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**Humanity:
From authoritarian ethics to rational ethics
based upon the HUEP**

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We hear more and more frequently that our species is affecting our planet (nonliving and living things, including ourselves) in ways that are highly dangerous to our species, and life in general. These negative effects are the outcomes of things that we do, individually and as groups. The list of these dangerous activities and their effects does not have to be repeated here. What needs to be discussed is what we can do about what is happening.

If our primary, basic, important wish is that our species not only survive, but also behave in ways that make for as good a life as possible for everyone, then we must figure out what it is that we should do to accomplish that and agree to do it. The current situation is that even though we increasingly are figuring out what we are able to do that will increase the odds of fulfilling that wish (with of course much, much more to figure out), we have a major problem in agreeing to what we should do and therefore in working together optimally to do it.

The best term for that set of beliefs as to what we should (and should not) do is "ethical beliefs." And if that set of ethical beliefs has any coherence to it, we could call it an "ethical philosophy."

Perhaps all of us have, to some extent, a basic ethical philosophy, or set of basic beliefs that guides us to make many of our specific decisions. What we have as a species, however, is no generally agreed upon basic ethical philosophy. Instead, we have highly conflicting basic ethical philosophies that vary among individuals and among our many groups (from families to nations). And those philosophies (individual and group), if put into words, suffer from much ambiguity due to our "poetic" (e.g., metaphoric) language, that can easily be made to have more than one meaning.

All of this results in our species being extremely fragmented, disorganized, and conflictual. Consequently, we see a marked inability to arrive at enough agreement to rapidly make decisions, many of which are extremely important for us to make as soon as possible. If we look at decision-making that we call "political," we can easily note how slowly and unreliably we arrive at needed political decisions. Not only that, history demonstrates multiple times over how differences of opinion about what we should and should not do can lead to aggression, even to the extent of war and genocide.

Our species needs not only to continue working on figuring out what we can do to save and benefit ourselves, but also to continue working on our ways of arriving at our ethical beliefs, such as to become a much more ethically unified species. (We of course will never arrive at complete agreement about everything, but always working toward that goal will carry us further than being complacent about our currently enormous disagreement.)

It has always been true that our primary sociocultural activity designed for the purpose of working on our ethics has been that set of activities that we have labeled "religion." But our religions have so far been quite ineffective in the production of a unified basic ethical philosophy for our species.

The ethics that comes to us naturally through evolution is "authoritarian ethics," based upon obedience to the most powerful. Thus, historically we have tended to legitimize our ethics by claiming that what we should do is what God wants us to do. However, there has never been agreement (nor is there likely to be in the foreseeable future) about whether there is a God or not, or if there is, what that God is like, or what that God would like us to do, if anything. Because there has never been any such authority agreed upon by everyone, we have had multiple religions that have kept us divided and sometimes even in conflict. This has even given religion somewhat of a bad name, with the growing belief that our religions have been more of a problem than a solution. Some have regarded religion as something to be "stamped out" (or allowed to die out), with no alternative sociocultural activity that is specifically designed for working on our ethics and that is also generally available and even sometimes expected.

The more appropriate alternative, I think, is the improvement of religion. Indeed, our species is gradually maturing, and so can and are its religions. This improvement in religion would be, I propose, the development of "rational-ethical religion" (as opposed to our naturally occurring "authoritarian-ethical religion").

Rational ethics is ethics in which the legitimization of beliefs is based upon logical consistency within the set of beliefs and based upon beliefs considered most likely to be accurate, especially when utilizing the rules of evidence. (The epitome of the "rules of evidence" is the set of scientific methods, that have demonstrated success by virtue of our enormously increased ability to predict outcomes and therefore to do amazing things.)

In addition to becoming more rational-ethical, our religions will need to help us work on cooperation and organization based upon the social contract for the benefit of all (as opposed

to obedience to the most powerful). I believe that this is actually occurring, but such change is very, very early in its development. A term I have devised for that movement within our religions, and within our species in general, is "Humanianity." It is not only the transition from authoritarian ethics to rational ethics, but also the increasing adoption of an "ultimate ethical principle," namely, the Humanian Ultimate Ethical Principle (HUEP). I will now explain the appearance and function of this ultimate ethical principle.

In rational ethics, the legitimization of a specific ethical belief would be the demonstration that it follows logically from a higher level, or broader, ethical belief (rule of conduct or principle) and one or more accurate existential beliefs (about existence and how it works). ("I should not cause needless suffering. Stealing causes needless suffering. Therefore, I should not steal.")

In a complete rational system, then, with each ethical principle being legitimized by demonstration of consistency with a still higher level, or broader, ethical principle, it is apparent that there would be "at the top" an ultimate ethical principle that could not be further so legitimized, and therefore would be in that sense "arbitrary." It would be based upon something other than that it follows from an even higher level, or broader, ethical principle. So, what could that ultimate ethical principle be?

The wording that I would propose for the optimal ultimate ethical principle for our species would be the Humanian Ultimate Ethical Principle (HUEP), namely, that:

"We should do that which will promote not only the survival of our species, but also as much joy, contentment, and appreciation as possible and as little pain, suffering, disability, and early death as possible, for everyone, now and in the future."

I see this ultimate principle as beginning to emerge, but as being very early in that process. We humans still remain primarily authoritarian-ethical, and prone to divide up into our groups that are somewhat obedient to their powerful leaders, human or theistic.

But in order to live according to this HUEP, we have to figure out the most basic and effective ways of working together on arriving at our more specific ethical beliefs. We are faced with the current situation that we have widespread difference of opinion, making ultimate decision-making extremely difficult and often based upon the relative power of various individuals and groups, thus resorting back to authoritarian ethics. Given this situation, what is the most important ethical principle –consistent with the HUEP– having to do with the decision-making process and involving a dramatically different methodology than what we have always tended to use?

I believe that it involves a commitment (and a commitment to advocate for that commitment) to continuing, non-hostile discussion of any issues having bearing upon our quality of life, no matter how long it takes, with the goal of ultimate agreement through increasing, agreed-upon understanding of the reasons for any disagreement and satisfactory resolution of the problems that are the cause of those reasons.

Note that this approach is drastically different from that which is almost always followed in the case of significant disagreement, namely, ending of discussion as being "nonproductive," usually preceded by the development of anger and often by the development of hostile behavior, and followed by psychological, social, or physical distancing, along with a significant tendency toward conflict that is on a continuum that even can progress to murder, war, and genocide. This resistance to continuing increasingly in-depth discussion in response to difference of opinion (belief) is profound, and is, I think, quite possibly the biggest challenge our species faces. It prevents the very thing that is most needed if we are to work together cooperatively as a species, in behalf of our species.

This whole concept is elaborated upon in [the website for Humanianity \(humanianity.com\)](http://humanianity.com), where there are tools provided to work on achieving this transition as rapidly as possible. For an analysis of the above described resistance, which I believe is our biggest challenge, this page of the website is most relevant: [Humanianity, Our Challenge](#)

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