

## *Tenth Global Ethic Lecture*

# **How should we do Business? Global Ethics in the Age of Globality**

*By Claus Dierksmeier, Director of the Global Ethic Institute  
at the University of Tübingen on April 15, 2012*

Distinguished Minister President, Distinguished Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like to extend my gratitude to you for the honor and opportunity to speak to you today, as well as to Mr. Küng for his kind introductory words. Your remarks, Professor Küng - just as much as the dignity of our duties at the Global Ethic Institute – oblige me to present this evening a few thoughts concerning the relevance and purpose of our Institute.

Just as our Institute would be unthinkable without the intellectual leadership of Professor Küng, so it would also be unthinkable without the material sponsorship of Karl Schlecht. We would therefore especially like to extend our thanks to you, Mr Schlecht, for being an exceedingly generous contributor and sponsor.

I would also like to thank the University of Tübingen, without whose institutional and organizational support our project would be unrealizable. I would therefore like to ask Mr Engler, who is representing the university as a whole, to please accept the thanks of both myself and us all.

The core theme of the next 45 minutes is the following:

The global problems facing humanity require, for their resolution, a global consensus concerning how we should treat one another and our environment; a great deal depends upon how we make use of our economic freedom, and whether we employ it in the interests of every world-citizen. I will discuss this theme with the aid of three keywords: Globality, Qualitative Freedom and Business Ethics. I begin with keyword 1...

### **Keyword: Globality**

With breathtaking speed, the global exchange of people and commodities changes the face of the earth. In addition to tribal leaders and local communities, regional subcultures and nation states, communes and clans, sheikhdoms and state governments, more and

more new kinds of actors appear upon the world stage: Media and militia, colossi of business and giants of science, social networks and civil society movements all enter in the action and flux of the world. Instead of being restricted to the local level, the strands of activity initiated by these different actors mesh into a dense fabric which is increasingly difficult to penetrate. The mutable static of formerly stable powers is being drawn into the immutable dynamic of fluctuating forces. Constructions give way to constellations, biological systems vanish, customs disappear, political orders fall, languages die out, and various traditional values and ideals dwindle. In their place, spurred on by an exponentially increasing exchange of information, innovative conventions very quickly take over. In no time at all, bizarre idols and lifestyles spread from the obscurest corner of the planet and cyberspace into global consciousness. Little remains private; practically nothing is local anymore; the new media of communication progressively levels physical distances.

Although there has always existed a cross-cultural exchange of commodities and information, our age is dramatically different from previous epochs. We live in a world that is no longer simply being gradually globalized, but rather one that is already cosmopolitan, insofar as we increasingly devise private activities, local business-dealings and national politics with respect to their worldwide reception. Whether we like it or not, our interests are connected with the interests of other persons and states. The internal affairs of distant countries become issues of national security. And the crises of the *global commons* (the over-fishing of the seas, the warming of the climate, the consumption of fossil fuels, etc.) transformed what was once considered “abroad” and “overseas” to but one environment, and yesterday’s national foreign policy becomes the global domestic politics of today. History has thus made us all cosmopolitans.

This interdependent reality is therefore best expressed, not as ‘globalization,’ but rather as ‘globality’. Whether by means of global epidemics or as a result of the epilepsy of the world market – we necessarily learn that our actions produce remote effects as unforeseeable as they are unintended. Although *single* processes of globalization are still able to be slowed, stopped and even reversed; this cannot be said of the *general* trend. The breadth and depth of the globalization that has already taken place now motivates us to already think in terms of the category of globality: A calculation on the planetary scale, the assessment of a long chain of consequences, an anticipation of world-wide developments.

When, however, the future significance of our activities surpasses our prior intentions, the following words hold true: Whatever we now leave to earth as our legacy might only be fully decipherable later, but the responsibility for our message to coming generations has to be taken on by the present. While in the past only moral *idealists* have appealed to us to act according to firmly universalizable maxims and as though we owed “the whole world” an account, today even self-proclaimed *realists* recognize it to be a sign of the times: that our *enlightened self-interest* noticeably overlaps with the precepts of a *moral-universalism* and an *idealistic ethics* increasingly proves to be a *realistic methodology*. The extension of our responsibility to the planetary level is increasingly imposed on us through imperatives of sustainability. All metrics with less temporal or geographic scope

have consistently proven to be too short-sighted measures. Whether we slow or stop future thrusts of globalization, what remains is that fundamental paradigm shift – away from locally confined economic and political bookkeeping towards a broader perspective of globality.

Times of crisis are especially able to highlight the global nexus. It is not only merely extreme left-wing critics, but increasingly vocal complaints are coming also from the political center about the plundering done by scrupulous fiscal pirates on the seas of global economy. More and more people have come to the conclusion that neither the oceans of earth nor the high seas of investment banking can be pacified by national law and local police. Quite obviously, the previous economic crash was a not the product of chance, but was rather a *systemic* crisis. There thus justifiably followed a call for a *systematic* reform. Its common problems provoke humanity to seek communal solutions. However such solutions often require global institutions, which in turn only operate efficiently if they are based on shared visions. Where, on the other hand, *unifying values* are lacking, *united action* becomes stymied.

Many cosmopolitan endeavours are currently being undermined by the suspicion, that these ventures serve the interests and agendas of a specific clientele, and cater predominantly to western values. Not everything that has been marketed since 1990 in the context of the “Washington consensus” as *liberalization* has been perceived as truly *liberating*. An unholy alliance of the *World Trade Organization*, the *International Monetary Fund* and *Wall Street* forced upon developing countries massive deregulations and privatizations. However, these measures sometimes led to the economic enslavement, rather than the emancipation, of the so-called Third World. As the underprivileged considered themselves disadvantaged by the well-to-do, they began to view all efforts towards global governance with distrust. Briefly: As globalization once courted the wealthy centers, the impoverished periphery is now revolting against globality.

Nevertheless, no one is aided by a return to regionalism; small systems particularly depend upon large contexts. Insofar as it is unregulated, the global undermines the regional, and exposes any expression of local cultures to the pressure of economic forces. Insofar as it is unchecked, it is only a matter of time before the tremendous financial and logistical power of the global economy sweeps up from the ground the last vestiges of local autonomy. What grew out of centuries of painstaking cultural work may fall to the ‘Fury of Disappearance’ created by world finance. This is precisely what the latest crises have etched into our consciousness. Withdrawal into an idyllic past defined by self-sufficiency is no longer a viable option.

Every situation where human beings interact bears the potential risk of a conflict that requires arbitration. The desire to be participant and judge in one and the same person incurs the punishment of eternal strife. Only with the utmost risk to the environment and our fellow men, can we develop in an uncoordinated manner. Only at the cost of deepest mistrust can we dismiss any bonds and refuse every universally-binding parameter of order. We therefore need to establish fair and sustainable structures that serve the

political and economic aims of humanity, and to cultivate and adapt these from within, so as to reflect contextual and cultural specificities. Since the hand of justice many times reaches too short and grasps reality too crudely, moral drive must also support legal force, i.e., in order to legitimize as well as supplement it by means of differentiation. Laws alone cannot cope with the current situation. An enforced global monoculture, which seeks to do violence to all diversity with uniform procedures, would scarcely be to our advantage. Consequently, economic globalization must not only be succeeded by political and legalistic globalization, but by an ethical globalization as well.

Nonetheless, one person's god is another person's idol; truth over here is heresy over there. The more intense cultural exchange and the pace of social change become, the more sharply we are confronted with the dilemma that regional customs, traditional religions, and conventions from the past no longer enjoy unquestioned authority; in their place come new and different values, though sometimes - none at all. Every thrust of globalization narrows the scope of conventional ethics. Since most people tend to resist, theoretically as well as practically, norms which they do not accept, each progressive step towards plurality represents a further fragmentation of society and signifies a loss of common order. To prevent indifference towards all norms on account of the growing differences between individual values, we need to determine according to which ethical standards we are to orient ourselves.

In order to find solutions not only for conventional, but also for new and emerging challenges, we need to draw on principles inherent in the traditions of all cultures of the world. In order to *motivate* just as much as to *legitimate* our global action, we require an ethic that unlocks the past for the present, instead of one which, in its glance towards the past, obstructs the path towards the future. Moreover, we need an ethic which neither capitulates in the face of factual divergences on the planet earth, nor would attempt to simply level them. I will argue that, in the postmodern age, this ethic is to be sought in the consequences of a qualitative ideal of freedom, orientated around the concept of a global ethic.

## **Keyword 2: Qualitative Freedom**

Within the ranks of all values, that of freedom occupies a special role. Certainly, there are cultures which, according to their *explicit self-understanding*, are not based upon the idea of freedom. Yet everyone *implicitly* claims freedom qua *self-determination*; even and especially when freedom regarding one's conduct in life is denied. Any commitment to values, not least the commitment of the fundamentalist, becomes absurd if it is enforced. Even those who ascribe to completely illiberal modes of life wish to do so *autonomously*. They have therefore no (good) reason to deny others the same such autonomy. Now, because individual freedom cannot be coherently denied, it must consequently be conceded to all and consistently facilitated. Reason simply demands, as the obviously rational conclusion, that in terms of freedom we grant to others that which we claim for ourselves. In this indirectly self-grounding structure, the idea of freedom is unique, and it thus recommends itself for the clarification of cross-cultural questions of value.

Accordingly, the freedom of others is not only the limit of our own freedom, but its aim as well. Freedom is not given to us, it is assigned to us. It calls for liberation. Internally, for the emancipation of our own self, just as well as outwardly, for the setting free of all others. Since neither market nor nature ensure that *everyone* has at his disposal the preconditions for autonomous life, the *demand* of *individual* freedom and the *promotion* of its general presuppositions must go hand in hand. Since freedom is granted *us* insofar as everyone has a right to it, it follows that, as long as there is only one single human being who finds himself to be unfree, the freedom of all others remains imperfect. *Per se*, freedom is therefore not a local or national, but rather a global idea; an idea not excluding anyone, but rather including everyone. Therefore, in particular, it is appropriate for the *Global Ethic project*.

The global image of “Freedom”, however, is tarnished. Many who were bound to the wheel of economic liberalization blame the contortions they suffered on the ideal of freedom itself (and not merely its libertarian distortion). Additionally, attacks on the international judicial system (carried out by the USA, either cynically or stupidly, in the name of “liberty”) have massively damaged the idea of freedom. In many places, people now attribute inherent structural weaknesses to the open society, again describing the market economy as unstable and democracy as fragile. As dishonourable battles were fought under the banner of universalism, many burn the flag of cosmopolitanism today. As the ideals of human rights and freedom were defended in a onesided manner, they are now suffering attacks from many sides.

And all this although the idea of freedom had for so long been ahead of the race! Its sleek racing car, driven to high altitudes, and fueled by deregulated economies, seemed to be able to glide, virtually effortlessly, over cultural burdens, hierarchical barriers, environmental problems and religious sensibilities. But the bolide lost its grip precisely on the imaginary finishing straight towards a state-free global society, skidding upon the sand of self-interest, so liberally scattered by speculative finance, and swerving into the solid wall of reality. Now that the vehicle has already been ridden to shards, nobody wants to take the responsibility for the wreckage. Suddenly in all corners of the land, the insight of classical liberalism is re-entering general awareness that the selfish joyrides of a select few must be curbed by precautions and regulations for all.

This is an admirable insight – above all as an admission of guilt from those hitherto at the wheel – it is not however sufficient to get freedom’s vehicle back on the road. As we all know, the crash was no accident, but due to the fact that the racing car was steered by drivers who considered the observation of the economic racing track’s environmental, social and ethical crash barriers to be superfluous. In order to get freedom’s vehicle on the move again, the cause of the accident – the quantitatively restricted tunnel-vision – must be rectified above all else. Otherwise, future accidents are inevitable.

The lens of globality helps with the diagnosis. It clarifies that such freedom – a guarded, enclosed and non-emancipatory freedom that cares neither for the weal nor the woe of humanity - is a type of freedom that belongs to the past. History has outlived this

*quantitative* freedom, that is, a freedom which only insists upon the tallying and increase of options, one which only calculates in terms of the stipulation “the more the better” and sees nothing other than a reduction of freedom within social participation, moral considerations and even environmental sustainability. Globality puts an end to this all-calculating, all-consuming idea of freedom.

But – why should freedom at all be valued only in quantitative terms? Why privilege the *quantitative maximizing* over the *qualitative optimizing* of our choices? It is clear to everyone that a small number of good choices is preferable to a larger number of abhorrent options – and that it is therefore a question, not only of the mass but also of the class of our choices. Let us think – to pick up an example from the Indian Nobel prizewinner, Amartya Sen – of two worlds: One offers us a determinate quantity of freedoms, including the unpleasant option of suffering from malaria, while the other, where the cause of the disease was be eradicated, offers the same number of options including the freedom to be able to live without fear of the disease. From a *quantitative* perspective on the mere number of given options, the scenarios are comparable. *Qualitatively*, however, there is a world of difference. And only by sensing this difference can we distinguish between meaningful and meaningless freedom.

Quantitatively conceived freedom does not at all flirt with the idea of unlimited opportunities. It knows: Whoever wants liberty limits license; good rules do not burden, but liberate. *Heteronomy* can destroy freedom, but *self-imposed* limits cannot. Self-restraint does not *negate* our freedom; it *realizes* it. The initial question is therefore not *how many* freedoms, but rather *which* ones? The true motto of freedom is consequently not “the more the better,” but, thought qualitatively, “the better the more.” The more essential a certain freedom, all the more should we – in competition with its alternatives – promote it. Instead of a “world of unlimited possibilities,” in which *some* can *acquire everything*, qualitative freedom strives for a “world of limited impossibilities,” in which *everyone* has the capacity to *achieve something*.

While quantitative freedom promotes the establishment of a liberalism of uniformity and imposes the maximization of private options upon the world, the idea of qualitative freedom advises diversity. It encourages us to try out different forms of cooperation, in order to procure the rich objectives of individuals and cultures (in order to maintain freedom), to coordinate (in order to shape freedom) and to grant freedom for the liberation of others (in order to develop freedom). Instead of deciding all questions by means of a *weighing up* of abstract options, qualitative freedom recommends the critical *balancing* of concrete alternatives. More simply formulated: Citizens themselves should define the freedom which they establish – and so transform themselves from passive *recipients* of aid into active *participants* of development.

The conception of qualitative freedom thus trusts human judgment. The latter of course does not float value-free within empty space, but is always already grounded – by the foundational moral norms that have always guided life. Who among us was not admonished as a child: “Do unto others as you would them do.” This *golden rule* of reciprocity, which prescribes reciprocal responsibility, solidarity, fairness, tolerance and

respect, is – as impressively evidenced by the publications of Hans Küng and Stephan Schlenzog – common to *all* world religions: To Islam, just as much as to Christianity and Judaism, to Hinduism, just as much as to Buddhism and Jainism, to Zoroastrianism, just as much as to Confucianism and Taoism. But we also find it in the secular legal texts of totally different cultures (in Egypt and Rome, for instance) as well as in fundamentally secular philosophies, e.g. in the well known “categorical imperative” of Immanuel Kant: “Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it would become a universal law.” Or alternatively: “So act as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end and never as merely a means only.”

This principle – articulated within these religiously as well as philosophically derived propositions – of treating humanity humanely, and thus not devaluing subjects as objects, has appeared evident to humanity, regardless of all spatio-temporal boundaries. In this focal point common to all believers and non-believers, the rays of the human ethic converge. The global ethic does not therefore have to be artificially illuminated; the foundational norm, in relation to which our freedom has always and everywhere to be answerable, shines by itself. The brilliance of all the cultural traditions of humanity is reflected in the global ethic: In the striking multiplicity of their cultural forms, they reflect and intensify the spiritual unity of their core moral norms.

The more potent the humanitarian and unifying factor is, the more cultural specificity we can allow. Through the global ethic, people of the most diverse origins can develop shared ideas, and on this basis, cooperate purposefully with one another. Thus, the centripetal force of the global ethic balances the centrifugal force of freedom. The global ethic connects; the global ethic unifies.

And upon this man is utterly dependent, as a thoroughly relational being, who is in constant exchange with alterity. Without a social and against the natural environment, no one can be free. A man abandoned upon an uninhabited planet will hardly experience himself as being particularly *free*, although he can pursue the fulfillment of his predilections physically *unhindered* and socially-morally *unconstrained*. *Thus radically fulfilled*, the dream of quantitatively limitless freedom turns out to be a nightmare. Consequently, individuality is not always compromised by collectivity, it is rather often completed by it. Freedom flourishes, not only in exclusive privacy, but especially in the inclusivity of connections. Therefore instead of deriving society strictly instrumentally from the calculations of utility maximization, we should constantly give attention to our inclinations towards cultural exchange, non-utilitarian communication, spiritual contemplation, as well as moral unification. Without symbolic forms and their moral norms, man becomes stunted and his freedom degenerates.

For this reason, we should not think of our society – nor global society – as a dead nexus of mutual insurance contracts, but as a multilateral emancipation pact, as a federation for life that neither approves the secession of the wealthy nor the exclusion of the poor, but that struggles for a world in which everyone contributes to a dignified existence for all.

Between self-help and help for others, between subsidiarity and solidarity. Insistence upon solidarity alone, quickly escalates in the direction of the paternalism of welfare. Conversely, mere subsidiarity makes the prospects of the poor dependent upon the benevolence of the providers. Neither state paternalism nor the privatism of benefactors accords with the dignity of humanity. The true lodestar of responsible socio-economic policy is therefore *subsidiary solidarity*: an outside help to encourage self-help.

It is the task of *individuals* to emancipate themselves from self-incurred dependencies; but it is the task of the *community* to liberate them from extraneous ones. Only in this way do we honor the equal right of all persons to make themselves *unequal* by their own work and works. This does not only demand the social securing and mitigating of the market, but – under this (unfortunately often only inadequately fulfilled) presupposition – also its unhindered workings. Qualitative freedom thus respects the free market economy as the expression of individual aspirations and efforts, *insofar* as the market is ordered in such a way that within it the voices of all, and not only the interests of some, find expression. Qualitative freedom is therefore neither oblivious to nor obsessive about the functions of markets.

In sum: Since it is not a product of nature, but rather a product of culture, i.e. since freedom only grows in communities and not upon trees, it is never found to be fully formed, but must be constantly further developed anew and by itself. Both in respect of the spatial globality of our living conditions, as well as temporally, in respect of the generations that will come after us, we should direct our freedom qualitatively according to the principles of the global ethic – out of respect for our environment and our communities just as in consideration of future generations. Freedom can only permanently secure its own presuppositions by proceeding economically cautiously, culturally respectfully and environmentally sustainably.

### **Keyword 3: Business Ethics**

The key words of business ethics are market, might (*Macht*) and moral. Wherever markets and powers are globalized, there must be a delimitation of morals. The economic crisis of 2008/2009 showed us that this had not yet been accomplished. Remedies recently recommended to us, have shown to be outdated by the crisis, i.e. *laissez faire*, deregulation, monetization, incentivization – even in the economic profession such slogans (propagated by the *Chicago School of Economics*) are deemed less and less attractive. One increasingly recognizes how these concepts (orientated around the thought of quantitative freedom) have contributed towards a global *race to the bottom*. We are all familiar with the argument:

A given company relocates to a country with unregulated market conditions, where a lack of ethical or ecological standards allows said company to operate at lower costs. The pressures of competition prompt others to follow this example, catapulting the host countries (which seek to retain capital, and maintain employment rates and tax revenues) into a competition over the lowest possible standard. This triggers a downward spiral that ends with the hypothetical “worst case scenario” in which profits are privatised and the

costs and consequences thereof socialized. On the slopes of an unbalanced global economy, this “snowball effect” of a one-dimensional pursuit of profit threatens to launch an avalanche of precarious economic conduct.

Similarly, in the financial sector an unholy alliance of legal deregulation and moral degradation led to social disaster. To the extent speculators not only squandered immense volumes of capital, but also the trust funds of the economic system, they were sawing the selfsame ideological branch all of them were sitting on. It becomes increasingly apparent that instead of aiming at social utility, the strategies and aspirations of some investors tolerated calamity. In the reflection of its catastrophic consequences, the *quantitative* understanding of freedom became aware, for the first time, of its Medusa’s head, and was turned to stone: Who nowadays still wishes to claim that purely quantitative freedom shall heal the world?

While the logic of quantity commits us to the cognitive tools of natural science and mathematics, the qualitative path opens up the treasures of the social and cultural sciences. The discourses on freedom will thus involve more voices, our analyses will become more *idealistic*, and with that turn out to be more *realistic* – since man is a being inspired by ideas and ideals. The supplementation of the quantitative with qualitative approaches leads, in economic theory, for example, to the dismissal of the so-called *homo oeconomicus*. This utility-maximizing hobgoblin was mainly toppled from its pedestal by the very quantification and mathematization it had facilitated. The image overhaul of a constantly maximizing, fully informed loner with unerring, stable preferences came about because the behavioral prognosis calculated upon its basis plainly and simply did not correspond with the reality.

These days not only the neuroeconomists, but also the social psychologists, institutional economists, and experimental psychologists bestow the economic acteur with more human traits once more. He – or she – is granted more social contacts and now possesses the ability to evaluate and modify his/her own preferences critically – and last but not least: morally. In so doing, contemporary economics increasingly approaches an image of humanity that has long since predominated in the areas of China, India, Northern Europe, and South America. The Swahili language, for example, succinctly conveys this image through the following phrases: *mtu si kitu* (humans are not objects), *mtu ni watu* (humans are only human through interaction with others) and *mtu ni utu* (to be human is to be humane).

While renowned economists, until a few years ago, did not hesitate to deny that firms possess any social responsibility, since it was unclear to them as to how a cohort of rational utility-maximizers in strict competition with other similar zombies could act ethically, today, the very same Professors (like Michael Jensen) loudly proclaim the swan song of that essentially muddled theory together with its botched behavioral prognoses. Now the hymn of *Personal Integrity* and *Corporate Social Responsibility* resounds everywhere. Suddenly, it is no longer questionable *whether* humanity has moral tendencies and whether businesses have social responsibility, but the only concern is *what* these are and *how* they are best fulfilled. Since companies have begun to be

understood as a union of morally able persons – and not just a network of egoistic robots – people now prefer to analyze corporate structures which operate both morally and profitably.

Now, statistical connection of ethics and success are being established, and reasonably so: For morality influences all predispositions and decisions of individuals, including economic ones. Morality thus has an effect on costs and prices – just as other preferences too. As a result, it can little surprise us that morality first helps to lower conflict and transaction costs, and secondly helps to further efficiency, innovation, loyalty, and reputation. By connecting us to our fellow man and woman in a deeper way, morality also helps in developing new economic forms of action – whether this be different notions of production and procedure, or novel marketing models and types of customers.

The recently much observed *Social Entrepreneurs* show how market and morality can harmonize. The global access to customers, products and streams of information are the presuppositions for the profitability of their projects. Not in spite of the fact, but because of the fact, that they act for the welfare of the community, social entrepreneurs are attractive to certain global investors and consumers. Just how profitable and crisis-resistant doing business with a humanitarian focus can be, is being talked about more and more, slowly but surely.

Theory follows practice. Topics which were long relegated to the peripheral subject matter of business economics (such as: ecological sustainability, social responsibility, and moral integrity) are now at the center of attention. Many companies have already started to adopt and implement policies that address these issues. Instead of measuring success using a quantitative “single bottom line”, many companies have started to measure success *qualitatively*, that is, according to the harmonious interplay of the “triple bottom line”: people, planet and profit.

In addition, the global data flow changes the business world. Even in under-regulated societies, more and more companies are subscribing to demanding transnational *Corporate Governance Standards*, e.g. in order to become (more) attractive to global investors. Adaptions to the expectations of the world’s citizens lead from time to time even to a *race to the top* when various companies or locations compete over who offers the most sustainable norms and the most transparent processes.

Especially when *Non-Governmental Organizations* competently act as mandatory mediators and experts, much that at a global level is (still) not enforceable by means of “hard,” i.e. legal measures, is already able to be reached by “soft” sanctions, for example through sector specific programs (as in the diamond or mineral industry), by institutions overseeing the industrial sphere (like, e.g. *Transparency International*) as well as universal platforms (like the *UN Global Compact*). Often the carrot of global recognition is far better at driving business towards commendable actions than the stick of public reproach. In short: globality *requires* not only an activity in qualitatively responsible freedom; it also increasingly *promotes* it.

Economics has also moved away from the belief that mere quantitative growth produces happiness; and that a greater GDP is to be equated with gains in welfare and freedom. One rather recognizes that whereas *cost-benefit* analyses can only prepare decisions, they cannot replace them. Many of the most socially relevant criteria can only be quantified with difficulty. Nations may, moreover, decide to incur financial burdens on behalf of their cultural and social values; this also represents a certain expression of deliberative qualitative freedom. And therefore on a national as well as, increasingly, on an international level, more and more qualitative models of growth are used and alternative measures like “overall freedom” and “real welfare,” or simply “happiness,” are tried out.

Gone are the days, therefore, when one took as one’s starting point a necessary conflict between ethics and success, i.e. between *either* an uncritical ethics of success *or* a superficial moralizing in respect of economic laws. Instead of mutual reproaches between economic and moral ideologies, today there is a prevalence of *reciprocal enquiries*. Instead of a flight into *horrible simplifications*, a new era of *fertile complexity* comes into being; a thinking which, starting from the concept of economic rationality, reflects the productive role of ethics in theory as well as in economic praxis. The works of Philip Mirowski, Stephen Marglin, Hilary Putnam, Amartya Sen, Vivian Walsh, Partha Dasgupta, Joseph Stiglitz, Nienhe Hsieh, James Galbraith, Senjay Reddy and many others bring morality back into the centre of Economics and bring Economics back into the sphere of the Social Sciences.

They stress: Instead of being predetermined by economic factors, humanity determines the course of the economy. Thus the *theoretical awareness* of economic freedom paves the way for the *practical* fulfillment of free responsibility in the economy.

My summary: Global problems can only be overcome by the united action of civil-society and economic and state actors – across all national, cultural and religious boundaries. For such alliances, however, a global consensus concerning values and goals is required. The more our freedom is actually unbound, the more we are morally bound to commit ourselves to a global ethic. Since freedom can only be preserved by conserving the very environs that sustain it, we should see in the orientation of a diachronically as well as synchronically recognized global ethic, not a quantitative *Minus* but a qualitative *Bonum*.

Nowhere else in the world have the potentials of this global ethic to provide concrete answers to pressing questions regarding the state of the global environment, the global economy and global politics, been as profoundly explored as in Tübingen. For the past decades, Hans Küng and his team of researchers have worked tirelessly to analyse the origins of the world’s religions, and to draw the foundations of a global ethic capable of uniting all peoples of the world. His extensive works on Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as well as the complementary works by Stephan Schlensog on Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism are milestones in the history of globalisation ethics research.

The Global Ethic Institute will build upon these achievements. It wishes to continue this research (e.g. in relation to the spiritual traditions of China and Africa) and further extend it to practical applications. The *Global Ethic Project* – based upon interdisciplinary research and teaching here in Tübingen – intends to inspire future *global governance*. Particularly in view of the fact that our life is ever more insistently determined by the global economy, we hope to theoretically develop the fundamental commandments of an ethic of humanity, in order to incorporate them into praxis. “Nothing is as practical as a good theory” – as the Jewish sociologist, Kurt Lewin, once wrote. And no theory is better than the truth. I thus end as I began: with words of thanks to the man who has created, over decades dedicated to truthfulness, an irradant life’s work of humanitarian truth, in the light of which we are able to firmly make further progress. Striving for *Veritas in veracitate* (truth in truthfulness) is the central interest of Hans Küng. It is also the maxim of the Global Ethic Institute.

I would like to thank you for the honor you bestowed upon me by giving me your attention. I am committed to live up to it. – Thank you very much.