

Religion and Ethos in Western Civil Societies.

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At the very beginning of this lecture, I would like to describe the perspective of my own discipline, cultural analysis and cultural studies, with regard to our common topic. Firstly I will try to analyze the function of “religion” for culture in general. Therefore, following a famous philosophical book (Whitehead’s *What is Religion?*), I want to examine what can be understood by the use of the term “religion”.

In a second step I will discuss the relation between religion and modernity and to what extent modernity is Western or global. What is important for me with regard to our dialogue is to avoid quick evaluations. Therefore, I would like to analyse certain positions in the transcultural dialogue between the Islamic and the Post-Christian European world. In my eyes, our conference will be successful if it proves possible to deal with all the controversial points in a fair and common way.

My paper has not a linear but more a cyclical structure, therefore I will start at the end, with the question of to what extent the conflicts between Western and Islamic countries are based on the differences of religious traditions. So I am starting with my first thesis:

Thesis:

The structural conflict between Islamic countries and Western societies has a double structure. On the one hand it is based historically on the difference between Christianity and Islam, but on the other hand it has become more and more a conflict within modernity, that is, between societies that are no longer religious in a traditional sense and countries which claim to have a strong religious base relevant or, moreover, obligatory for all its peoples. There is a reciprocal discomfort: religious people, including a minority of traditional Christians inside Western countries, feel uncomfortable with the symbolic framework of a post-religious civil society that is characteristic of most of European countries. They think that without a strong religious foundation, ethical principles cannot work and that every society needs a reliable objective symbolic structure. It was Dostoyevsky who formulated the sentence: Without God all is allowed. But also the thesis of a famous Austrian author, Hermann Broch, that a world without a central valuesystem cannot survive is the diagnosis of a deep crisis of modern Western culture. Broch, who, like T.S. Eliot, was not a traditional religious person but a secularist, could not imagine a symbolically fragmented world or, in other words, a pluralistic value system.

On the other hand, there is a discomfort of modern people in all attempts to reestablish a religious monopoly in modern societies. This is not only true for the majority of the population in most of the European countries (including traditional Catholic countries like Ireland, Poland, Italy or Spain); as far as I can see, there are also relevant segments of the population in many countries with Islamic traditions who are critical of the idea that religion should be the political and cultural foundation of their society (Egypt, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria). This part of the population is not automatically atheistic or agnostic,

but these men and women are in favor of the idea that only a clear separation of state and religious institutions can guarantee a strong stable and open civil society.

This brings me to my second thesis.

Thesis:

In his influential Essay Note towards the Definition of Culture, T. S. Eliot developed a new and broader understanding of culture which is no longer restricted to the exclusive field of fine arts, the masterpieces of the historical past and literature but is defined as the whole way of life including popular culture, eating, sports, dreams and many other issues. But culture is also seen as a value system and the deep structure and program of each culture is religion, in the case of most European countries Christianity. Thus, religion in a broader sense is not only a specific sub-field in modern society but to some extent the base of a specific culture.

Thus, in Eliot's eyes, religion as the program of a specific culture is unavoidable. I think Eliot makes a point that is worth discussing. If one understands "religion" namely in a broader way, including for example all modern ideologies since the nineteenth century, then his argument may also be true with regard to secular societies that either have either a religious or ideological monopoly or entail a sampling of different religions and ideologies that more or less determine culture as the whole way of life. This is true for an orthodox Jew, for a Muslim but also for a Marxist or a traditional nationalist in the first half of the twentieth century. In my view, secular ideologies are to some extent heirs of traditional religion. It was Ernest Gellner who defined nationalism as the religion of the industrial époque. That brings me to my third point.

Thesis

From the perspective of cultural analysis one may argue that religion and ethos are integrative and necessary parts of every culture. There is no culture without "religion" and "values". Following the etymology of the Ancient Greek word "ethos" I differentiate between ethos and ethics. I understand ethos as a sample of values rooted in a certain culture and more or less determining or regulating the behavior of the people within this cultural framework. Ethos is to some extent particular, ethics in a modern sense claims to be universal, although it may have its origin in a particular culture and be based on historical events. So, all ethics have a cultural background, a specific ethos, but claim a universal validity. Otherwise they are not ethics, but a particular ethos. This universalism that can be worked out from different ethos' include not only universal values and human rights and elements of human dignity but also contain certain institutionalized and non-institutionalized structures with regard to the transcultural dialogue between different national or religious entities. As I will show later, dialogue is not only a specific format of communication but entails a specific value, the recognition of the other as the other of myself.

But what is religion? And what do specific religions have in common? Drawing on Alfred North Whitehead, religion is not a simple, but a complex phenomenon which entails different components, as the British philosopher shows in his basic essay on Religion. The first aspect is what Whitehead calls feeling, that means a mystic element, a moment the German philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher

described in his *Speeches on Religion* as the very base of all religious issues: the mystic experience of the Christian monks, Buddhists or in Islam the Sufis or the religiosity of modern Romantics concerning nature, Schleiermacher has. All these forms of meditation are, by the way, a very attractive aspect in religion, especially in our time, because they create religious certainty seemingly without any words or any strict and dogmatic beliefs. It corresponds with modern subjectivity and individualism and does not come into conflict with modern sciences and their interpretation of the world.

The second moment of religion in Whitehead is rite, that is the way of giving religious feeling (s) certain and constant forms and a symbolic structure. All members of a given religious community take part in its central rite which for example refer either to central human issues such as birth and death, the initiation of adults into the world or marriage, or have a reference to central aspects of the religious tradition.

The third component in Whitehead is traditionally linked with myth or – to make use of the plural – with myths, with a sample of holy stories about God (or Gods) and his prophets and representatives. From the perspective of cultural anthropology and philosophy, it can be understood as a sample of narratives that creates a certain community and constructs the identity of its members.

As I have shown in my book *The Architecture of Modern Culture. Towards a Narrative Cultural Theory* (Müller-Funk 2012) narratives have a central function for many essential cultural phenomena, the creation of values, cultural memory, the production of meaning and the production of individual and collective identity.

The fourth element of religion Whitehead calls dogma, but he points out that he does not imply any negative connotation with that term. Dogma is seen as this component of religion that gives it a clear and rational structure. Following the French philosopher Michel Foucault, it is a non-scientific discourse including arguments, definitions and more or less strict terms. Or in other words, this is the field of theology, of the philology of religious texts. Whitehead seems to understand these four elements in a linear and hierarchical sense. He appreciates Christianity and Buddhism (he does not mention Islam) because both religions have, as he points out, a high degree of rational argumentation.

In my analysis I differ from Whitehead in two points. Firstly, I do not follow his ideas of lower and higher aspects of religion (which entail a narrative about the development of religion, feeling and rite on the one hand, myth and dogma on the other). Secondly, I dare say that there are still some more components in religion that are relevant for our topic.

The first, or the fifth one, is culture as a system of values that makes human existence, life worthwhile, as Eliot pathetically pointed out. To some extent it follows from component three and four, from myth and dogma, but can be differentiated from these components. For example the Ten Commandments in Christianity entail a global ethical issue, I may affirm, although I am not a Christian in a traditional sense. All the values that have been worked out by various religious traditions one may also find in the ideas of human rights and human dignity. So I would understand secularization in a way which differs from the general use. Secularization has often been (mis)understood as an act of substitution of religious

issues by sciences and modern thought, as an act of expropriation. I propose to interpret secularization as a central aspect of modernity in the Hegelian sense of *aufheben*, picking up (sustaining) by removing.

The sixth aspect of religion is institutionalization and power; every religion has a specific form of organization, a political hierarchy and different ways of exclusions, for example exclusion of women from power positions as is the case in the Catholic Church. Nearly all traditional forms of religious institutions have a strong patriarchal structure which comes under pressure with regard to democratic values like equality or, to put it another way, the ban on sexual or ethnic discrimination.

This is already true with regard to the different confessions within Christianity from the centralized Catholic Church to the American protestant Community Churches. It is a very strong argument in contemporary cultural analysis and cultural studies that religion and culture are not beyond violence and power but that power is inscribed in all symbolical manifestations of culture, also in religion.

I prepare my next point with the question to what extent these six elements of religion come under pressure under the conditions of a modern urban and industrialized society and to what extent they differ from each other.

Thesis:

European societies are more or less post-Christian entities. The preposition *post* has made an extraordinary career in the last three decades. It has different meanings. But it never has the meaning of *anti*. A post-religious and a post-Christian society (or culture) is not, or rather not automatically, an anti-religious one. They follow the structure I described earlier with the Hegel's paradoxical and not dialectic metaphor of the German word *aufheben*, which means sustaining by removing. With regard to Western civil societies, it implies a loss of power of traditional religion in all areas of modern society and culture.

In a first version of *post*, it means in the European discourse the end of traditional belief and beliefs since the European Enlightenment and Romanticism. Here, *post* works as an *after*. As the Latin-American writer Octavio Paz wrote in a collection of famous essays (*The Sons of Mud*), Western Modernism is characterized by the tradition of breaks, including the break with a traditional way of religious belief. The ambiguous formula of *God in Exile* (Hölderlin) or of the *Death of God* (Jean Paul, Nietzsche) can be read as expressions of this modern experience and this break with traditional forms of religiosity. The clue in this argument is that all traditional Christian forms of religion have changed by this elementary experience and reflection.

In a second version *post* refers to what I would call a broken continuity. Christianity in Western world has not disappeared but changed. One can say that Christian values remain an essential part of an open value system that is under permanent change. That means firstly that the interpretations of the Christian narratives and dogmas may change, but also that they are under pressure, that they need legitimation. There is something outside and beyond the traditional symbolic world of Christian values. Also the idea

of human rights and human dignity is embedded in the tradition of Christianity. Modern ethics has something in common with Islam and Christianity. It claims the universal validity of its values.

In a third version post refers to a reflection that is possible because of the >posterior < situation. On the one hand Christianity and to some extent other religious traditions (Jewry, Islam) has made remarkable contributions to the idea of human rights and human dignity, but on the other hand all these religious traditions have to undergo the idea of a critical perspective that is historically linked with the [J1] Enlightenment.

Modernity, at least in a Western and European sense, is characterized by the fact that the different elements I have mentioned with Whitehead above separate from each other as an effect of modern critique and modern culture. All the six elements have undergone a change because of the critical dynamism of modernity, but in a different way. Whereas religious feeling (mystics), rites and narratives still play a remarkable role in European societies, it is quite evident that especially the three other elements of religion come under pressure: dogma, ethos and organization.

1. With regard to the dogmatic aspect of religion, that means the denial of the idea that there is only one possible interpretation of “holy” texts. Holy texts are seen as human texts about holy things. The Ten Commandments for example may be accepted but their meaning has changed.
2. It means the critique of the idea that religion should or can determine and organize the human way of life, including the relation between the sexes, the organization of the family and society.
3. It rejects the idea that one institutionalized religion should be at the centre of culture and politics.
4. It means a reduction of the political sphere of influence. Etymologically, the Greek expression *kath' holon* implies that catholic means the reference to all, a holism; in modern times religion is restricted to one specific symbolic and social field. After the triumph of modern sciences and philology it has lost its monopoly on interpreting the world. The cosmogony of the Bible for example can be understood after the triumph of modern biology since Darwin as a poetic allegory or a metaphor at best.

I think one can illustrate these post- situations with the difficulties of the Catholic church in the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The patriarchal and centralistic institutional form is seen by many members of the Catholic Church as a problematic anachronism that stands in contrast to the ideas of civil society (exclusion of women from power and from priesthood, the lack of democratic participation. The Catholic Church has also a problem with regard to the values of an individualistic society (sexuality, the relation between the sexes, deviant forms of sexuality, new forms of living together, divorce) and it has also a problem convincing the majority in postmodern European cultures with regard to some of its dogmas.

That brings me to my fifth point:

Thesis:

It refers to the contrast between absolutism and relativism and entails the point that postmodern European societies are in principle contextual. They do not fight against religion, but they guarantee:

5.1. a pluralism of narratives, rites and dogma and a free choice for beliefs.

5.2. a separation of State and Church (freedom from the one religion, freedom for all religions). This is part of the idea of the separation of the public and the private sphere and goes hand in hand with democratic control and the division of political power (Montesquieu);

5.3. the ethos (value system) is seen in the context of a permanent and controversial discussion and change. So culture may be seen, as Edward Said has pointed out, as a more or less peaceful battlefield.

5.4. Human rights are interpreted as an ethos of a global world that at the same time forms the framework of European civil societies.

Undoubtedly, religions in this pluralistic sense can make important contributions within modern society and culture. They all have their own voice, but they have to act in an open social space and in a pluralistic symbolic one with a structural and a symbolic framework: the democratic state, open society and human rights. In contrast to traditional concepts, this framework is to some extent not eternal, but is part of a permanent dynamic change. It is a work in progress.

I come to point 6.

Thesis:

The Ethos of Human Rights

There are different historical approaches with which to explain the concept of Human rights and also of Human dignity, e.g. philosophically (natural justice) or in the sense of the history of ideas (Christianity as the forerunner and the Enlightenment as the historical point of view that made the formulation of human rights possible). But one can also say that it is not important whether or not one can prove all these values philosophically or theologically. In contrast to traditional proof, post-modern philosophers such as Richard Rorty have argued that it may be contingent that we live in a global situation where human rights play such an enormous role. And it is quite clear that it is not possible to prove human rights. But they are, including freedom from and freedom for religion, an enormous achievement. But only a rascal would deny this achievement because they are, historically speaking, contingent, just as it is contingent that I personally live in this epoch of global human rights. (This is the Joseph Schumpeter theorem, named by [J2] the Austrian economist and social scientist Joseph Schumpeter).

What Rory says about human rights can also be formulated regarding specific religions and confessions. In one of his famous essays, the French philosopher Michel de Montaigne claims that the fact that he is a Christian is like the circumstance that he is a person from the French Perigord, the region around Bordeaux. This is a radical sentence. It does not mean that Montaigne denies being a Christian. In contrast, he accepts this fact, rejecting any idea of conversion. But it also means that he would accept being a Jew or a Muslim had he been born in another place. This is an idea completely different from any traditional form of tolerance. It opens a door to a new self-understanding that has a high price: the loss of a calming and stable identity. It is a prototype of what I have called a post-Christian concept of European religious identity.

The culture of human rights as a principally open modern value system is not at least the result of specific collective painful experiences, especially the religious wars in Europe at the end of the Middle Ages and at the beginning of the Early Modern Age. I need only mention the religious civil war in England, the war against the Huguenots in France and the Thirty-Years-War in Central Europe (1618-1648) that ended with the peace of Westphalia. In Hobbes and Montaigne the insight into the dangerous and destructive aspect of religion connected to political conflicts deeply inscribed in the history of their countries is central. This is the very reason behind the idea to separate religion (the Church) from political power and, furthermore, to split political power into an executive, a legislative and a judicative element.

Philosophical universalism is the heir of universalistic religion which claims global validity. It depicts the image of a post-, (in the case of France but not in the German protestant area) partly non-religious world that is based on a secular spirit, the state of enlightenment that is a secular version of the religious holy spirit in Christianity. Enlightenment is seen as a project which has no real and symbolic borders. Therefore it can legitimate imperial and colonial projects that include the idea of bringing people from other cultures values that are seen beyond any cultural differences.

This philosophical universalism, especially in the Kantian form, was later criticized by Goethe's friend Johann Gottfried Herder and by the Romantics. Herder argues that the claim for superiority is the result of an ethnocentric attitude at least in two directions. It treats non-European cultures as principally inferior (in this regard Herder is a forerunner of Postcolonial Studies), that is, those so-called inferior cultures are not enlightened, or less so. It is a theory that operates with binaries with regard to the past of its own culture, here the light of contemporary times, there the dark past, the Middle Ages.

Herder is the first more or less consistent representative of a radical >culturalism<, which suggests that every culture, which is seen, in contrast to contemporary cultural analysis, as a stable and homogenous item, has its own dignity, its own circle and its own centre of social fortune. The up and down of cultures is constructed in analogy with the four seasons of the year: spring, summer, autumn, winter.

This implies a radical relativism that has one new value: the variety of cultures is seen as a specific aesthetic, but also ethical value. But the ethical aspect leads to the return to a universalistic argumentation: the progress of humankind is guaranteed by the variety of cultures that entails different answers to the elementary question of human existence and human needs. So, the plurality of different cultures proves to be the result of a universalistic argument. As every ethic argument it implies a universal claim and means the recognition of other cultures instead of the idea of the principal superiority of the Western race. I am not an expert in human rights, but as far as I can see, Herder's argument has

been integrated into the Declaration of Human Rights after 1945, because meanwhile human rights are not restricted to an abstract individual but also formulated for groups, for different minorities, giving a group of people the right to speak their own language and to have their own religious traditions etc. In my view the tension between Kant and Herder, between universalism and cultural particularism cannot be overlooked. A kind of universalism that denies the recognition of the cultural and religious Other fails with regard to ethics, but also a cultural particularism which does not relate the ethos of a certain cultural community to the universal paradigm of human rights is ethically unacceptable. One cannot argue, for example, that in one country torture is acceptable because it is part of the national ethos and in other countries is not, because it is not part of this kind of ethos.

I come to point seven

thesis

Human dignity and Human rights are concepts that are embedded in a post-national and global ethos. Or with other words, the ethos of modernity has a historical and cultural origin, but there is, to quote Octavio Paz, only one modernity, although there are various forms of different cultural ethos. As I have described above, this new global ethos that can be shared by people from different religious but also secular positions has mainly developed within the European context. But this statement about the genesis of those concepts is not an argument against its claim for universality. Hardly anybody would deny the universal meaning of modern sciences and engineering, because they are still to a high degree “Western”.

The thesis that the ideas of human rights and human dignity are “Western” and to some extent ethnocentric may be especially true for the eighteenth and nineteenth century. But the situation has completely changed since the world wars of the twentieth century. There are other deep caesuras, firstly the de-legitimation and ending of classical colonialism and imperialism, secondly the Shoah, Auschwitz, the mass murder of European Jews organized by German National Socialism and its fifth columns in Europe, thirdly by the experience of totalitarianism, that is, the absolute power of the modern state over and in society. Last but not least, a more or less global feminism advocating consistent equality between men and women has changed the post-religious discourse field of human rights and our understanding of human dignity.

These four caesuras have changed our understanding of the global ethos of ethics in a dramatic way. The first difference is that modern global ethics is no longer formulated in a positive philosophical definition but from a negative horizon. We do know exactly what human dignity is after reading Primo Levi’s moving literary report on the Nazi concentration camp (This is a human being), in which the human being is reduced to biological object. The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben has called this configuration *homo sacer* – this is an adaptation from Ancient Rome characterizing a person who is outlawed, a person who does not have the status of a slave, but a person that can be tortured and killed by all the others. I will not polemicize, but the state of the imprisoned people in the nowhere land Guantanamo has been understood in the sense of *homo sacer* (by some Western critics) and the killing of the male Muslims of Srebrenica and its surroundings is also to be seen in this perspective.

The Shoah has become a negative symbolic standard and guideline. The same is true for certain massacres of colonialism, for ethnic cleansing and mass murder. It was the Austrian author Hermann Broch who developed (partly in discussion with Hannah Arendt) the idea of reestablishing the League of Nations on the experience of the absolute minus pole of inhumanity. So, modern ethics are defined by the absence of slavery, of sexual, religious or ethnic disrespect, of torture and totalitarian power, of hunger, of systematic inequality and exploitation on all levels. One could add other points to this list.

This implies the program of a global ethos, but it does not mean that the program fits together with the social, political and cultural reality. From the perspective of cultural analysis, this is not a new phenomenon. With reference to Europe, one has to say that the ethic program of Christianity was in a permanent contrast to the everyday life of the people, but also of the politics.

The second difference refers to the fact that it is not necessary to justify human rights and human dignity by a positive philosophical definition. I have already mentioned the work of the American post-Pragmatic philosopher Richard Rorty, who argues that authors like Franz Kafka or George Orwell and many others offer much more for the understanding of human rights and human dignity than a legion of philosophic academics. So literature and film is seen here as a form of intellectual vision that gives us an insight into mechanisms of systematic violating of the dignity of man and woman and creates empathy with the people who are tortured, abused and maltreated, as was the case with the young Indian medicine student two months ago. Thus, our global ethos is backed by historical experience and a strong affective and pathetic aspect, that violation of other human beings is unbearable. I think Walter Benjamin's interpretation of Klee's *Angelus Novus* is important. The tortured and killed innocent people of the past obligate us to act in future in favour of a world in which the violation of human respect and dignity is banned.

The third new moment is that the ideas of human rights and human dignity are, as I have mentioned before, a work in progress. The list of items becomes longer and longer. Furthermore, they are in a permanent process of discussion, because our ideas of freedom, equality and solidarity may change. And it is also true that those central values may come in contrast to each other. There may be a form of solidarity that undermines freedom and vice versa. Modern societies are characterized by the fact that they are based on a peaceful fight for meaning and interpretation. Pluralism does not mean a durable coexistence of various ideas and concepts in politics and culture, but a dynamic interaction in a civilized conflict. What the opponents in post-religious civil society have in common is the idea of the framework and the rules of the political game. It is the >syntactic< structure, not (only) the semantic by which modern European civil societies are held together.

My last argument refers to a transcendental aspect. All the negative items that form the horizon for a positive understanding of human dignity necessarily lead to a philosophy of alterity that has been systematically developed by the French-Jewish-Lithuanian philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, whose family was killed in Hitler's concentration camps. It refers to the figure of the Other. Also in Kant, the most important philosopher of historical Enlightenment, there is the idea that human being may not become a sheer object, but is a free and unique individual (the German *Subjekt*), but Levinas goes further when he claims that the symbolically unmarked Other is not an instance outside, but within ourselves. The Other in Levinas is always antecedent, it is inscribed in our existence; it is a transcendent precondition of our life we can accept or deny. Religious people identify this transcendent superior Other (*L'Autre*) that has its elevation in the human *vis à vis* with [J3] God; it implies that ethic is not an advanced form of philosophy but that our human existence includes an ethical structure itself.

Thesis (8):

What I had in mind for my lecture was to correct a concept of the Western enemy we are confronted with: Modernity is seen by its internal and external enemies and counterparts quite often as a sheer capitalistic complex, as a decadent and cynical culture without values and convictions. But to some extent the contrary is the case: democracy and modern culture including human rights and dignity as an underlying program are extremely challenging and ambitious.

This brings me to point nine.

Thesis (9):

Surely, modernity has its price and it includes what I would call the drama of modernity, the loss of absolute certainties and securities, the obligation of responsibility for oneself, the necessity of creating new forms of living together privately as well as in open space, the readability [J4] to change oneself, the acceptance of critique and conflict and many other things that stand in contrast to every pre-modern authoritarian and patriarchal symbolic order.

This ethos of modern civil societies also has a deep structure: dialogue is not only a helpful diplomatic instrument, which is important, because as long we discuss with each other, the weapons remain silent, dialogue also represents a principled recognition of the Other beyond his or her sexuality, religion, language or culture. And it implies a utopic moment, namely that all people and groups shall have a voice. This includes an ethical dimension: The dialogue is a specific Sprachspiel (Wittgenstein), which is in contrast for example to commands and means the possibility of the absence of asymmetry of power and the possibility that the experience of dialogue will change me.

Like the ethics issues of religion, the ethos of human rights and human dignity also stands in a more or less permanent contrast to the reality. But this is not an argument against the guide-line. Moreover, the guideline is seen as a reliable corrective of the state of the arts. But it is true that there is, because of the gap between program and reality, a moment of cynicism and hypocrisy in our attitudes.

I will end with my tenth thesis

Thesis:

As a colleague of mine, Albrecht Koschorke has examined how cultural differences become especially striking when they go hand in hand with social, economic and political conflicts. So the conflict between contemporary Europe, the post-colonial and post-imperial European Union and its neighbors in the Middle East and in the South [J5] has deep and long historical roots, in which religion as a difference

marker played a very important, but at the same time problematic role. I am not an expert in medieval studies, but as far as I can see the conflict between these areas was based not on imperialism but on a rivalry between pre-modern empires, for example between the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empires. Following the French theorist René Girard, one could argue that Christianity and Islam are also in conflict, not because they are so strange to each other but exactly because they are familiar to each other. In their relations one can find many mimetic elements.

But this rivalry is overlapped by colonialism and imperialism from the beginning of the nineteenth century, including a more or less systematic denial of respect for the various countries and regions of the symbolic space influenced by Islam. Since Edward Said's famous book *Orientalism*, a lot has been written on this topic. It is quite evident that it is our obligation, the obligation of the European civil societies, to deal with that topic in a self-critical way in the media, in the humanities and social sciences and also in schools. If we are interested in creating sustainable peaceful transcultural relations, we should have a critical eye on our schoolbooks and academics issues. War may begin in schoolbooks – on both sides. The colonial crimes stand in clear contrast to our more or less common ideas of human rights and human dignity.

It is quite evident that the global ethos of human rights and human dignity is not primarily a symbolic weapon in the hands of the post-imperial West, which is very often seen as the arch-enemy of the Islamic world, but is a powerful instrument in the hands of those countries that have suffered colonialism and de-colonization. As the Austrian essay writer Jean Améry pointed out in conversion of Nietzsche's notion that Christianity supports a morality of slaves instead of a morality of the masters, morals are in favor of the weaker side. Thus, global ethics could work as a corrective for both sides.

So, the circle of my lecture is closed, but this is an arbitrary closure, because one has to come to an end.