

**German Ethics Council's Anniversary Event**  
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# Human dignity and new technologies

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## Stefan Zweig, Die Welt von Gestern

The world is always changing.

But it should not be yesterday's world.

It should be a world of respect and cooperation: a world of dignity.

# Stefan Zweig, Tomorrow's world

- an atmosphere of tolerance and world citizenship
- where people are respected and feel free from bias and narrow-mindedness.
- where they appreciate individual liberty and spiritual independence
- and at same time connected with others and the community in which they flourish
- a time in which the life of the individual and society is not dominated by the military, the political, and the commercial but the arts, sciences, and humanities.

# Human dignity and new technologies

## OUTLINE

- Human dignity
- Globalization as new context
- Globalization and healthcare
- The basic problem of inequality
- The emergence of global bioethics
- A broader perspective of bioethics
- The fundamental role of human dignity and human rights.

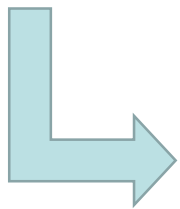
# Human Dignity

Roberto Andorno: Human dignity is the idea that every human individual has inherent worth and accompanying rights

## Five major paradigms

- Moral dignity (Antiquity)
- Spiritual dignity (Middle Ages and Renaissance)
- Rational dignity (17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century)
- Social dignity (19<sup>th</sup> century)
- Human dignity (20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century)

Expanding  
circle of  
moral  
concern



Global governance  
Medical research  
Health policy  
Patient care

**New context:  
Globalization**

Human dignity and new technologies

# Globalization

Economic: world as one market place

Social

Political

Cultural

Ideological



Global consciousness



Press Esc to exit fullscreen

How would you  
**describe yourself?**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBZjr-ml8Lw>

▶ ▶ 🔊 0:04 / 1:28

Are you a global  
citizen?

“citizen of the world”



## Are you a global citizen?



**Nigeria**



**China**



**Peru**



**India**



**Spain**



**Kenya**



**Ghana**



**Pakistan**



**Canada**



**Brazil**



**Greece**



**UK**



**Indonesia**



**US**



**Mexico**



**Chile**



**Germany**

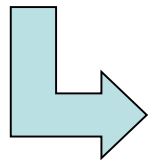


**Russia**

# Globalization and healthcare

Enormous improvement of health and life expectancy

- International expansion of medical research
- Global availability of medication and treatment
- International cooperation, aid and exchange

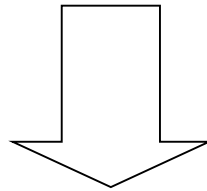


Emergence of global ethical problems (e.g. organ trade; health tourism)

# Globalisation and healthcare

## improvement of global health

- but
- growing disparity: better health but not for everyone and not everywhere
  - deterioration of the natural world



- basic ethical problem is **inequality**
- broad range of ethical principles is needed to address ethical challenges.

### **Inequality as a major social and political problem**

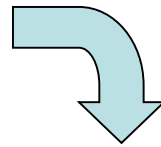
- No longer possible to deny that inequality exists and is growing: something is fundamentally wrong; “in-dignified situation.”
- Change is possible; politics have shaped the healthcare market and created the inequalities.

# Basic ethical problem of inequality

**Where is bioethics?**

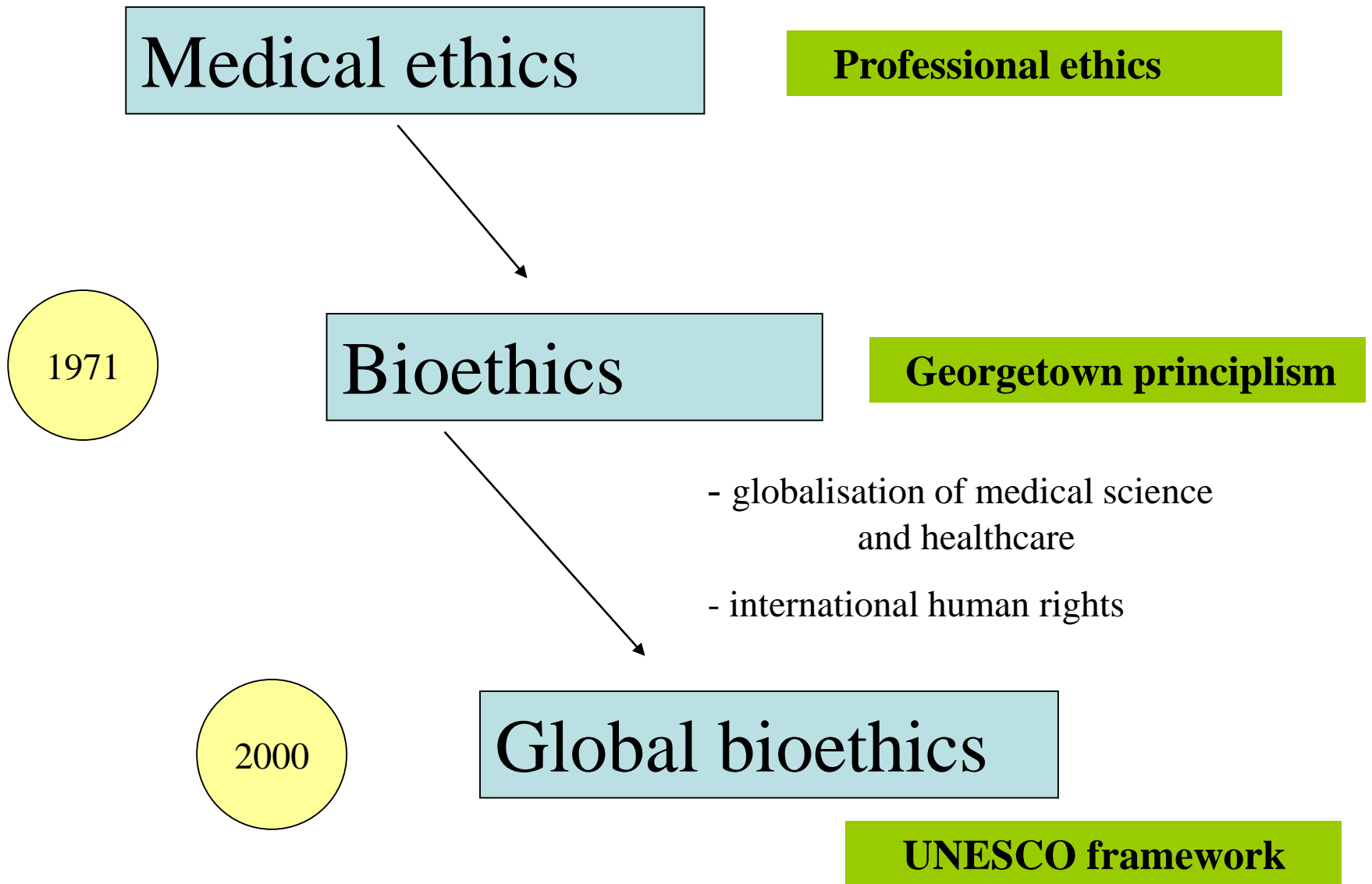
Focus of mainstream bioethics is limited (autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice)

**Need for broader approach**



Global bioethics

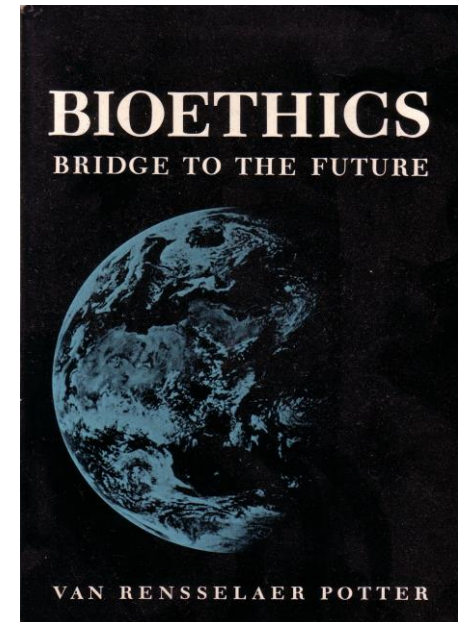
# The emergence of global bioethics



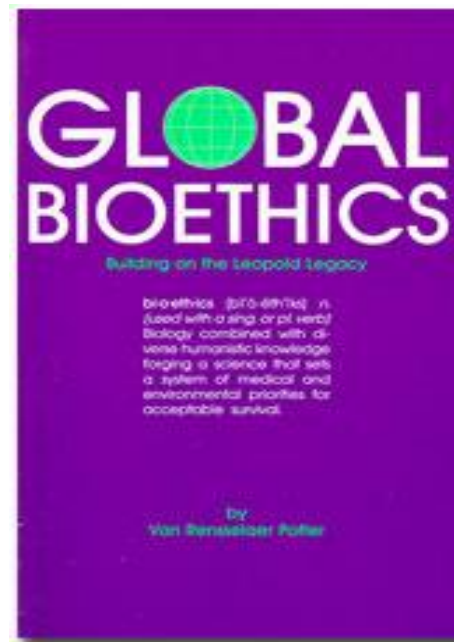
# The emergence of global bioethics

Revival and renewal of Potter's conception of bioethics

1. Focus on global problems
2. Broad, encompassing approach
3. Global ethical framework



1971



1988

# Global bioethics

## 1. Focus on global problems

Potter's priority problems:

- population
- peace
- pollution
- poverty
- politics
- progress

## We have different ethical problems today:

Biodiversity loss

Biological and toxic weapons

Bio-piracy

Brain drain and care drain

Climate change

Commercialization of research and medicine

Corruption

Dual use; bio-security and bio-terrorism

Exploitation of vulnerable populations

Food safety and security

Health disparities (10/90 gap of WHO)

Health tourism

Humanitarian assistance

Integrity; conflicts of interests

Intellectual property rights regime

Pandemics; emerging infectious diseases

Poverty

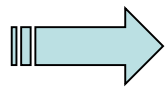
Publication ethics, fraud, ghost writing

Refugees, displacement

Trafficking: organs, tissues, body parts, humans



### 2. We need a new, broader, encompassing approach beyond the perspective of individual autonomy



Individual, social and environmental challenges can no longer be disconnected in bioethical discourse

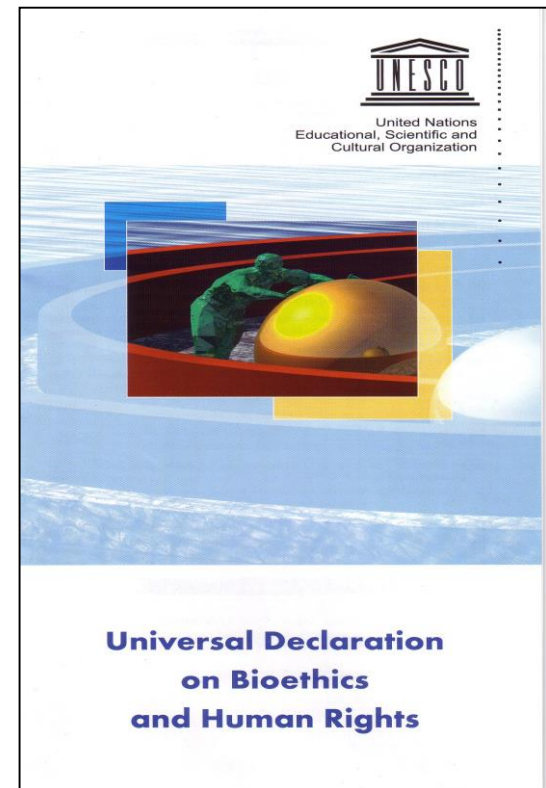
*“The time has come to recognize that **we can no longer examine medical options without considering ecological science and the larger problems of society on a global scale...**” A system of ethics is global, on the one hand, if it is unified and comprehensive, and in the more usual sense, if it is worldwide in scope.”*

Van Rensselaer Potter: *Global bioethics*, 1988, p. 2, 78.

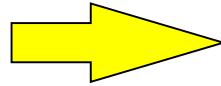
## 3. We have a basic global ethical framework

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

Universal Declaration on Bioethics  
and Human Rights (2005)



UNESCO  
Declaration  
on Bioethics  
and Human  
Rights  
The  
product



15 principles for  
global bioethics

1. *Human dignity and human rights*
2. *Benefit and harm*
3. *Autonomy and individual responsibility*
4. *Consent*
5. *Persons without the capacity to consent*
6. *Respect for human vulnerability and personal integrity*
7. *Privacy and confidentiality*
8. *Equality, justice and equity*
9. *Non-discrimination and non-stigmatization*
10. *Respect for cultural diversity and pluralism*
11. *Solidarity and cooperation*
12. *Social responsibility and health*
13. *Sharing of benefits*
14. *Protecting future generations*
15. *Protection of the environment, the biosphere and biodiversity*

# Broader perspective of bioethics

## Human dignity and human rights

Benefit and harm

Autonomy and individual responsibility

Human vulnerability and personal integrity

Privacy and confidentiality

Non-discrimination and non-stigmatization

Cultural diversity, pluralism and universalism

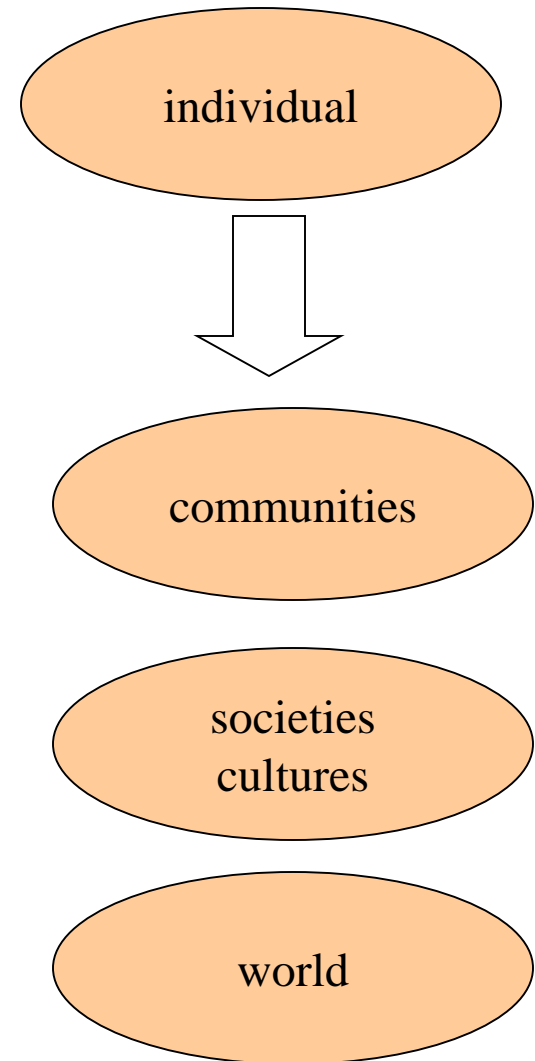
Solidarity and cooperation

Social responsibility

Sharing of benefits

Future generations

Protection of the environment and biodiversity



# Global bioethics

## Different conceptual horizon than mainstream bioethics

Every human being has same rights everywhere

Connected rather than free self-actualizing individuals

Vulnerability rather than autonomy

Social rather than individual responsibility

Cooperation rather than competition

Common good rather than individual preferences

Collective action rather than consumer choice

# Global bioethics

Fundamental role of human dignity



## Approximation of bioethics and human rights discourse

- both are global, public discourses
- same claim to universality
- same link to policy
- dissociated from philosophical and theological foundations
- same origin (anti-Holocaust)
- shared goals: never again should people be treated as means

# Fundamental role of human dignity and rights

Three types of relationships between bioethics and human dignity and rights in Bioethics Declaration:

1. Human dignity and rights as starting point and context
2. Human dignity and rights as basic principle of bioethics
3. Human dignity and rights as constraint and ultimate arbiter

# Fundamental role of human dignity and rights

## 1. Human dignity and rights as starting point and context

- Bioethical principles are anchored in human rights as reflected in the title of the normative instrument
- Emphasis in the Preamble of the UDBHR
  - a. *“Recognizing that ethical issues...should be examined with due respect to the dignity of the human person and universal respect for, and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms”*
  - b. *“Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights...”*
  - c. Many references made to human rights instruments
  - d. Explicit reference to Oviedo Convention of 1997
- One of the explicit aims of the Declaration
  - Art.2.c. aim is *“to promote respect for human dignity and protect human rights, by ensuring respect for the life of human beings, and fundamental freedoms, consistent with international human rights law”*



# Fundamental role of human dignity and rights

## 2. Human dignity and rights as basic principle of bioethics

Art.3: Human dignity and human rights

1. *Human dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms are to be fully respected.*
2. *The interests and welfare of the individual should have priority over the sole interest of science or society*

# Fundamental role of human dignity and rights

## 3. Human dignity and rights as constraint and ultimate arbiter

- Preamble: *“Recognizing that this Declaration is to be understood in a manner consistent with domestic and international law in conformity with human rights law”*
- Art.6: Exceptions to the principle of consent can only be made in accordance with international human rights law
- Art 7: Same constraints for research with persons without the capacity to consent
- Art. 8: Same constraints for disclosure of personal information
- Art. 11: Emphasis that discrimination and stigmatization always violate human rights

# Fundamental role of human dignity and rights

## 3. Human dignity and rights as constraint and ultimate arbiter

- Art.12: Respect for cultural diversity and pluralism.

New principle but most limited one. Considerations of cultural diversity and pluralism can never be invoked to infringe upon human rights.

- Art.14: Social responsibility and health.

Also new principle but based on the human right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health

# Fundamental role of human dignity and rights

## 3. Human dignity and rights as constraint and ultimate arbiter

- Explicit formulation of limits:

*Art. 28: “Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any claim to engage in any activity or to perform any act contrary to human rights, fundamental freedoms and human dignity”*

# Bioethics and Human Dignity and Rights

Principles of global bioethics as mechanisms for protecting human dignity and rights: emphasis on action, protection and implementation.

- \* from academic discipline to
  - consultation
  - policy-making
  - public debate
  - technology assessment
  
- \* from reflection to
  - participation
  - engagement
  - advocacy

Vielen Dank für  
Ihre Geduld und  
Aufmerksamkeit