

TOWARD A UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF A GLOBAL ETHIC

by

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Humans tend to group themselves in communities with similar understandings of the meaning of life and how to act accordingly. For the most part, in past history such large communities, called cultures or civilizations, have tended on the one hand to live unto themselves, and on the other to dominate and, if possible, absorb the other cultures they encountered. For example, Christendom, Islam, China.

I. THE MEANING OF RELIGION (IDEOLOGY)

At the heart of each culture is what is traditionally called a Religion, that is: "An explanation of the ultimate meaning of life, and how to live accordingly." Normally all religions contain the four "C's": Creed, Code, Cult, Community-structure, and are based on the notion of the Transcendent.

Creed refers to the cognitive aspect of a religion; it is everything that goes into the "explanation" of the ultimate meaning of life.

Code of behavior or ethics includes all the rules and customs of action that somehow follow from one aspect or another of the Creed.

Cult means all the ritual activities that relate the follower to one aspect or other of the Transcendent, either directly or indirectly, prayer being an example of the former and certain formal behavior toward representatives of the Transcendent, like priests, of the latter.

Community-structure refers to the relationships among the followers; this can vary widely, from a very egalitarian relationship, as among Quakers, through a "republican" structure like Presbyterians have, to a monarchical one, as with some Hasidic Jews vis-a-vis their "Rebbe."

The Transcendent, as the roots of the word indicate, means "that which goes beyond" the every-day, the ordinary, the surface experience of reality. It can refer to spirits, gods, a Personal God, an Impersonal God, Emptiness, etc.

Especially in modern times there have developed "explanations of the ultimate meaning of life, and how to live accordingly" which are not based on a notion of the Transcendent, e.g., secular humanism, Marxism. Although in every respect these "explanations" function as religions traditionally have in human life, because the idea of the Transcendent, however it is understood, plays such a central role in religion, but not in these "explanations," for the sake of accuracy it is best to give these "explanations" not based on notion of the Transcendent a separate name; the name often used is:

Ideology. Much, though not all, of the following will, *mutatis mutandis*, also apply to Ideology even when the term is not used.

II. FROM THE AGE OF MONOLOGUE TO THE AGE OF DIALOGUE

1. A Radically New Age

Those scholars who earlier in the twentieth century with a great show of scholarship and historical/sociological analysis predicted the impending demise of Western Civilization were "dead wrong." After World War I, in 1922, Oswald Spengler wrote his widely acclaimed book, *The Decline of the West*¹. After the beginning of World War II Pitirim A. Sorokin published in 1941 his likewise popular book, *The Crisis of Our Age*². Given the massive, world-wide scale of the unprecedented destruction and horror of the world's first global war, 1914-18, and the even vastly greater of the second global conflict, 1939-45, the pessimistic predictions of these scholars and the great following they found are not ununderstandable.

In fact, however, those vast world conflagrations were manifestations of the dark side of the unique breakthrough in the history of humankind in the modern development of Christendom- become-Western Civilization, now becoming Global Civilization. Never before had there been world wars; likewise, never before had there been world political organizations (League of Nations, United Nations). Never before did humanity possess the real possibility of destroying all human life--whether through nuclear or ecological catastrophe. These unique negative realities/ potentialities were possible, however, only because of the correspondingly unique accomplishments of Christendom/Western/ Global Civilization--the like of which the world has never before seen. On the negative side, from now on it will always be true that humankind could self-destruct. Still, there are solid empirical grounds for reasonable hope that the inherent, infinity-directed life force of humankind will nevertheless prevail over the parallel death force.

The prophets of doom were correct, however, in their understanding that humanity is entering into a radically new age. Earlier in this century the nay-sayers usually spoke of the doom of only Western Civilization (e.g., Spengler, Sorokin), but after the advent of nuclear power and the Cold War, the new generation of pessimists--as said, not without warrant: *corruptio optimae pessima*--warned of global disaster. This emerging awareness of global disaster is a clear, albeit negative, sign that something profoundly, radically new is entering onto the stage of human history.

There have, of course, also recently been a number of more positive signs that we humans are entering a radically new age. In the 1960s there was much talk of "The Age of Aquarius," and there still is today the continuing fad of "New Age" consciousness. Some may be put off from the idea of an emerging radically new age because they perceive such talk to be simply that of fringe groups. I would argue, however, that the presence of "the crazies" around the edge of any idea or movement, far from being a sign of the invalidity of that idea or movement, is on the contrary a confirmation precisely of its validity, at least in its core concern. I would further argue that if people are involved with a movement which does not eventually develop its "crazies," its extremists, the movement is not touching the core of humankind's concerns--they should get out of the movement, they are wasting their time!

Moreover, there have likewise recently been a number of very serious scholarly analyses pointing to the emergence of a radically new age in human history. Two of them will be dealt with in some detail. The first is the concept of the "Paradigm- Shift," particularly as expounded by Hans Kung.³ The second is the notion of the "Second Axial Period," as articulated by Ewert Cousins.⁴ Then, including these two, but setting them in a still larger context, I shall lay out my own analysis, which I see as the movement of humankind out of a multi-millennia long "Age of Monologue" into the newly inbreaking "Age of Dialogue," indeed, an inbreaking "Age of Global Dialogue."

Of course there is a great deal of continuity in human life throughout the shift from one major "Paradigm" to another, from one "Period" to another, from one "Age" to another. Nevertheless, even more striking than this continuity is the ensuing break, albeit largely on a different level than the continuity. This relationship of continuity and break in human history is analogous to the transition of water from solid to fluid to gas with the increase in temperature. With water there is throughout on the chemical level the continuity of H₂O. However, for those who have to deal with the water, it makes a fantastic difference whether the H₂O is ice, water, or steam! In the case of the major changes in humankind, the physical base remains the same, but on the level of consciousness the change is massive. And here too it makes a fantastic difference whether we are dealing with humans whose consciousness is formed within one paradigm or within another, whose consciousness is Pre-Axial, Axial-I or Axial-II, whose consciousness is Monologic or Dialogic.

2. A Major Paradigm-Shift

Thomas Kuhn revolutionized our understanding of the development of scientific thinking with his notion of paradigm shifts. He painstakingly showed that fundamental "paradigms" or "exemplary models" are the large thought frames within which we place and interpret all observed data and that scientific advancement inevitably brings about eventual paradigm shifts-- from geocentrism to heliocentrism, for example, or from Newtonian to Einsteinian physics--which are always vigorously resisted at first, as was the thought of Galileo, but finally prevail.⁵ This insight, however, is valid not only for the development of thought in the natural sciences, but also applicable to all major disciplines of human thought, including religious thought. For example, the move from the Semitic thought world of Jesus and his followers into the Hellenistic world of early Christianity and then into the Byzantine and Medieval Western Christian worlds, and further, generated a number of greater and lesser paradigm shifts in European religion and culture over the centuries.

3. The Modern Major Paradigm-shift

Since the eighteenth century European Enlightenment, Christendom-now-become-Western Civilization has been undergoing a major paradigm shift, especially in how we humans understand our process of understanding and what meaning and status we attribute to "truth," that is, to our statements about reality--in other words, to our epistemology. This new epistemological paradigm is increasingly determining how we perceive, conceive, think about, and subsequently decide and act on things.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the role in religion, in the "ultimate understanding of reality and how to live accordingly," played by the conceptual paradigm or model one has of reality. The paradigm within which we perceive reality not

only profoundly affects our theoretical understanding of reality, but also has immense practical consequences. For example, in Western medicine the body is usually conceived of as a highly nuanced, living machine, and therefore if one part wears out, the obvious thing to do is to replace the worn part--hence, organ transplants originated in Western, but not in Oriental, medicine.

However, in Oriental, Chinese, medicine, the body is conceived of as a finely balanced harmony: "pressure" exerted on one part of the body is assumed to have an opposite effect in some other part of the body--hence, acupuncture originated in Oriental, but not in Western, medicine.⁶ Our conceptual paradigms have concrete consequences.

Furthermore, obviously some particular paradigms or models for perceiving reality will fit the data better than others, and they will then be preferred--e.g., the shift from the geocentric to the heliocentric model in astronomy. But sometimes differing models will each in their own ways "fit" the data more or less adequately, as in the example of Western and Oriental medicines. The differing models are then viewed as complementary. Clearly it would be foolish to limit one's perception of reality to only one of the complementary paradigms.

Let me turn now to the post-Enlightenment epistemological Paradigm-Shift. Whereas the Western notion of truth was largely absolute, static, and monologic or exclusive up to the past century, it has since become deabsolutized, dynamic and dialogic--in a word, it has become "relational."⁷ This "new" view of truth came about in at least six different, but closely related, ways. In brief they are:

1. Historicism: Truth is deabsolutized by the perception that reality is always described in terms of the circumstances of the time in which it is expressed.
2. Intentionality: Seeking the truth with the intention of acting accordingly deabsolutizes the statement.
3. Sociology of knowledge: Truth is deabsolutized in terms of geography, culture, and social standing.
4. Limits of language: Truth as the meaning of something and especially as talk about the transcendent is deabsolutized by the nature of human language.
5. Hermeneutics: All truth, all knowledge, is seen as interpreted truth, knowledge, and hence is deabsolutized by the observer who is always also interpreter.
6. Dialogue: The knower engages reality in a dialogue in a language the knower provides, thereby deabsolutizing all statements about reality.⁸

In sum, our understanding of truth and reality has been undergoing a radical shift. This new paradigm which is being born understands all statements about reality, especially about the meaning of things, to be historical, intentional, perspectival, partial, interpretive and dialogic. What is common to all these qualities is the notion of relationality, that is, that all expressions or understandings of reality are in some fundamental way related to the speaker or knower.

It was the German philosopher Karl Jaspers who almost a half-century ago in his book *The Origin and Goal of History*¹⁰ pointed to the "axial" quality of the transformation of consciousness that occurred in the ancient world. He called the period from 800-200 B.C.E. the "Axial Period" because "it gave birth to everything which, since then, man has

been able to be." It is here in this period "that we meet with the most deepcut dividing line in history. Man, as we know him today, came into being. For short, we may style this the `Axial Period.'"¹¹ Although the leaders who effected this change were philosophers and religious teachers, the change was so radical that it affected all aspects of culture, for it transformed consciousness itself. It was within the horizons of this form of consciousness that the great civilizations of Asia, the Middle East, and Europe developed. Although within these horizons many developments occurred through the subsequent centuries, the horizons themselves did not change. It was this form of consciousness which spread to other regions through migration and explorations, thus becoming the dominant, though not exclusive, form of consciousness in the world. To this day, whether we have been born and raised in the culture of China, India, Europe, or the Americas, we bear the structure of consciousness that was shaped in this Axial Period.

What is this structure of consciousness and how does it differ from pre-Axial consciousness? Prior to the Axial Period the dominant form of consciousness was cosmic, collective, tribal, mythic, and ritualistic. This is the characteristic form of consciousness of primal peoples. It is true that between these traditional cultures and the Axial Period there emerged great empires in Egypt, China, and Mesopotamia, but they did not yet produce the full consciousness of the Axial Period.

The consciousness of the tribal cultures was intimately related to the cosmos and to the fertility cycles of nature. Thus there was established a rich and creative harmony between primal peoples and the world of nature, a harmony which was explored, expressed, and celebrated in myth and ritual. Just as they felt themselves part of nature, so they experienced themselves as part of the tribe. It was precisely the web of interrelationships within the tribe that sustained them psychologically, energizing all aspects of their lives. To be separated from the tribe threatened them with death, not only physical but psychological as well. However, their relation to the collectivity often did not extend beyond their own tribe, for they often looked upon other tribes as hostile. Yet within their tribe they felt organically related to their group as a whole, to the life cycles of birth and death and to nature and the cosmos.

The Axial Period ushered in a radically new form of consciousness. Whereas primal consciousness was tribal, Axial consciousness was individual. "Know thyself" became the watchword of Greece; the Upanishads identified the atman, the transcendent center of the self; Gautama charted the way of individual enlightenment; Confucius laid out the individual's ethical path; the Jewish prophets awakened individual moral responsibility for powerless persons. This sense of individual identity, as distinct from the tribe and from nature, is the most characteristic mark of Axial consciousness.

From this flow other characteristics: consciousness which is self-reflective, analytic, and which can be applied to nature in the form of scientific theories, to society in the form of social critique, to knowledge in the form of philosophy, to religion in the form of mapping an individual spiritual journey. This self-reflective, analytic, critical consciousness stood in sharp contrast to primal mythic and ritualistic consciousness. When self-reflective logos emerged in the Axial Period, it tended to oppose the traditional mythos. Of course, mythic and ritualistic forms of consciousness survive in

the post-Axial Period even to this day, but they are often submerged, surfacing chiefly in dreams, literature, and art.

Following the lead of Ewert Cousins, if we shift our gaze from the first millennium B.C.E. to the eve of the twenty-first century, we can discern another transformation of consciousness, which is so profound and far-reaching that he calls it the "Second Axial Period."¹² Like the first, it is happening simultaneously around the earth, and like the first it will shape the horizon of consciousness for future centuries. Not surprisingly, too, it will have great significance for world religions, which were constituted in the First Axial Period. However, the new form of consciousness is different from that of the First Axial Period. Then it was individual consciousness, now it is global consciousness.

This global consciousness which is generated on a "horizontal" level through the worldwide meeting of cultures and religions, is only one of the global characteristics of the Second Axial Period. The consciousness of this period is global in another sense, namely, in rediscovering its roots in the earth. At the very moment when the various cultures and religions are meeting each other and creating a new global community, our life on the planet is being threatened. The very tools which we have used to bring about this convergence-- industrialization and technology--are undercutting the biological support system that sustains life on our planet. The future of consciousness, even life on the earth, is shrouded in a cloud of uncertainty.

Cousins is not suggesting a romantic attempt to live in the past, rather that the evolution of consciousness proceeds by way of recapitulation. Having developed self-reflective, analytic, critical consciousness in the First Axial Period, we must now, while retaining these values, reappropriate and integrate into that consciousness the collective and cosmic dimensions of the pre-Axial consciousness. We must recapture the unity of tribal consciousness by seeing humanity as a single tribe.

Further, we must see this single tribe related organically to the total cosmos. This means that the consciousness of the twenty-first century will be global from two perspectives: (1) from a horizontal perspective, cultures and religions must meet each other on the surface of the globe, entering into creative encounters that will produce a complexified collective consciousness; (2) from a vertical perspective, they must plunge their roots deep into the earth in order to provide a stable and secure base for future development. This new global consciousness must be organically ecological, supported by structures that will insure justice and peace. The voices of the oppressed must be heard and heeded: the poor, women, racial and ethnic minorities. These groups, along with the earth itself, can be looked upon as the prophets and teachers of the Second Axial Period. This emerging twofold global consciousness is not only a creative possibility to enhance the twenty-first century; it is an absolute necessity if we are to survive.

5. Globalization

Since the 16th-century European "Age of Discovery" the earth has tended more and more to become, as Wendell Wilkie put it in 1940, "One World." This increasingly happened in the form of "Christendom" dominating and colonizing the rest of the world. In the 19th century, however, "Christendom" became less and less "Christian" and more and more the "secular West," shaped by a secular ideology, or ideologies, alternative to

Christianity. Still, the religious and ideological cultures of the West, even as they struggled with each other, dealt with other cultures and their religions in the customary manner of ignoring them or attempting to dominate, and even absorb, them--though it became increasingly obvious that the latter was not likely to happen.

As the 20th century drew to a close, however, all of those ways of relating become increasingly impossible to sustain. For example: What happened in other cultures quickly led young men and women of the West to die on the volcanic ash of Iwo Jima or the desert sands of Kuwait. But more than that, the "West" could no longer escape what was done in the "First World," such as the production of acid rain, in the "Second World," such as the Chernobyl nuclear accident, or in the "Third World," such as the mass destruction of the Amazon rain forest, "the world's lungs."

At the same time the world has been slowly, painfully emerging from the millennia-long Age of Monologue into the Age of Dialogue. As noted above, until beginning a century or so ago, each religion, and then ideology--each culture--tended to be very certain that it alone had the complete "explanation of the ultimate meaning of life, and how to live accordingly." Then through the series of revolutions in understanding, which began in the West but ultimately spread more and more throughout the whole world, the limitedness of all statements about the meaning of things began to dawn on isolated thinkers, and then increasingly on the middle and even grass-roots levels of humankind: The epistemological revolutions of historicism, pragmatism, sociology of knowledge, language analysis, hermeneutics, and finally dialogue.

Now that it is more and more understood that the Muslim, Christian, secularist, Buddhist, etc. perception of the meaning of things is necessarily limited, the Muslim, Christian, secularist, etc. increasingly feels not only no longer driven to replace, or at least dominate, all other religions, ideologies, cultures, but even drawn to enter into dialogue with them, so as to expand, deepen, enrich each of their necessarily limited perceptions of the meaning of things. Thus, often with squinting, blurry eyes, humankind is emerging from the relative darkness of the "Age of Monologue" into the dawning "Age of Dialogue"--dialogue understood as a conversation with someone who differs from us primarily so we can learn, because of course since we now growingly realize that our understanding of the meaning of reality is necessarily limited, we might learn more about reality's meaning through someone else's perception of it.

6. The Age of Global Dialogue

Ewert Cousins has basically affirmed everything Hans Kung has described as the newly emerging contemporary paradigm-shift, but Cousins sees the present shift as much more profound than simply another in a series of major paradigm-shifts of human history. He sees the current transformation as a shift of the magnitude of the First Axial Period which will similarly reshape human consciousness. I too want to basically affirm what Kung sees as the emerging contemporary Major Paradigm-Shift, as well as with Cousins that this shift is so profound as to match in magnitude the transformation of human consciousness of the Axial Period, so that it should be referred to as a Second Axial Period.

More than that, however, I am persuaded that what humankind is entering into now is not just the latest in a long series of major paradigm-shifts, as Hans Kung has so carefully and clearly analyzed. I am also persuaded that it is even more than the massive move into the consciousness transforming Second Axial Period, as Ewert Cousins has so thoroughly demonstrated. Beyond these two radical shifts, though of course including both of them, humankind is emerging out of the "from-the beginning-till- now" millennia-long "Age of Monologue" into the newly dawning "Age of Dialogue."

The turn toward dialogue is, in my judgment, the most fundamental, the most radical and utterly transformative of the key elements of the newly emerging paradigm, which Hans Kung has so penetratingly outlined, and which Ewert Cousins also perceptively discerns as one of the central constituents of the Second Axial Age. However, that shift from monologue to dialogue constitutes such a radical reversal in human consciousness, is so utterly new in the history of humankind from the beginning, that it must be designated as literally "revolutionary," that is, it turns everything absolutely around. In brief: Dialogue is a whole new way of thinking in human history.

To sum up and reiterate: In the latter part of the twentieth century humankind is undergoing a Macro-Paradigm-Shift (Hans Kung). More than that, at this time humankind is moving into a transformative shift in consciousness of the magnitude of the Axial Period (800-200 B.C.E.) so that we must speak of the emerging of the Second Axial Period (Ewert Cousins). Even more profound, however, now at the edge of the Third Millennium humankind is slipping out of the shadowy Age of Monologue, where it has been since its beginning, into the dawn of the Age of Dialogue (Leonard Swidler). Into this new Age of Dialogue Kung's Macro Paradigm Shift and Cousins' Second Axial Period are sublated (*aufgehoben*, in Hegel's terminology), that is, taken up and transformed. Moreover, as Ewert Cousins has already detailed, humankind's consciousness is becoming increasingly global. Hence, our dialogue partners necessarily must also be increasingly global. In this new Age of Dialogue dialogue on a global basis is now not only a possibility, it is a necessity. As I noted in the title of a recent book-- humankind is faced with ultimately with two choices: Dialogue or Death!¹³

III. NEED FOR A GLOBAL ETHIC

When the fact of the epistemological revolutions leading to the growing necessity of interreligious, interideological, intercultural dialogue is coupled with the fact of all humankind's interdependency--such that any significant part of humanity could precipitate the whole of the globe into a social, economic, nuclear, environmental or other catastrophe--there arises the pressing need to focus the energy of these dialogues on not only how humans perceive and understand the world and its meaning, but also on how they should act in relationship to themselves, to other persons, and to nature, within the context of reality's undergirding, pervasive, overarching source, energy and goal, however understood. In brief, humankind increasingly desperately needs to engage in a dialogue on the development of, not a Buddhist ethic, a Christian ethic, a Marxist ethic, etc., but of a global ethic--and I believe a key instrument in that direction will be the shaping of a UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF A GLOBAL ETHIC.

I say ethic in the singular rather than ethics in the plural, because what is needed is not a full blown global ethics in great detail--indeed, such would not even be possible--but a

global consensus on the fundamental attitude toward good and evil and the basic and middle principles to put it into action. Clearly also, this ethic must be global. It will not be sufficient to have a common ethic for Westerners or Africans or Asians, etc. The destruction, for example, of the ozone layer or the loosing of a destructive gene mutation by any one group will be disastrous for all.

I say also that this UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF A GLOBAL ETHIC must be arrived at by consensus through dialogue. Attempts at the imposition of a unitary ethics by various kinds of force have been had aplenty, and they have inevitably fallen miserably short of globality. The most recent failures can be seen in the widespread collapse of communism, and in an inverse way in the resounding rejection of secularism by resurgent Islamism.

That the need for a global ethic is most urgent is becoming increasingly apparent to all; humankind no longer has the luxury of letting such an ethic slowly and haphazardly grow by itself, as it willy nilly will gradually happen. It is vital that there be a conscious focusing of energy on such a development. Immediate action is necessary:

- 1) Every scholarly institution, whether related to a religion or ideology or not, needs to press its experts of the widest variety of disciplines to use their creativity among themselves and in conjunction with scholars from other institutions, both religiously related and not, in formulating a Global Ethic.
- 2) Every major religion and ethical group needs to commission its expert scholars to focus their research and reflection on articulating a Global Ethic from the perspective of their religion or ethical group--in dialogue with all other religions and ethical groups.
- 3) Collaborative "Working Groups," of scholars in the field of ethics which are very deliberately interreligious, interideological need to be formed specifically to tackle this momentous task, and those which already exist need to focus their energies on it.
- 4) Beyond that there needs to be a major permanent Global Ethic Research Center, which will have some of the best experts from the world's major religions and ethical groups in residence, perhaps for years at a stretch, pursuing precisely this topic in its multiple ramifications.

When the UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF A GLOBAL ETHIC is finally drafted--after multiple consultation, revision and eventual acceptance by the full range of religious and ethical institutions--it will then serve as a minimal ethical standard for humankind to live up to, much as the United Nation's 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Through the former, the moral force of the world's religious and ethical institutions can be brought to bear especially on those issues which are not very susceptible to the legal and political force of the latter. Such an undertaking by the Religions and Ideologies of the world would be different from, but complementary to, the work of the United Nations.

After the initial period, which doubtless would last several years, the "Global Ethic Research Center" could serve as an authoritative religious and ideological scholarly locus to which always-new specific problems of a global ethic could be submitted for

evaluation, analysis and response. The weightiness of the responses would be "substantive," not "formal." That is, its solutions would carry weight because of their inherent persuasiveness coming from their intellectual and spiritual insight and wisdom.

IV. PRINCIPLES OF A UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF A GLOBAL ETHIC

Let me first offer some suggestions of the general notions that I believe ought to shape a UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF GLOBAL ETHIC, and then offer a tentative draft constructed in their light:

I. The Declaration should use language and images that are acceptable to all major religions and ethical groups; hence, its language ought to be "humanity-based," rather than from authoritative religious books; it should be from "below," not from "above."

II. Therefore, it should be anthropo-centric, indeed more, it must be anthropo-cosmo-centric, for we can not be fully human except within the context of the whole of reality.

III. The affirmations should be dynamic in form in the sense that they will be susceptible to being sublated (aufgehoben), that is, they might properly be reinterpreted by being taken up into a larger framework.

IV. The Declaration needs to set inviolable minimums, but also open-ended maximums to be striven for; but maximums may not be required, for it might violate the freedom-minimums of some persons.

V. It could well start with--though not limit itself to-- elements of the so-called "Golden Rule": Treat others as we would be treated.

Excursus: the "Golden Rule"

A glimpse of just how pervasive the "Golden Rule" is, albeit in various forms and expressions, in the world's religions and ideologies, great and small, can be garnered from this partial listing:

1) Perhaps the oldest recorded version--which is cast in a positive form--stems from Zoroaster (628-551 B.C.E.): "That which is good for all and any one, for whomsoever-- that is good for me...what I hold good for self, I should for all. Only Law Universal is true Law" (Gathas, 43.1).

2) Confucius (551-479 B.C.E.), when asked "Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life?" said: "Do not to others what you do not want done to yourself" (Analects, 12.2 & 15.23). Confucius also stated in a variant version: "What I do not wish others to do to me, that also I wish not to do to them" (Analects, 5.11).

3) The founder of Jainism was Vardhamana, known as Mahavira ("Great Hero--540-468 B.C.E.); the various scriptures of Jainism, however, derived from a later period: "A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated" (Sutrakri-tanga 1.11.33). "One who you think should be hit is none else but you.... Therefore,

neither does he cause violence to others nor does he make others do so" (Acarangasutra 5.101-2).

4) The founder of Buddhism was Siddhartha Gautama, known as the Buddha ("Enlightened One"--563-483 B.C.E.); the various scriptures of Buddhism also derived from a later period: "Comparing oneself to others in such terms as 'Just as I am so are they, just as they are so am I,' he should neither kill nor cause others to kill" (Sutta Nipata 705). "Here am I fond of my life, not wanting to die, fond of pleasure and averse from pain. Suppose someone should rob me of my life.... If I in turn should rob of his life one fond of his life.... How could I inflict that upon another?" (Samyutta Nikaya v.353).

5) The Hindu epic poem, the 3rd-century B.C.E. Mahabharata, states that its "Golden Rule," which is expressed in both positive and negative form, is the summary of all Hindu teaching, "the whole Dharma": "Vyasa says: Do not to others what you do not wish done to yourself; and wish for others too what you desire and long for for yourself--this is the whole of Dharma; heed it well" (Mahabharata, Anusasana Parva 113.8).

6) In the biblical book of Leviticus (composed in the fifth century B.C.E., though some of its material may be more ancient) the Hebrew version of the "Golden Rule" is stated positively: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19: 18).

7) The deuterocanonical biblical Tobit was written around the year 200 B.C.E. and contains a negative version--as most are--of the "Golden Rule": "Never do to anyone else anything that you would not want someone to do to you" (Tobit 4:15).

8) The major founder of Rabbinic Judaism, Hillel, who lived about a generation before Jesus, though he may also have been his teacher, taught that the "Golden Rule"--his version being both positive and negative-- was the heart of the Torah; "all the rest was commentary": "Do not do to others what you would not have done to yourself" (BTalmud, Shabbath 31a).

9) Following in this Jewish tradition, Jesus stated the "Golden Rule" in a positive form, saying that it summed up the whole Torah and prophets: "Do for others just what you want them to do for you" (Luke 6:31); "Do for others what you want them to do for you: this is the meaning of the Law of Moses [Torah] and of the teachings of the prophets" (Matthew 7:12).

10) In the seventh century of the Common Era Mohammed is said to have claimed that the "Golden Rule" is the "noblest Religion": "Noblest Religion is this-- that you should like for others what you like for yourself; and what you feel painful for yourself, hold that as painful for all others too." Again: "No man is a true believer unless he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself."¹⁴

11) The "Golden Rule" is likewise found in some non-literate religions as well: "One going to take a pointed stick to pinch a baby bird should first try it on himself to feel how it hurts"¹⁵

12) The eighteenth-century Western philosopher Immanuel Kant came up with a "rational" version of the "Golden Rule" in his famous "Categorical Imperative," or "Law of Universal Fairness": "Act on maxims which can at the same time have for their object themselves as universal laws of nature.... Treat humanity in every case as an end, never as a means only."¹⁶

13) The late nineteenth-century founder of Baha'ism, Baha'ullah, wrote: "He should not wish for others that which he doth not wish for himself, nor promise that which he doth not fulfill."¹⁷

14) In 1915 a new version of Buddhism, Won Buddhism, was founded in Korea by the Great Master Sotaesan. In the teachings he left behind are found variants of the "Golden Rule": "Be right yourself before you correct others. Instruct yourself first before you teach others. Do favors for others before you seek favors from them." "Ordinary people may appear smart in doing things only for themselves, but they are really suffering a loss. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas may appear to be stupid in doing things only for others, but eventually they benefit themselves."¹⁸

It is clear that the core of the world's major Religions, the "Golden Rule," "does not attempt the futile and impossible task of abolishing and annihilating the authentic ego. On the contrary, it tends to make concern for the authentic ego the measure of altruism. 'Do not foster the ego more than the alter; care for the alter as much as for the ego.' To abolish egoism is to abolish altruism also; and vice versa."¹⁹

Authentic egoism and authentic altruism then are not in conflict with each other; the former necessarily moves to the latter, even possibly "giving one's life for one's friend." This, however, is the last and highest stage of human development. It is the stage of the (w)holy person, the saint, the arahat, the bodhisattva, the sage. Such a stage cannot be the foundation of human society; it must be the goal of it. The foundation of human society must be first authentic self-love, which includes moving outward to loving others.

Not recognizing this foundation of authentic self-love is the fundamental flaw of those idealistic systems, such as communism, that try to build a society on the foundation of altruism. A human and humanizing society should lead toward (w)holiness, toward altruism, but it cannot be built on the assumption that its citizens are (w)holy and altruistic to start with. Such an altruism must grow out of an ever developing authentic self-love; it cannot be assumed, and surely it cannot be forced (as has been tried for decades--with disastrous dehumanizing results).

VI. As humans ineluctably seek ever more knowledge, truth, so too they seek to draw what they perceive as the good to themselves (that is, they love). Usually this self is expanded to include the family, and then friends. It needs to continue its natural expansion to the community, nation, world and cosmos, and the source and goal of all reality.

VII. But this human love necessarily must start with self-love, for one can love one's "neighbor" only AS one loves oneself; but since one becomes human only by inter-

human mutuality, loving others fulfills one's own humanity, and hence is also the greatest act of authentic self-love.

VIII. Another aspect of the "Golden Rule" is that humans are always to be treated as ends, never as mere means, i.e., as subjects, never as mere objects.

IX. Yet another implication of the "Golden Rule" is that those who cannot protect themselves ought to be protected by those who can.

X. A further ring of the expanding circles of the "Golden Rule" is that non-human beings are also to be revered and treated with respect because of their being.

XI. It is important that not only basic but also middle ethical principles be spelled out in this Declaration. Although most of the middle ethical principles that need to be articulated in this Declaration are already embedded in juridical form in the United Nations' 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is vital that the religions and ethical traditions expressly state and approve them. Then the world, including both adherents and outsiders of the various religions and ethical traditions, will know what ethical standards all are committing themselves to.

XII. If a Universal Declaration of a Global Ethic is to be meaningful and effective, however, its framers must resist the temptation to pack too many details and special interests into it. It can function best as a kind of "constitutional" set of basic and middle ethical principles from which more detailed applications can be constantly be drawn.

Such general suggestions need to be discussed, confirmed, rejected, modified, supplemented. Beyond that, it is vital that all the disciplines contribute what from their perspectives ought to be included in the Declaration, how that should be formulated, what is to be avoided--and this is beginning to happen. The year 1993 was the 100th anniversary of the 1893 World Parliament of Religions which took place in Chicago and marked the beginning of what became world-wide interreligious dialogue. As a consequence, a number of international conferences have been taking place and in the center of them has been the launching and developing of a UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF A GLOBAL ETHIC.

The first was held in New Delhi, India in February, 1993; the second in August of the same year in Bangalore, India and the third that year in September in Chicago. For that huge (over 6,000 participants) September 1993 Chicago "Parliament of the World's Religions" Professor Hans Kung drafted a document entitled "Declaration Toward a Global Ethic," which the Parliament adopted.²⁰

Beyond that, the text given below, drafted by Professor Leonard Swidler, was first submitted to and analyzed in January, 1993, by the "International Scholars' Annual Dialogue--ISAT" (Jewish-Christian-Muslim) in Graz, Austria; it was also a major focus of the "First International Conference on Universalism" in August, 1993, in Warsaw; a Consultation of the American Academy of Religion in November, 1993, in Washington D.C. was devoted to the topic; the sixth "International Scholars' Annual Dialogue" in January, 1994, concentrated for a second year on the Universal Declaration; in May, 1994, it was the subject of a conference sponsored by the "International Association of

Asian Philosophy and Religion--IAAPR" in Seoul, Korea; the "World Conference on Religion and Peace--WCRP" in part focused on it in its fall, 1994 World Assembly in Rome/Riva del Garda, Italy; and on June 20-21, 1995, it was the subject of a conference in San Francisco in honor of the "Fiftieth Anniversary of the Founding of the United Nations," entitled: "Celebrating the Spirit: Towards a Global Ethic."

At the same time it is imperative that various religious and ethical communities and geographical regions work on discussing and drafting their own versions of a possible text for a Universal Declaration of a Global Ethic. The draft given below and the one drawn up by Hans Kung should certainly be made use of in this process. But all communities and regions need to make their own contributions to the final Declaration, and in the process of wrestling with the issue and forging the wording they will make the concern for a global ethic their own, and will thus better be able to mediate it to their "constituents" and enhance the likelihood of the Declaration in fact being adhered to in practice.

What needs to be stressed as well, however, is that such a project cannot be carried out only by the scholars and leaders of the world's religious and ethical communities, though obviously the vigorous participation of these elements is vital. The ideas and sensitivities must also come from the grassroots.

Moreover, it is also at the grassroots, as well at the levels of scholars and leaders, that, first, consciousnesses must be raised on the desperate need for the conscious development of a Global Ethic, and then conviction of its validity must be gained. The most carefully thought out and sensitively crafted Declaration will be of no use if those who are to adhere to it do not believe in it. A Global Ethic must work on all three levels: scholars, leaders, grassroots. Otherwise it will not work at all!

As a stimulus to this discussion, I offer the following tentative draft of a Universal Declaration of a Global Ethic, already revised many times after consultation with scholars and grass-roots from many religious traditions, including Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and Sikhs and Bahais.

NOTES

1 Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (Munich: Beck, 1922-23), 2 vols.

2 Pitirim A. Sorokin, *The Crisis of Our Age* (New York: Dutton, 1941).

3 See among others, Hans Kung, *Theologie im Aufbruch* (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1987), esp. pp. 153 ff.

4 See especially Ewert Cousins, "Judaism-Christianity-Islam: Facing Modernity Together," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 30:3-4 (Summer-Fall, 1993), pp. 417-425.

5 Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2nd ed., 1970).

6 I am grateful for this exemplary comparison to Henry Rosemont, who I met when he was the Fulbright Professor of Philosophy at Fudan University, Shanghai, 1982-84.

7 Already two millennia and more ago some Hindu and Buddhist thinkers held a nonabsolutistic epistemology, but that fact had no significant impact on the West; because of the relative cultural eclipse of those civilizations in the modern period and the dominance of the Western scientific worldview, these ancient nonabsolutistic epistemologies have until now played no significant role in the emerging global society-though in the context of dialogue, they should in the future.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century Eastern thought has become increasingly better known in the West, and proportionately influential. This knowledge and influence appears to be increasing geometrically in recent decades. It is even beginning to move into the hardest of our so-called hard sciences, nuclear physics, as evidenced by the popular book of the theoretical physicist Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (Boulder, CO: Shambhala, 2nd ed., 1983).

8 For a full discussion of these epistemological issues and related matters, see my *After the Absolute: The Dialogical Future of Religious Reflection*.

9 I am in this section especially indebted to Ewert Cousins' essay "Judaism-Christianity-Islam: Facing Modernity Together," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 30:3-4 (Summer-Fall, 1993), pp. 417-425.

10 Karl Jaspers, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (Zurich: Artemis, 1949), pp. 19-43.

11 Ibid., p. 19; trans. Michael Bullock, *The Origin and Goal of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), p. 1. For the ongoing academic discussion of Jaspers' position on the Axial Period, see "Wisdom, Revelation, and Doubt: Perspectives on the First Millennium B.C.," *Daedalus* (Spring, 1975); and *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations*, ed. S.N. Eisenstadt (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989).

12 For a more comprehensive treatment of Cousins' concept of the Second Axial Period, see his book *Christ of the 21st Century* (Rockport, MA: Element, 1992).

13 Leonard Swidler et alii, *Death or Dialogue* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990).

14 Hadith: Muslim, chapter on iman, 71-2; Ibn Madja, Introduction, 9; Al-Darimi, chapter on riqaq; Hambal 3, 1976. The first quotation is cited in Bhagavan Das, *The Essential Unity of All Religions* (1934), p. 298.

15 A Yoruba Proverb (Nigeria), cited in Andrew Wilson, ed., *World Scripture* (New York: Paragon House, 1991), p. 114.

16 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, A 54; and *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Ethics*, BA 66f.

17 *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, trans. by Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 2d ed., 1976).

18 *The Scripture of Won Buddhism* (Iri, Korea: Won Kwang Publishing Co., rev. ed. 1988), pp. 309 f.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 303.

20 Hans Kung and Karl-Josef Kuschel, eds., *A Global Ethic* (New York: Continuum, 1993).