

GLOBAL ETHICS

The globalization process that has become the key developing feature of our lives has stirred up heated debate over its viability for all peoples. Questions have arisen about the interactive relationship of global forces and human functioning. Corporate greed, genetically altered food, continued abject poverty, the use of child/slave labor, communication limitations, monetary and debt policy, major health crises, abuses of the ecosystem, social inequities, racial, gender and ethnic discriminations, are but a few of the areas of concern over global inevitability and the human dimension struggling to cope with it. In all of the discussion over this situation, the matter of ethical behavior—individual, corporate, national, transnational—is key. And the most frequently referenced work is the UN's Declaration of Human Rights. It is held to be the primary guide to encouraging ethical and moral behavior in all facets of human existence: "Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." In spite of the inability of nations and peoples to consistently adhere to the declaration, the document continues to be used by the oppressed and poorly-served peoples of the world to bring shame to those who neglect or ignore it. Thus the matter of global ethics and human rights are inextricably joined. The selections chosen for this issue are but a few of the great many efforts going on in the world today to encourage the ethical behavior of people toward one another and the world in which they live. The proposals are for some type of universal, globalized codification of the "ethical rules" or "norms of behavior" by which we might all live in peace and harmony.

" . . . even while cherishing our diversity, we need certain shared values if we are to work together for our common good—perhaps our survival—as a species. Those core values are defined in the Charter of the United Nations, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in other international agreements that have been negotiated over the past half century. Those documents are not products of one civilization, imposed on others by superior might. On the contrary, like the Common Era*, which gives us the millennium, they provide a shared yardstick for the civilization of which we are all a part. They form the essential framework of our peaceful dialogue and interaction with each other."

*Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations
Introduction, Common Values for a Common Era Civilization, June 1999*

**The "universal" acceptance, by all peoples, of the Christian calendar as a guide to time.*

Principles of a Global Ethic

Drs. Joseph Juhasz and Lester Shepard are holocaust survivors, and encourage a "United People" movement based on an understanding that in view of the increasing globalization, or interactive nature, of existence today, people must adopt a code of behavior that encourages the above universal values. They believe that an attitude of such acceptance is growing in power despite major setbacks such as the continued use of violence to settle disputes; the neglect of major health crises; the economic disparity among nations; and continued cultural misunderstanding.

A fuller description of their philosophy, and their attempts to organize a "people's movement" for global ethics can be found on their website <www.ior.com/~lshpard/united.html>. Ed.

As a starting point for examining the issue of the desirability of establishing a global ethic, the following values might be considered as basic:

Benevolence—understood as and including good will or intention, cooperation, peace, loyalty, solidarity, compassion, caring, and humility; readiness to help instead of harm, sympathize rather than being judgmental of, and respect, others: treating others as ends instead of means.

No one should be condemned/ostracized for characteristics he/she cannot help. But everyone must be held responsible for malicious acts.

Equality—avoidance of domination and oppression. Exercising or allowing for the least possible force, constraint, violence, threat, power over the other, and social and organizational hierarchy when the latter entails subjection, abuse, and humiliation. Refraining from the exploitation of perceived weakness, such as infir-

mity, old age, vulnerability, ignorance, gullibility, or any handicap. Rejection of the premise that right conduct consists in whatever you can get away with. Absence of racial, ethnic, religious, sexual, class, and cultural prejudice as well as of social exclusion. Democratic self-government.

Truthfulness—no system distinguishing moral right from wrong can operate without acknowledging a difference between truth and falsity, between honesty and deceitfulness. Life would come to a stop in a civilization where deception has become the rule. Education, learning, science, open-mindedness, and objectivity in the long run tend to work for, lies, pretense, and fraud against, the creation of a better world.

Equity—implying social justice. People must be provided with the basic necessities of life. Abject poverty makes right moral conduct impossible for all but exceptional individuals. Democracy with uninformed and prejudiced constituents is useless. Information must be either free or all should have the means to afford it; everyone with a desire to learn must be guaranteed the opportunity for education to her/his fullest potential. Virtue is partly a habit formed through education.

Environmental protection—ensuring ecological and economic sustainability. Reverence or respect for all life is an absurd goal or a nearly meaningless proposition in a world where human beings must sustain themselves with organic food, but people ought to be encouraged to eat as low as practicable on the food chain. Hunting and fishing are basically for those whose sustenance still unavoidably depends on them. Animal experimentation should be restricted to the minimum, and no vivisection ought to be performed, if for no other reason because they make people callous to suffering, and this callousness can spread to their relations with other human beings. But the earth is not a private zoo run for the pleasure of privileged environmentalists.

Freedom—everyone should enjoy freedom of action as long as it doesn't

Don Bragaw, editor of this publication, wondered why these two academics had setup a website devoted to Global Ethics. Here are excerpts from his e-mail exchange with Dr. Juhasz.

D.G.: I've read the rationale, and all your other material. Can you explain to me why you and Lester Shepard are pursuing this? Has the globalization process forced you into a realization that we, and this world of ours, have reached a point where we must talk with each other from absolute positions of equality and democratic exchange? Or what?

J.J.: I think you hit it on the head on an abstract level . . . I might add to that the desire to find a kind of "absolute zero" of morality that can become the basis of a "global ethic." . . . On a more personal level—we are brothers—we are both survivors of the Holocaust and of the Stalinist-Communist regime; we are both getting old and we felt that this was a subject on which we wanted to communicate through a new medium (the Internet) in an accessible and "jargonless" manner, in a mode suited to this new medium. Our dad was working along similar lines at his untimely death at the age of 68—and we felt, perhaps in the beginning somewhat unconsciously, that we had "work to do" in his memory. (Internet exchange, Jan 9/01)

interfere with the freedom of others.

Treat others as you wish that others treat you—the golden rule is unequaled in succinctly summing up right moral conduct. Although one can cite excep-

tions to its validity on technical grounds, the point is that any person of adequate intelligence can grasp its intent and understand its applicability in concrete cases.

A Framework For Universal Principles of Ethics

In a more directed, active application of ethical principles in businesses and alliances desiring to interact with themselves and others, Larry Colero (Crossroads Programs Inc.), operating in association with the University of British Columbia and his own consulting group, has suggested (and field tested) a framework for global ethical behavior. Colero is associated with educators and business groups and is not an ethicist, but he found that he needed an ethical guide in his work with a wide variety of groups. Note the similarity to the work of Juhasz and Shepard. Ed.

If there were a set of universal ethical principles that applied to all cultures, philosophies, faiths and professions, it would provide an invaluable framework for dialogue.

Since 1997, the following framework of principles has been used by six instructors to facilitate learning and spark dialogue with a wide variety of students, business people and professionals in Africa, China, Czechoslovakia and across North America. In each case, participants were encouraged to suggest changes, additions or deletions. Only one minor change has ever been suggested.

WHAT GOOD IS A SET OF PRINCIPLES?

There are many tools for decision making, but few (secular) guides to indicate when situations might have an ethical implication. Yet this awareness is a crucial first step before decisions are made. Recognizing the moral context of a situation must precede any attempt to resolve it. Otherwise, what's to resolve?

Ethical dilemmas rarely present themselves as such. They usually pass us by before we know it or develop so gradually that we can only recognize them in

hindsight—a little like noticing the snake after you've been bitten. But what are the signs that a snake might be present? An ethical framework is like a snake detector.

I offer the following principles as landmarks—generic indicators to be used as compelling guides for an active conscience. They are NOT absolute rules or values. They are more like a rough measurement where an exact one is not possible. They often conflict with each other in practice, and some will trump others under certain circumstances. But as principles that need to be considered, they appear constant.

These principles are compatible with the argument that we should simply follow our intuition and rely on the “inner voice.” However, that voice is not always audible, and today's society presents a wide range of complex circumstances that require more guidance than simply “concern for others” or “does it feel right?” And so these principles are offered effectively as a more detailed reference.

In a sense, the principles are outcomes of the mother of all principles—unconditional love and compassion—which appears in virtually all faiths, and is expressed here as “concern for the well-being of others.” (This principle is at the heart of the stakeholder model of ethics, i.e., what is my impact on others?) At first glance, the principles will appear obvious and perhaps trite or simplistic. Keep in mind that they are meant to be practical rather than groundbreaking, and that many people have found them useful in the absence of other guides.

The principles have been organized into three categories for ease of use: personal, professional, and global ethics.

PRINCIPLES OF PERSONAL ETHICS

Personal ethics might also be called morality, since they reflect general expectations of any person in any society, acting in any capacity. These are the principles we try to instill in our chil-

dren, and expect of one another without needing to articulate the expectation or formalize it in any way.

Principles of Personal Ethics include:

- *Concern for the well-being of others*
- *Respect for the autonomy of others*
- *Trustworthiness and honesty*
- *Willing compliance with the law (with the exception of civil disobedience)*
- *Basic justice; being fair*
- *Refusing to take unfair advantage*
- *Benevolence; doing good*
- *Preventing harm*

PRINCIPLES OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Individuals acting in a professional capacity take on an additional burden of ethical responsibility. For example, professional associations have codes of ethics that prescribe required behavior within the context of a professional practice such as medicine, law, accounting, or engineering. These written codes provide rules of conduct and standards of behavior based on the principles of Professional Ethics, which include:

- *Impartiality; objectivity*
- *Openness; full disclosure*
- *Confidentiality*
- *Due diligence/duty of care*
- *Fidelity to professional responsibilities*
- *Avoiding potential or apparent conflict of interest*

Even when not written into a code, principles of professional ethics are usually expected of people in business, employees, volunteers, elected representatives and so on.

PRINCIPLES OF GLOBAL ETHICS

Global ethics are the most controversial of the three categories, and the least understood. Open to wide interpretation as to how or whether they should be applied, these principles can some-

times generate emotional response and heated debate.

Principles of Global Ethics include:

- *Global justice (as reflected in international laws)*
- *Society before self/social responsibility*
- *Environmental stewardship*
- *Interdependence and responsibility for the “whole”*
- *Reverence for place*

Each of us influences the world by simply existing; and it is always wise to “think globally.” An added measure of accountability is placed on globally influential enterprises such as governments and transnational corporations. (Responsibility comes with power whether we accept it or not.) One of the burdens of leadership is to influence society and world affairs in a positive way. Can a person, nation or company truly be “successful” while causing human suffering or irreparable environmental damage? A more modern and complete model of success also considers impact on humanity and the earth's ecology.

CO-EXISTENCE OF PRINCIPLES

Principles can only provide guidance. There are myriad situations that will never lend themselves to an easy formula, and the principles can only be used to trigger our conscience or guide our decisions. (As stated earlier, they are also useful for ethics education.)

It is important to note that principles of personal ethics are the first check-point in any situation, often overriding those at the professional and global levels. For example, when judging if a corporation has been socially responsible, we still need to consider principles of personal ethics as prerequisites. Contributions to charities and the like (doing good) may appear to be in the interests of society, but lose their significant if the corporation has not also

taken responsibility to prevent or minimize the damage done by their core business operations. Similarly, trustworthiness is fundamental to professionalism, and so on.

As well, there are many times when principles will collide with other principles. Let's say you are a scientist who has been coerced by a corrupt military dictatorship into designing a biological weapon. Since the project is top secret, you have a professional duty to maintain confidentiality. But if there were an opportunity to inform United Nations observers, global and personal principles would justify divulging confidential information to protect the overall good of humanity. (Compare this to selling confidential information for personal gain.)

Still, the scientist is faced with a tough decision since they or their family could be harmed as a result of the whistle-blowing. This is where the principles must be viewed in the context of universality. © Crossroads Programs, Inc. <www.universalthics.com>

Colero goes on to assert that these principles are merely guides, that "morality can never be distilled into a universally acceptable list of absolute rules. These principles are simply recurring patterns of ethically responsible behavior that our conscience can use as landmarks. Cultural differences will continue to impact upon such behavior, requiring even greater understanding of how such basic principles are applied or accepted. Ed.



A technician wearing personal protective equipment testing a contaminated environment.

AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Global Ethics: A Sustainability Rationale

One of the areas where global ethics first appeared as a major force in global thinking was in the area of preservation of the earth. The environmental movement received its impetus from people such as Rachel Carson, Aldo Leopold, Kenneth Boulding, who warned of the peril to the earth from over population, dangerous political and military policies, depletion of natural resources, degradation of soil, air and water, careless scientific applications, disregard of human frailty and right to existence. The environmental movement has consistently tried to educate the general public about the universal responsibility of the world's population for our own well-being and that of planet earth. The excerpt below is the abbreviated 1999 Earth Charter, which stresses "(the) need for a shared vision of basic values that will provide an ethical foundation for the emerging world community." The Earth Charter, formulated by non-governmental groups concerned about the environment, shares many issues with the United Nations' efforts in the areas of environment and development. See also Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992; and subsequent follow-up meetings, conferences and developments. Ed.

THE EARTH CHARTER

PROMOTING CHANGE FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Benchmark Draft II, April 1999

PREAMBLE

In our diverse yet increasingly interdependent world, it is imperative that we, the people of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations. We are one human family

and one Earth community with a common destiny.

Humanity is part of a vast evolving universe. Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life. The well-being of people and the biosphere depends upon preserving clean air, pure waters, fertile soils, and a rich variety of plants, animals and ecosystems. The global environment with its finite resources is a primary common concern of all humanity. The protection of Earth's vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust.

The Earth community stands at a defining moment. With science and technology have come great benefits and also great harm. The dominant patterns of production and consumption are altering climate, degrading the environment, depleting resources, and causing a massive extinction of species. A dramatic rise in population has increased the pressures on ecological systems and has overburdened social systems. Injustice, poverty, ignorance, corruption, crime and violence, and armed conflict deepen the world's suffering. Fundamental

changes in our attitudes, values, and ways of living are necessary.

The choice is ours: to care for Earth and one another or to participate in the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life.

As a global civilization comes into being, we can choose to build a truly democratic world, securing the rule of law and the human rights of all women, men, and children. We can respect the integrity of different cultures. We can treat Earth with respect, rejecting the idea that nature is merely a collection of resources to be used. We can realize that our social, economic, environmental, and spiritual problems are interconnected and cooperate in developing integrated strategies to address them. We can resolve to balance and harmonize individual interests with the common good, freedom with responsibility, diversity with unity, short term objectives with long term goals, economic progress with

the flourishing of ecological systems.

To fulfill these aspirations, we must recognize that human development is not just about having more, but also about being more. The challenges humanity faces can only be met if people everywhere acquire an awareness of global interdependence, identify themselves with the larger world, and decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility. The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life will be strengthened if we live with reverence for the sources of our being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in the larger scheme of things.

Having reflected on these considerations, we recognize the urgent need for a shared vision of basic values that will provide an ethical foundation for the emerging world community. We, therefore, affirm the following principles for sustainable development. We commit

ourselves as individuals, organizations, business enterprises, communities, and nations to implement these interrelated principles and to create a global partnership in support of their fulfillment.

As never before in human history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning. Such renewal is the promise of these Earth Charter principles. Fulfillment of this promise requires an inner change—a change of mind and heart. It requires that we take decisive action to adopt, apply, and develop the vision of the Earth Charter. Every individual, family, organization, and government has a critical role to play. Youth are fundamental actors for change. We can, if we will, take advantage of the creative possibilities before us and inaugurate an era of fresh hope.

The detailed document can be viewed at < <http://www.earth-charter.org>>, or obtained from The Earth Charter Initiative, International Secretariat, The Earth Council, I. P.O. Box 319-6100 1 San Jose, Costa Rica

EARTH CHARTER PRINCIPLES

Together in hope, we pledge to:

1. Respect Earth and all life.
2. Care for the community of life in all its diversity.
3. Strive to build free, just, participatory, sustainable and peaceful societies
4. Secure Earth's abundance and beauty for present and future generations.

In pursuit of these goals, we will :

5. Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain and renew life.
6. Prevent harm to the environment as the best method of ecological pro-

tection and, when knowledge is limited, take the path of caution.

7. Treat all living beings with compassion, and protect them from cruelty and wanton destruction.
8. Adopt patterns of consumption, production, and reproduction that respect and safeguard Earth's regenerative capacities, human rights, and community well-being.
9. Ensure that economic activities support and promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.
10. Eradicate poverty, as an ethical, social, economic, and ecological imperative
11. Honor and defend the right of all persons, without discrimination, to an environment supportive of their dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well-being.

12. Advance worldwide the cooperative study of ecological systems, the dissemination and application of knowledge, and the development, adoption, and transfer of clean technologies.

13. Establish access to information, inclusive democratic participation in decision making, and transparency, truthfulness, and accountability in governance.

14. Affirm and promote gender equality as a prerequisite to sustainable development.

15. Make the knowledge, values, and skills needed to build just and sustainable communities an integral part of formal education and lifelong learning for all.

16. Create a culture of peace and cooperation.

Corporate Ethics: The Global Compact

Enlisting various participants from the economic, political and social realms of the globalization process to take a stand and support ethical practices has been a major role of the United Nations. One such effort was made in 1999 to encourage implementation of global corporate ethical practices. This took the form of a "Global Compact" that the Secretary-General initiated and which gained the support of an ever-widening group of business leaders. A clear-cut relationship to the ethical principles of the UN Charter, and the UN Declaration of Human Rights, was established. Since the initial meeting, the compact has shown some evidence of effective implementation. Ed.

At the World Economic Forum, Davos, on 31 January 1999, UN Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan challenged world business leaders to "embrace and enact" the Global Compact, both in their individual corporate practices and by supporting appropriate public policies. These principles cover topics in human rights, labour, and environment.

HUMAN RIGHTS

The Secretary-General asked world businesses to:

Principle 1: support and respect the protection of international human rights within their sphere of influence; and

Principle 2: make sure their own corporations are not complicit in human rights abuses.

LABOUR

The Secretary-General asked world businesses to uphold:

Principle 3: freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;

Principle 4: the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour;

Principle 5: the effective abolition of child labour; and

Principle 6: the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

ENVIRONMENT

The Secretary-General asked world businesses to:

Principle 7: support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges;

Principle 8: undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and

Principle 9: encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

ISSUES RELATING TO THE GLOBAL COMPACT

Press Statement Issued July 26, 2000, as a result of a follow-up meeting of corporate leaders, to explain how the compact might operate. Ed.

How it works

The Global Compact is a UN-sponsored platform for encouraging and promoting good corporate practices and learning experiences in the areas of human rights, labour and the environment. It is an entry point for the business community to work in partnership with UN organizations in support of the principles and broader goals of the United Nations, and provides a basis for structured dialogue between the UN, business, labour and civil society on improving corporate practices in the social arena. Finally, the Compact offers a means to significantly broaden the number of companies undertaking such activities.

Initiated in Davos in 1999 by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the Global Compact is rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work of the International Labour Organization; and the Earth Summit - Agenda 21 principles on the environment. These three texts express a clear set of universal values supported by all



Enrique Ter Horst (third from right), Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti, looking at a map of Haiti with members of the Canadian Battalion of UNSMIL. The group was planning a trip to northern Haiti with a United Nations Development Programme specialist (second from right) to assess damage to the forest in Haiti's National Park. UN/DPI Photo by Eskinder

governments. No other initiative on corporate social responsibility has such universal and legitimate underpinning.

The Global Compact, accordingly, sets a frame of reference for industry initiatives as well as regional and government-led efforts. In the months since the world trade talks in Seattle, more and more businesses and organizational leaders are recognizing the importance of the Global Compact as a means to address social problems and to keep world markets open.

What it is not

The Global Compact is not a code of conduct; monitoring and verification of corporate practices do not fall within the mandate or the institutional capability of the United Nations. But neither is the Compact to be used as a corporate shield from criticism. To the contrary, it highlights the global citizenship qualities of corporations, and opens up opportunities for focused, mediated, directed and constructive dialogue. The Compact does not ask companies to take over the responsibilities of governments. They are asked to take action only within their respective spheres of influence. But in the case of international intergovernmental conventions which require action at the company level to be successfully implemented, for instance, corporate participation in the Global Compact can be helpful.

The nature of the commitment

Participation in the Global Compact makes it incumbent upon businesses to:

- 1) Issue a clear statement of support for the Global Compact and its principles, and engage in public advocacy for the Compact.
- 2) Post once a year on the Global Compact website a concrete example of progress made or lessons learned in implementing the principles. This can take many forms, i.e., changes in internal management policies or concrete operational experiences.
- 3) Engage in partnership with UN organizations by undertaking activities that further the implementation of the principles, or

by entering strategic partnerships in support of broad UN goals such as poverty eradication.

Broadening the pool of company participation

All participants agree to the importance of enlisting more companies. Once leading companies have articulated their commitment, the involvement of other companies through company supply chains and UN networks becomes a priority. Groundwork is already underway, via global business associations such as the International Chamber of Commerce, the World Business Council on Sustainable Development, the Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum and sectoral associations. The International

Organization of Employers secured endorsement from dozens of employers associations worldwide (including ones based in China and India), and is organizing regional workshops in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

Involvement of trade unions and civil society

It is also crucial to continue engaging labour and non governmental organizations in constructive participation. Discussions regarding expanded representation, relative roles and specific contributions are underway.

All potential partners recognize that a non-confrontational approach is conducive to arriving at solutions to the social challenges of globalization.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Visit the Global Compact website <www.unglobalcompact.org>.
- An additional source of information concerning increased business ethics: Business for Social Responsibility, whose website is located at <www.bsr.org>.
- In a brief article, "Ethical Dilemmas" in Industry Week, May 1, 2000, the author, Weld Royal, examines specific cases where global commerce is making it necessary for companies to give attention to the ethics of doing business in foreign cultures. <www.industryweek.com/currentarticles/text/803.asp>

Issues in Health Care Global Ethics

The vast differences that exist within, between and among cultures pose significant problems in the application of ethical judgments. As one looks at some of the issues related to a specific area such as health care, the nature of how global ethical principles can be applied becomes critical and possibly controversial. The following is abbreviated from a UN publication entitled Basic Facts about the United Nations. Ed.

DEFINITION

Often times, in the US at least, we tend to have a narrow view of what is accepted in terms of medical customs. Bioethical issues are complicated enough within one cultural setting, so holding a globally-consistent view on bioethics is almost impossible. Along

with the globalization of economies, we have seen a globalization of medical care. In 1995, a worldwide conference on genetics and ethics was held over the Internet! While such advances have countless benefits, they also reveal the bioethical differences we have embedded within our cultures. A number of topics have developed around this issue.



School children in a village northwest of Pyongyang, North Korea, receive food rations.

UN/DPI Photo by James Bu

HUMAN RIGHTS

China, Pakistan, the former Yugoslavia, Singapore, the United States—all countries that have been accused of abusing or disregarding the “human rights” of their citizens. What are human rights and why are they important to the discussion of bioethics? Human rights have been delineated in various official documents, from the US Constitution’s Bill of Rights to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR was established by the United

Nations in 1948, and it served to protect certain inalienable or natural rights. It establishes that all people are born free and equal. Based upon this belief, the charter goes on to outline various other rights.

What does this have to do with bioethics? The UDHR mentions health and well-being in various articles. In general, it claims that all people have the right to complete care and adequate protection from sickness and suffering. Article 5 states that no one shall be subjected to any form of cruel and unusual punishment. Article 25 gives special

consideration to motherhood and child-bearing—it states that mothers and their children have the right to special protection. What about China’s birth control policies? Are these standards of medical care unethical in the eye of the global community? Let’s not forget the US Congress’s recent move to reform the American system of welfare. Many women are going to be forced to work even though they cannot afford adequate child care. Is this a violation of Article 25 of the UDHR?

Of course, many laws placed under a certain light might be considered violations, but the basic ideals behind the UDHR are inviolable: 5-year-old children should not be spending endless days sewing soccer balls; women should not live in fear of being shipped off as sex slaves; slavery and indentured servitude should be relics of the past.

International organizations are working to eliminate these problems. The UN, UNICEF, WHO, Amnesty International, The Red Cross/Crescent, Doctors Without Borders, and others are lending their support to the suffering in hopes of alleviating their pain.

WHAT ROLE DOES RELIGION AND CULTURE PLAY IN GLOBAL ETHICS?

Religion and culture happen to be two of the stronger influences in the lives of patients and their families. Both help to shape bioethical policy around the world. This being the case, these bioethical policies or traditions might develop a certain inconsistency with those of other cultures. In Southeast Asia, for example, doctors often keep their patients in the dark when it comes to terminal diagnosis. They inform the family, but they keep the information from the patient. The physicians believe such news could only cause the patient to suffer more than necessary during his or her remaining days. Such actions would probably be considered unethical in the US.

Under Jewish law, a physician is only allowed to treat a patient when the treatment can be reasonably expected to succeed. Hence, Jewish physicians might be disallowed from participating in experimental procedures. On the other hand, a physician is commanded by Jewish law to practice if he has been licensed to do so. This being the case, some have argued that certain restrictive managed care practices might be contrary to Jewish law.

One of the most vitriolic of bioethical issues, euthanasia draws strong responses from religious groups. Similar to Judaic doctrine, in the Islamic Oath of the Doctor, the doctor swears to “protect human life in all stages and under all circumstances, doing my utmost to rescue it from death, malady, pain and anxiety.” While euthanasia is disallowed in Islam, palliative care for the dying is encouraged. The Muslim physician also swears to “keep peoples’ dignity, cover their privacies and lock up their secrets.” This strong emphasis on privacy has seen recent obstacles in the form of easy access to medical records and discussion of mandatory release of HIV infections.

Unlike the Islamic-Judeo-Christian ethic, the Buddhist tradition places much importance in self-determinism. As a result, euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide are not necessarily looked upon negatively. Buddhists value the ability to decide how and when they will die. Yet, surveys have shown a growing body of Buddhists (especially Thais) believe that euthanasia is wrong. Interestingly, some Buddhists also believe that palliative care through use of narcotics might not be acceptable because such drugs cloud the mind during the dying process.

The role of culture and religion in bioethics is a prominent one. We cannot hope to create one all-encompassing

“rule book” of medical ethics because of cultural differences. Instead, should we focus on the significance of cultural relativism, the belief that actions within cultures cannot be considered wrong or right, but acceptable or unacceptable within a certain cultural sphere? Can anyone be wrong?

UN DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Because the UN Declaration of Human Rights is such a key document in any discussion of global ethics, students should have ready access to the document. Below is a summary statement of the UN Declaration of Human

Rights for possible teacher and student use. The full document can be found by accessing <www.unchr.ch>.

DEFINING UNIVERSAL RIGHTS

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a cornerstone of the wide-ranging body of human rights law created over the decades, marked its fiftieth anniversary during 1998. Articles 1 and 2 of the Universal Declaration state that “all human beings are born equal in dignity and rights” and are entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration “without distinction of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language,

(continued on p. 11)

Instructional Advisories

- References for Teachers: Two articles that the editor has found helpful in defining key issues regarding Global Ethics are:
 Follesdal, Andreas (1999/2000). Global Ethics and Respect for Culture. A working paper published by ARENA: Advance Research on the Europeanization of the Nation-State. <www.arena.uio.no/publications/wp99_20.htm>
 Dower, Nigel. Global Ethics for the 21st Century: Theory and Social Reality. <www.arbid.unimelb.edu.au/envjust/papers/allpapers/dower/home.htm>
- Lawrence M. Hinman operates a website devoted to ethics; while primarily aimed at college or university ethics courses, it provides a reference to a wide variety of topics such as: race, gender, world hunger, rights, abortion, and euthanasia. <www.ethics.acusd.edu/index.html>
- Any web search engine can be utilized to find other pertinent articles using the topic: Global Ethics.
- For purposes of clarification in the use of materials and instructional advisories in this issue, the following definitions may be helpful. Expansion of these definitions can be easily accomplished using unabridged dictionaries, and by reference to the UN Declaration of Human Rights. Because of cultural differences within, between and among nations, these definitions may take on local dimensions. What should be stressed is finding the common core regardless of seeming differences; for instance, the Golden Rule is found in some form in every religion.

Global: Something that is applicable across continental/national boundaries; transcending local or national interests; transnational, e.g., poverty; religious beliefs; worldwide corporations such as Nike, whose manufacturing, production and distribution extends without regard to national boundaries.

Ethics: Having to do with an individual/group/state/nation's perception and conduct of values/norms of good, right behavior when applied in individual, national or transnational actions, e.g., greed, genocide, ethnic cleansing welfare programs.

Global Ethics: Perceptions and actions involving values and norms of behavior that are universally accepted or agreed to, and which involve global responsibility for the good or well-being of others, e.g., deliberate and egregious actions by one nation to its own people/or segments of population, which are agreed by universal acclaim to be acts against humanity, and not local; human rights; the Holocaust; AIDS in Central Africa.

GLOBAL ETHICS:

Suggested Instructional Strategies

*The following instructional strategies can be adapted for students in middle/secondary school (Grades 5-12).
The strategies are designed for integration into regular lessons as time and topic allow.*

STRATEGY 1:

Teachers and students should develop clear definitions and examples of what constitutes “ethical behavior.” Practical and direct school issues should be used so that students will begin with a recognizable situation requiring them to make judgments of “right or decent behavior” and can extract from the discussion a useful, workable definition. Application of the principles indicated in the piece by Joseph Juhasz and Lester Shepard would be a good student guide. The teacher should increasingly broaden the scope of the discussion from the local situation, to community, state, national and global issues. Without being judgmental about the positions stated, note should be taken of possible differences between and among students: e.g., gender, geographical, socio-economic, racial/ethnic background.

The Institute for Global Ethics, <www.globalethics.org/dilemmas>, is a possible source for case studies of ethical dilemmas. Additionally, the seminal work of Lawrence Kohlberg in the area of moral reasoning is very helpful when dealing with Global Ethics.

STRATEGY 2:

The Declaration of Human Rights is a useful document with which to identify major global ethical issues in daily news coverage—for example, freedom from

servitude or slavery. News articles concerning “slave” or “child slavery” factories in less developed area of the world; freedom from “degrading treatment” and the role of women in various societies; the right to a standard of living in relation to the AIDS crisis in Africa.

A debate format might be developed with regard to these issues: Should United States foreign policy assert human rights over advancing commercial interests (i.e., China)?

STRATEGY 3:

Three of the articles provided above specifically refer to values or norms which are “inherent” in dealing with ethical behavior. Have students identify those norms and, through general discussion or small group processes, have them suggest specific ways in which those values or norms could be demonstrated and applied to everyday situations. If students are in small groups, distribute to each group a separate newspaper article from the current press, and ask them to identify the ethical situation portrayed, the specific values involved, and what alternative vision of values/behavior might be identified (and why that is so). Topics that are ordinarily covered in history or government classes lend themselves nicely to this exercise: For example, historical examples of genocide; women’s rights; slavery; removal of Native Americans to

less desirable lands; labor issues in 19th and 20th century; religion and public education; euthanasia; death penalty.

STRATEGY 4:

Are ethical values/principles universal in nature? Have the students read the article above on health care issues. Which of the examples given seem to illustrate that ethical principles or values are less than universally accepted? Have students identify why universality is difficult to achieve—in class, in school, in community, state, nation and world. For illustrative purposes have students talk about various religious beliefs with regard to health care, treatment of women, etc.

STRATEGY 5:

Students might be encouraged to develop a geographic positioning of human rights (or lack of them) around the world using a world map. Have them begin with a discussion of human rights in the United States and then, using the Internet or other available references. (Human Rights Watch maintains a website with constant updates on various areas of the world.) After the students have completed research and compiled the results on a master classroom sized map (or transparency), have them make some judgments about the state of human rights in the world today.

(continued from p. 9)

religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”

Articles 3 to 21 set forth the civil and political rights to which all human beings are entitled, including:

- The right to life, liberty and security;
- Freedom from slavery and servitude;
- Freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
- The right to recognition as a person before the law; the right to judicial remedy; freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention or exile; the right to a fair trial and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal; the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty;
- Freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence; freedom from attacks upon honour and reputation; the right to protection of the law against such attacks;
- Freedom of movement; the right to seek asylum; the right to a nationality;
- The right to marry and to found a family; the right to own property;
- Freedom of thought, conscience and religion; freedom of opinion and expression;
- The right to peaceful assembly and association;
- The right to take part in government and to equal access to public service.

Articles 22 to 27 set forth the economic, social and cultural rights to which all human beings are entitled, including:

- The right to social security;
- The right to work; the right to equal pay for equal work; the right to form and join trade unions;

- The right to rest and leisure;
- The right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being;
- The right to education;
- The right to participate in the cultural life of the community.

The concluding Articles, 28 to 30, recognize that everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the human rights set forth in the

Declaration may be fully realized; that these rights may only be limited for the sole purpose of securing recognition and respect of the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society; and that each person has duties to the community in which she or he lives.

Abbreviated version is from: Basic Facts About the United Nations, New York: United Nations, 1998, p. 219; a "plain language" version of the declaration is found on <www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchool Bus>.

BOOK REVIEW

INTERCULTURAL SERVICES: A WORLDWIDE BUYER'S GUIDE AND SOURCEBOOK

by Gary M. Wederspahn

Gulf Publishing Company, Houston, TX

While there has always been a need for different cultures to communicate and exchange both knowledge and product, it was always an individualistic enterprise. With the almost astronomical growth of global corporate interactions, and the concomitant computerization of personal and corporate contacts, the barriers between and among cultures have considerably eroded. Gary Wederspahn and others like him have done much to assist this process. Mr. Wederspahn provides a step-by-step guide for businesses that are entering into the trans-cultural experience for the first time. The book's greatest assets are its clear and precise definitions of current terms; and the very explicit description of the tasks and performance roles of those who would be involved in the process. Additionally, the book includes a listing of the vast resources now available to those who would venture into global enterprises.

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