ is based on three moral attitudes which recognizes these three layers; (1) care and love, which build trust and confidence. This moral attitude is inherent in care ethics
(religions); (2) respect for moral autonomy. This is inherent in modern and Kantian ethics; (3) social esteem, which develop capacities for social relationships. This 'ethics of recognition' is based on individual well being, allowing individuals to develop personal integrity with the inclusion of these three layers of self-relationship. These three moral attitudes build a moral point of view, and indicate different types of rights and obligations for the individual. Such moral recognition of the individual implies a moral relationship within the social sphere in which all individuals exist. This kind of ethics is not procedural, but substantive, because it values one good of human beings, namely, individual well being.

An Intercivilizational Approach to Global Ethics

Prof. Y. Onuma began his presentation by saying that he would like to introduce political correctness to the discussions, and pointed out the problems related to the terms 'universal' and 'global'. He said that 'universality' has been used throughout history to imply validity across the globe, and that the term 'global' is used in order to avoid the negative association with the 'universal'. He proposes what he calls an 'inter-civilizational approach', a perspective through which an analysis of global issues can be made with a high degree of legitimacy by people transcending racial, ethnic, civilizational and national boundaries. The basis of this approach is historical. Prof. Onuma said that in the 19th Century, the world was divided by various civilizations based on their own cosmologies. In the 20th Century, the influence of the West grew, with the late 20th Century reaching what he calls an 'exceptional' stage of the proliferation of the 'american way of life', with the influence of US mass culture, based on the capitalist economy. There is an unprecedented move towards one common culture, a global hegemony, while at the same time a certain level of animosity exists among cultures that were colonized and oppressed. In the context of this complexity, within which the possibility for a common ethic seems grim, Prof. Onuma proposes that international instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant of Human Rights(1966), the Vienna Declaration of Human Rights(1993), and the major treaties for the protection of the global environment as clues to global ethics which can transcend national, regional and civilizational boundaries. These instruments, for him, have a global legitimacy which no ethical and religious documents have. The role of ethics and religions, in this context, is to interpret these instruments in order to make them relevant for everyone. He noted that he would like to see two values added to the existing international instruments; the virtue of modesty, and the virtue to be content with one's life.

Discussion:
The following points were discussed:

1) The importance of ethical language: It was pointed out that in order to effect people, we have to reach people where they are and speak in their language. Prof. Dallmayr pointed out that there needs to be an equal representation of cultures and regions the dialogue on ethics. Otherwise, it creates a bias in the dialogue. For example, in the West, values are closely associated with property, and are considered as a way in which one projects oneself into the world. This is a certain language of values, which implies an egocentrism inherent in the Western mentality. For the
Buddhist tradition, for example, the beginning of ethics consists of a detachment of the ‘self’, of a ‘no self’. Therefore one must be careful with the language that is being used.

(ii) The self in ethics: It was noted by Prof. Honneth that in some countries, a ‘self’ in the Western sense may not be taken as a reference point for ethical theory. But one can translate the ‘self’ and ‘self-relationship’ to the term ‘autonomy’. The question can then be asked whether a Buddhist monk does not have to be ‘autonomous’ to arrive at his/her conclusion about the ‘non-self’.

(iii) Civilizations: Prof. Onuma noted that he uses the term ‘civilizational’ as a functional concept, and not as a substantive concept. For him, there is always an overlap between civilizations. One should avoid substantiation of the idea of civilizations, since this is what leads to ideas such as ‘clash among civilizations’. He said that he uses the term civilization is a cross-cultural perspective, and emphasizes the need for an inter-civilizational as well as an intra-civilizational dialogue.

**Political Realism and Ethics**

Prof. Njoh-Mouelle observed that within the sphere of international politics, there is an absence of ethics. For him, this sphere is founded on the principles of efficiency, success, ‘will to power’ and domination. He suggested some possibilities for introducing ethical values to political realism. In order to ‘moralize’ political life internationally, there is no use in announcing principles and rules of conduct if it is left up to each person to abide by it or not. He said that it is urgent to refer to a minimum of contractual engagement or conventions which also implies a minimum amount of sanctions, and made reference to the Kantian concept of contractual relation among Nations on an international scale, a “community of the citizens of the world”. We must realize that it is up to the international judicial system to foster respect for ethical principles. For him, the creation of judicial structures such as the adoption by the UN of the International Convention for the Prevention and Repression of Genocide in 1948, or the International Tribunal of Nüremberg in 1945, give hope for the future of ethics in international politics. Futhermore, work by international Organizations such as UNESCO, on creating the *Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights*, which promotes the value of life, should be promoted and simulated. But Prof. Njoh-Mouelle emphasized that declarations of principles are not enough. What is needed is a code of conduct to be adopted by the Parliaments of the world in order to foster these values. He concluded by saying that the world needs an Organization within the UN system strong enough to begin a “reform of the international moral order”.

**The Christian Tradition**

The aim of the presentation by Prof. J. Taylor was to give his analysis from the viewpoint of a “practicing Christian layman”, on how far Christian traditions, together with the traditions of other religions in the world, have sought to provide values and inspire life styles that have universal ethical relevance and impact through inter-religious co-operation and dialogue. For him, every religious and cultural tradition must face the new challenges of today in accordance with the principles of love, compassion, justice and responsibility. Today, ethical challenges which human beings face pertain to
the environment, human rights, and the promotion of peace and justice. In order to help humanity to deal with such challenges, religions must seek to find values inherent in their traditions. As ethical challenges and responsibilities are increasingly perceived as universal or global in their impact and in their potential solution, dialogue and cooperation between people of varied religions and cultural traditions can provide a common agenda to address injustice and to inspire new order and justice. There have recently been various efforts and initiatives to organize and promote inter-religious cooperation and dialogue, especially at local, national or regional levels. The Parliament of World’s Religions in 1999 brought together religious figures from all over the world. Such inter-religious cooperation has included participation in various international initiatives for ethical dialogue and reflection, such as the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, the “Earth Summit”, or the UN Millennium World Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders in 2000. These inter-religious co-operations attested to the fact that people are willing to come together to affirm unity in diversity, to listen and not only to speak, and to seek through dialogue and co-operation to make an ethical contribution to the world’s needs. UNESCO’s efforts in the dialogue on ethics, namely in the context of the Universal Ethics Project, may strengthen not only academic understanding but pedagogical application and ethics implementation of visions and responsibilities which are vital for human dignity and survival.

The Islamic Tradition

Prof. S.H. Nasr presented the Islamic approach to ethics and to global ethics. He began by pointing out that most dialogues on ethics have been ‘monologues’, in guise of a dialogue, dictated by a dominant culture. This is an important factor to keep in mind when we talk about ethics. In order to understand ethics in the Islamic tradition, it is important to see from what background the Islamic world looks at ethical issues. Islamic thought has a long tradition of ethics, and for Islamic thinkers, there is an important distinction between ethics, morality and law. In this tradition, law is inseparable from ethics. Law is divine law, and is considered to be a source of ethics. Today, when one observes in the Islamic world an assertion to the primacy of the divine law, this movement is not simply blind fundamentalism, but an emphasis to the laws which have ethical implications for people in society. For the people of the Islamic world, the vast majority of whom are religious, the divine law has applications for ethical norms. For them, the source of ethics is the word ‘Allah’ in Arabic, which is a word that describes character and an ethical model. To most Muslims, the use of the model of the prophet is what determines the ethical norm. International documents must consider this fact. How are these aspects of Islamic tradition in ethics universalized? There are two aspects of the response to this question. First, in Islamic thought, ethics, which comes from divine revelation, is not limited to the Islamic world. Second, the Islamic perception of man is that there is an innate goodness in all human beings, and it is through knowledge and the intellect that one reaches an understanding of what is good or bad. This is why ethics was taught in the Islamic tradition before any other subject was introduced to the student. These two aspects created the philosophical and theological basis for the possibility for universal ethics or an ethics which is global. The problem for Islamic thought today is not the problem of confronting other religious systems which possesses ethical norms, but rather the problem of coming to terms with other human beings who do not share the same world view, that is to say other forms of secular ethics which do
not believe in its transcendental origin. This is the challenge for the dialogue among civilizations today.

The Confucian Tradition

Prof. K.H. Pohl spoke about ethics in the Confucian tradition. In Confucian thought, there is no equivalent to the modern Western notion of the self and the individual. The Confucian 'self' is a relational self, defined through social institutions and relationships, characterized by interrelatedness among family, friends, communities, countries and the universe, and is marked by a sense of mutuality, responsibility and obligation. The maturing process of this 'self' is centered on acquiring ethical identity and involves moral self-cultivation towards a 'great self' or 'authentic self'. This process of self-cultivation allows individuals to transcend their respective and limited 'self' in order to attain the deep sense of humanity. One crucial idea is that of the 'mean', which is important in both interpersonal relationships and the process of self-cultivation, cultivating equilibrium between the emotions that will lead to social harmony and universal peace. Moral self-cultivation and social/political responsibilities in a community are inseparable, leading to a harmonious co-existence. By transcending individual interests and even anthropocentric views in a most comprehensive way, by playing a responsible part in the functioning of the creative transforming process of the entire universe, the individual ultimately forms a union with the universe/heaven. The central Confucian virtue is ren (love, benevolence, humanness), unfolding from loving care in the family to care not only of all human beings but of all creatures, leading to the understanding of the unity of man with Heaven. This kind of social virtue has a concrete psychological nucleus composed by the love between parents and children in the family. This elementary and universal experience can be enlarged and spread throughout the whole world, but with the special love relationship between parents and children remaining of central importance. This Confucian concept of universal order is based on the ideal of holding the mean through consensus, balance, reciprocity and complementarity, and is an ethics based on ideas such as self-transcendence, mutual responsibility, family values, relationships and the Golden Mean.

Today’s globalized world is characterized by the dominance of Western thought, with an abstract notion of the individual person, guaranteeing his or her self-interest by litigious means within a legal or contractual framework. An encounter with Confucianism could make us aware of these basic but universal notions which have become blind spots in the Western model; it may give a vision of an alternative modernity, one that is less built on self-interest, but one that provides a re-conceptualization of the value of human relationships, particularly in the family and the community, transcendence of self-interest and a discovery of other ways to achieve social harmony.

Discussion

The following points were made:

(i) Recognition and freedom: Prof. Caws said that Prof. Honneth’s concept of recognition could be translated into what he wanted to say about freedom. Everything he recognized as a moral injury on the basis of a
The denial of recognition can be seen as a moral injury on the basis of hampering freedom.

(ii) *The language of values and ethics:* Several participants noted that there needs to be an effort to translate ethical concepts into ordinary language that everyone can understand. The importance of reaching out to the world population on ethics through the language of the respective cultures was highlighted. There must be a search to find other languages for ethics that would be relevant to all cultures with modesty and mutuality into ethical dialogue with the recognition of other ways of conducting discourse. Furthermore, religious discourse must not be abandoned in ethical dialogue, since most of the world’s population speaks in the language of religions. The task is to reconstruct ordinary moral reflection. The relationship between moral theory and ordinary moral consciousness is important, because if moral theory is not a hermeneutical reconstruction of ordinary moral consciousness, it is a failure. It was also noted that dialogue and creative interpretations of well-known texts to spread ethical dialogue are essential in understanding ethics today.

(iii) *Dialogue among civilizations:* It was noted by some that the dialogue among civilizations must be a disinterested dialogue without the prior intention of achieving a specific goal. It must first and foremost be a way of getting to know each other.

(iv) *Problem-based approach:* Some argued that ethics should deal with practical problems where an agreement on conduct should be sought in different sectors and fields.

(v) *Philosophy Education:* It was mentioned that there should be emphasis on human rights and philosophy education for the enhancement of ethical reflection in the world.

**Session IV**

**Future of Ethics**

The last afternoon session began with a summary by Prof. Bell. After the summary, there was a roundtable on ethics for the future and the role of UNESCO, focusing on recommendations by the participants. Rather than adopting a set of recommendations, Mrs. Fournier asked each participant to give his/her recommendations which UNESCO would consider in respect to the future program on ethics.

**Summary**

Prof. Bell made a brief summary of the meeting by noting some main points. First, through the presentations and the discussions of the meeting, there was a consensus that there is a practical need for a type of global ethics in relation to the global problems of today’s world. Secondly, it seemed that this ethics should be based on cross-cultural dialogue and should emerge from dialogue, incorporating diversity. Furthermore, there is a need to respect human rights in the dialogue on ethics, while this should not be the end-point. The language of rights should not set limits to ethical discourse, and there must be other languages included in this dialogue on ethics, as long
as it does not obstruct the language of rights. Finally, ethical dialogue should not be the end point, and ethical reflection needs to be translated into concrete measures.

Prof. Bell concluded by giving some recommendations: (1) UNESCO should create a platform on which intercultural dialogue would be possible, (2) UNESCO should take the lead in coordinating projects for a world dialogue on ethics, (3) The approach towards a 'global ethics' should not be 'top down', as in one consensus document, but rather a problem-solving one focusing on specific issues or areas, (4) UNESCO should have an advisory Board to help coordinate the projects.

Suggestions for Future Action

The participants wished to make the following suggestions concerning the future action of UNESCO in the field of ethics. These comments were not discussed during the meeting, and are neither exhaustive nor systematic. They are included in the report in order to illustrate a possible course of future action by UNESCO.

- Creation of a clearinghouse for projects on ethical dialogue.
- UNESCO should make a solid commitment to promoting reflection on ethics and common values.
  Creation of a 'priority list' on the pressing issues that concern the world community and requires ethical responses.
- UNESCO should focus on ethics education and investigate the methodology and the content of ethics education. The focus should not simply be on teaching ethical norms, but to foster philosophical reflection on ethical values which are beyond norms. There should be a creation of a model curriculum on ethics, as well as a feasibility study on teaching ethics to children. The teaching of philosophy and ethics should integrate new communication tools to teach and disseminate information. It should also strive to dissolve the dichotomy of the global and the local in ethical thought, and integrate the local cultural resources of the region in which it is being taught.
- Initiating a comparative study on ethics. This study should nurture the teaching of philosophy and ethics, and would put emphasis on the importance of diversity of ethical thought in the world.
- Creation of an open forum for intercultural dialogue on ethics among civilizations. The emphasis should not only be on ethical dialogue, but also focus on concrete ethical problems (a problem based approach). This should also serve as a consultative network for the coordination of projects on ethics as well as the documents concerning ethical dialogue.
- Creation of a Glossary of ethical terms.
- Seminars on ethics in different cultures (i.e. Ethics in Islamic Thought, Ethics in Confucian Thought).
- Creation of an advisory board or a consultative committee.

It was noted that UNESCO should take the lead in preparing the groundwork for harmonious co-existence in the world, the preventive work for peace. Furthermore, UNESCO is in a unique position to make an ethical call to the world, reminding policy makers, the civil society and the world community of the importance of ethical reflection for the future of humanity.
Ethics for the 21st Century
Paris Headquarters, Room 16
September 21-22, 2000
Programme

September 21, 2000

Opening Session
9:00  Opening Speech by the Assistant Director-General for the Social and Human Sciences Sector of UNESCO
9:15  Address of H.E. R. Carazo Odio, Former President of Costa Rica
9:30  Message by Prof. R. Lubbers, Secretary-General of UNHCR
9:45  Address of Dr. R. Muller, Chancellor Emeritus, UN Peace University
10:00 Address of Dr. I. Eide, Former President of the Norwegian National Commission for UNESCO

Session I
A Common Framework for the Ethics of the 21st Century
Chair: Professor F. Dallmayr
10:00 Roundtable

Session II
The Role of Ethics in the 21st Century
Chair: Professor A. Honneth
2:00  H. Atlan: From the Perspective of Scientific/Technological Transformations
2:20  N. Dower: From the Perspective of Globalization
2:40  P. Caws: From the Perspective of Socio-Cultural Transformations
3:00  F. Dallmayr: The Role of Ethics and Cross-Cultural Encounters
3:40  Discussion
4:00  A. Etzioni: The Role of Ethics and Democracy
4:20  I. Kujuradi: Human Rights and Global Ethics
5:00  D. Bell: For Improving the Universality of Human Rights
5:20  G. Bexell: Universalism in Ethics and Cultural Pluralism
5:20-6:30 Discussion
6:30  Reception

September 22, 2000

Session III: Different Approaches to Ethics
Chair: Professor A. Etzioni
9:00  R. Kidder: Global Values and Ethics
9:20  P. Morales: Comparative Analysis of Approaches to Ethics
9:40  A. Honneth: Rationalism and Ethics
10:00 Y. Onuma: An Intercivilizational Approach to Global Ethics
10:20 Discussion
11:00 E. Njoh-Moelle: Political Realism and Ethics
11:20 J. Taylor: The Christian Tradition
11:40 H. Nasr: The Islamic Tradition
12:00 K-H. Pohl: The Confucian Tradition
12:20 Discussion

Session VI: Future of Ethics
Chair: Assistant Director-General for the Social and Human Sciences Sector
2:00  Summary/Discussions
3:00  Recommendations
5:45  Closing Address
List of Participants

I. Speakers

**H. Atlan** (France / Israel): Director of the Human Biology Research Center and Scholar in residence for studies in Philosophy and Ethics of Biology, at the Hadassah University Hospital in Jerusalem.

**D. A. Bell** (Canada): Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Hong Kong.

**G. Bexell** (Sweden): Professor of Ethics and Chairman of the Board of the Faculties of Art and Theology at Lund University.


**P. Caws** (USA): Professor of Philosophy at the George Washington University.

**F. Dallmayr** (USA): Packey Dee Professor of Government at the University of Notre Dame.

**N. Dower** (UK): Head of the Department of Philosophy at Kings College, University of Aberdeen.

**I. Eide** (Norway): Former President of the Norwegian National Commission for UNESCO.

**A. Etzioni** (USA): Professor at the George Washington University.

**A. Honneth** (Germany): Professor of Social Philosophy at the Goethe-University of Frankfurt /Main.

**R. M. Kidder** (USA): Founder and President of the Institute for Global Ethics.

**Y. Kim** (Korea): Professor of Philosophy, Academy of Korean Studies, Secretary-General of the Korean National Commission for UNESCO.

**I. Kuçuradi** (Turkey): Professor of Philosophy at the Hacettepe University of Ankara. President of the International Federation of Philosophical Societies.
P. Morales (Netherlands/Argentina): Academic Coordinator and responsible for European Affairs for the Steering Committee of the Earth Charter.


S. H. Nasr (USA): Professor of Islamic Studies at George Washington University.

E. Njoh-Mouelle (Cameroon): Professor of Philosophy and Adviser to the President of the Republic of Cameroon.

Y. Onuma (Japan): Professor of International Law at the Graduate School of Law and Politics at the University of Tokyo.

K-H Pohl (Germany): Chair of Chinese Studies at Trier University.

J. B. Taylor (UK): Theologian. Secretary of the European Churches Working Group on Asylum and Refugees (ECWGAR) at the Conference of European Churches (CEC).

II. UNESCO Secretariat

F. Fournier, ADG/SHS
G. Glaser, ADG/SC a. i.
D.D. Diene, DIR/CLT/ICP
A. Kazancigil, DIR/SHS/SRP
L. Lazarev, SHS/PHD
M. Shino, SIIS/IPE
J. Blom, SHS/HPE
H. Plinckert, SHS/HPE
V. Aldebert, SHS/HPE
A. Boundy, SHS/HPE
Opening Speech of the
Assistant Director-General for the Social and Human Sciences Sector

The world has, in the past 50 years, changed in drastic ways. The post-modern society, with the end of the cold war and the isolation with which it oppressed open exchange and communication, has paved the way for new political stakes. The weakening of the Nation State and the establishment of international structures and instruments, the globalization of economic exchange, the development of Multinationals and the consolidation of powerful groups have all lead to a shift in the global power structure.

We have witnessed the 'revolution' in information technology opening doors to new paths of unprecedented opportunities in worldwide communication. The possibility for accessing education and knowledge through such new ways gives hope to the future of education for humanity. At the same time, the new political stakes gives the possibility for an open society with good global governance as its core.

While certain elements of today's world give great hope for the future, we cannot ignore the negative. Indeed, we find that there is a widening gap of the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', not only of material wealth, but of knowledge; that there is an absence of dialogue and understanding among and between cultures, that there are still irreconcilable difference from lack of tolerance and acceptance, leading to bloody violence, conflict and war. In fact, in relation to the distribution of not only wealth, but of justice, equality and opportunities, the world has yet to arrive at a stage rid of injustice and violent conflict.

More than ever today, the problems concerning humanity obligate the international community to examine and re-examine the prevailing conditions and traditional solutions. In so many areas of human creativity and competence, the thresholds of norms are being tried and questioned, and the acceleration of progress and innovation are bringing with it an ensemble of new problematics. In the field of computer science and communication, the question of freedom is today harshly contrasted with that of regulation. In science research and technology, acutely demonstrated by the domain of biotechnology, the world is faced with new possibilities for the future of the human race. In general, within the sphere of scientific progress of the past century, the ethical consequences are being addressed. The definition of ethical guidelines in this domain shows the need to protect social interests, while the tension between scientific research and ethical imperatives continues to raise problems.

The global community must confront these problems at hand. But technological innovation is not the only area giving rise to global queries. One global problem that the world has to face emerged during the ecological crises of the 1970's. The issue of global warming and the need to protect the environment worldwide implied that if the rate in the growth of population, industrialization, pollution, food production and resource depletion were maintained, the earth could not sustain a sound eco-system. Another global problem is that of AIDS, a disease which has come to depict the universal plight at the end of the 20th Century.
In the 1970s and the 1980s, the world community began mobilizing their efforts to report on what was recognized as a common crisis. Commissions established by the United Nations, such as the Independent Commission on International Development Issues, known as the Brandt Commission, in 1977, the Independent Commission on Disarmament and security Issues, known as the Palme Commission, in 1980, and the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development.

These global problems which define our times illuminate our general perception of today's society and its inevitable need to confront the increasingly global character of human existence. Despite the popularization of the notion of the human global plight, its consequences and implications, the identification of missing factors in the intricate process of international co-existence are yet to be articulated and fully understood. What seems obvious is that there are multiple transboundary issues and problems. There must therefore be an active effort to compose proper responses. Such an effort must be founded on transnational dialogue and action. In fact, the multitude of global factors affecting our lives lead us to a similar conclusion: that without concerted reflection and action on the part of the world community on the responses to such issues, the possibility of coherence and solid co-existence seems difficult. Hence, this claim is for the world to reckon with itself as a community—A global community.

Indeed, it seems that the society of the 21st Century is awakening to the unprecedented level of interconnectedness and the unexpected degree of interdependence in the world. With this rise of consciousness, the level of uncertainty flies high amid the infinite choices of possibilities. Among the multiple questions concerning the future of the world which has now become a global ‘village’, one stands out as primordial: how is it possible to organize a peaceful co-existence in such a community of innumerable cultures, religions, traditions and customs? This question, in turn, suggests a flood of others; what needs to exist in order for such a community to function in a fruitful environment? What will be the common ground on which intercultural discussion, reflection and understanding will proliferate? How will it be possible to arrive at a sufficient level of consensus needed in society? In short, the conditions of a global village demand reflection on the basic elements needed to maintain a peaceful productive community of people.

As in any community, there must be a minimum level of understanding and accord on the policies or rules that will govern the global, and such regulations must be founded on a guiding set of basic principles that could mentor such a process. But unlike other communities, the global community has neither an over-riding constitution, nor a tradition of customs to serve as a reference. What is lacking, in short, is an open dialogue on the ethical elements pertinent to today's society and its problems.

Indeed, it seems clear that more than ever, today’s society requires us to reflect upon the ethics, not only for today, but also for tomorrow.

The function of UNESCO is to encourage all nations and peoples to find ways to establish a peaceful co-existence. UNESCO’s intellectual and ethical role within the UN system gives it the unique position to take the leading role in the dialogue on ethics, coordinating and facilitating the various initiatives.
UNESCO, through the Division of Philosophy and Ethics, has been conducting extensive research on ethics and its importance in today's society. The Universal Ethics Project brought together thinkers from all over the world to reflect on the possibilities to identify common values and principles. The document, "A Common Framework for the Ethics for the 21st Century", has outlined its results. This meeting will mark the conclusive phase of the Universal Ethics Project. In addition, through the Division of Ethics of Science and Technology, UNESCO has made great efforts in the field of Bioethics and the ethics of science and technology. The achievements have been the creation of the International Bioethics Committee and the World Commission on the Ethics of Science and Technology, as well as the adoption of the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights by the General Conference of UNESCO at its 29th session in 1997 and endorsed by the General Assembly at its 53rd session on 9 December, 1998.

This meeting marks our efforts on promoting and facilitating an intercultural dialogue on ethics. But in this endeavor, it is important to keep in mind the diversity of all stakeholders in the dialogue. Alasdair MacIntyre said, in the 2nd Edition of his book A Short History of Ethics, that he was mistaken in choosing a title so misleading. He said that in fact, what he was doing was writing the Short History of Western Ethics.

It is indeed important to keep in mind that there is, as Thomas Nagel says, no "view from nowhere". But this is, in a positive sense, what creates the deep richness of the human condition. What is necessary is not the denial of the particular perspective from which a stakeholder speaks out. What is necessary, is the recognition not only of the cultural references and standpoints of others, but also that of the self. What is perhaps interesting to reflect upon is an ethical attitude to ethical discourse; in short, ethics for ethicists.

What I am referring to is not contradictory to what K.O. Apel calls the "Transcendental Pragmatic Foundation of Discourse Ethics", proposing the procedural principles of discourse. But what I am referring to is much less abstract. All of us involved in the dialogue on ethics must be aware of our own cultural references and roots, and must not claim universality, nor blindly pretend to cultural 'neutrality'. Our hope is to raise awareness of the deep world heritage of ethical wisdom, and to promote mutual learning and understanding for an 'authentic' dialogue on the values that are to guide the evolution of the 21st Century.

Today's conference on "Ethics for 21st Century" is a major part in this endeavor. I hope that this meeting will shed light on the hopes and difficulties related this task of promoting intercultural dialogue on ethics.

I take this opportunity to thank the Assistant Director-General for the Natural Sciences Sector at UNESCO, whose presence here today is important for the future cooperation between the natural sciences and the community of thinkers in the human sciences. It is time to create better links between philosophers and the scientific community in order to reflect on the fundamental issues. I am glad that the Science Sector of UNESCO shows so much enthusiasm and spirit of cooperation regarding our
efforts. It is indeed an important task to bring everyone to the open table of dialogue and exchange.

Thank you.