

**Critical Religion in Antagonistic Civil
Society:
Towards Discourse and Cooperation among
Civilizations (II)**

By

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In the 20th century the Western civilization has missed three opportunities, to end the prehistory of the human species on this globe, and to start a truly human history: in 1918, in 1945 and in 1989.¹ Karl Marx had predicted, that the future would either belong to humanistic socialism or to barbarism.² Since then, one wave of barbarism after the other has struck the Western civilization: waves of conservative- or better counter-revolutionary, religiously masked and legitimated, as such modern and secular nationalisms in all forms and shapes, including black, brown and red fascism.

Alternative Futures I, II, and III

Since Marx, the trend toward post-modern, global alternative Future III - the realm of freedom beyond and on the basis of the realm of necessity, was inverted, and overpowered, and perverted by tendencies toward post-modern, global alternative Future I – the more and more administered society, characterized by necessity rather than freedom, and toward post-modern, global alternative Future II – the more and more militarized society, engaged in one conventional or civil war after the other, and preparing - in the spirit of Samuel Huntington - first clashes and then the third world war among the civilizations, including the use of weapons of mass destruction.³ According to Fox News, which continually supports the second Bush Administration, we find ourselves already in World War III. In advancing modern civil society, the originally Judeo-Christian concrete utopia of the freedom of All has been transformed into an ideology, which legitimates the freedom of the One, the dictator, and the freedom of the

Few, the bourgeois ruling class in the context of corporatism: the merging of corporate power and state power, and of course military power. Here ideology is understood critically as false consciousness, the masking of race, national, and class interests, shortly as untruth.

The End of World War I

The preparation of alternative Future III was missed in 1918, at the end of World War II.⁴ It ended in 1918 with a net result of around 10 million people dead. It ended with the collapse of the German Empire, the Habsburg Empire, the Czarist Empire, and the Ottoman Empire. The Soviet Empire was in the making, but the socialist October Revolution did not lead toward alternative Future III, but rather toward alternative Future II: red fascism.⁵ Nevertheless, 1918 could have marked the beginning of the end of the Euro centric, Colonialist, Imperialistic Paradigm of Modernity and to the dawning of post-modern alternative Future III. However the Versailles Treaty of Clemenceau of France and Lloyd-George of Britain prevented the trend toward alternative Future III from developing. That was the

realpolitik

of the Modern Constellation. The word had been used first by the conservative statesman Bismarck. But Machiavelli had developed its ideology. Instead of a just peace and the initiation of alternative Future III, there emerged a dictated peace, in which the defeated nations took no part. The consequence was European and Japanese fascism: the rehearsal of alternative Futures I and II. Two decades after the end of World War I, fascism led to World War II, which was far more barbarous than any previous war in world – history.

The End of World War II

The year 1945 saw the end of the Second World War with a net result of around 60 million dead, including 26 million Russians and 6 million Jews. Many more millions of

human beings were thrown into exile. European and Japanese fascism had been defeated. Soviet Communism appeared stronger than ever, but it did not come closer to alternative Future III.⁶ Internally, Soviet Communism was already experiencing an economic, social, political, and cultural crisis, because of Stalin's policies, which were more directed toward alternative Futures I and II than III. There was even a greater chance in the West, that alternative Future III could be envisioned and institutionally be prepared. In 1945, the United Nations was founded in San Francisco. In 1948 came the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Marshall Plan was initiated for the rebuilding of Europe. But unfortunately the tendencies toward alternative Future III were once more frustrated rather than promoted by the division of the world into two economic, political, and military blocks.

Counter-Revolution

The year 1989 saw the successful counter-revolution in Eastern Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union. What the counter-revolutionary invasion of 12 capitalist countries into the Soviet Union in the 1920s, and Hitler's armies' likewise counter-revolutionary invasion of the 1940s could not accomplish, was achieved in 1989 without a shot fired. It was a great victory of the Western bourgeoisie in the international class struggle. It was accomplished through the credit system of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank; through an extreme armament race, which cost the United States alone over three trillion dollars; through nationalism as blockbuster; and through the ideological help by Pope John Paul II and the Vatican. After the First Gulf war a

New World Order

was announced. But President Bush senior felt embarrassed, when he had to explain what this

vision thing

for the international order should look like. It certainly did not look like a vision of alternative Future III. There was no change in Iraq. There was no democracy in Kuwait. There was no solution for the Israel-Palestine conflict. There was not enough democratic change in the Arab world. Instead of a real revolution, or at least reforms, toward alternative Future III, there came Osama Bin Laden and al-Quaeda. Certainly, at the present moment of world-history it does not look as if the so called

war against terrorism

would bring the world closer to the vision of alternative Future III.

Longing for the totally Other

Over the last fifteen years the West has again forfeited the opportunity to prepare alternative Future III, and has instead moved deeper into barbarism: as symbolized by Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay. Here we must ask, in the perspective of the critical theory of society and religion, if especially the committed critical members of all the world religions can possibly muster and mobilize enough longing for the entirely Other than the slaughterbench of the horror and terror of the continuing human animal history, in order to work and fight for global alternative Future III - a reconciled society, characterized by political freedom, social equality, and spiritual brotherhood and sisterhood, by personal autonomy as well as universal, i.e. anamnestic, present, and proleptic solidarity: despite of all the wars, massacres, tortures, streams of refugees in the 20th and 21st centuries; despite the Gulag archipelago; despite Auschwitz and Treblinka; and despite Hiroshima and Nagasaki.⁷ This longing for the totally Other must certainly not be misunderstood as abstract utopianism.⁸ It is longing understood materialistically in the face of the bad infinite of the extremely contradictory civil society as transcending from below and from inside into this life and beyond toward the good Infinity and the Truth. It is the longing, that the finitude of the finite may not be the last word of history. It is the longing that the murderer shall not triumph over the innocent victim, at least not ultimately. It is the longing for perfect Justice and unconditional Love. In any case, much

depends on an affirmative answer to this question concerning the actualization of this insatiable longing for the totally Other inside and outside of the world religions for the possible and probable arrival of the most desirable alternative Future III – the realm of the concrete freedom of All, and not only of the Few, or the One as it has been the case so far in world history since antagonistic civil society arose the first time in the old city states, between family and state, in the great civilizations at the Euphrates and Tigris, at the Nile River, at the Indus River and at the Yellow River and around the Mediterranean about three thousand years before Christ or the common era.⁹

Terrorism

The second Bush-Administration, instead of conquering the terror campaign of the Jihadists, helped its expansion in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in the Near East, and around the globe.¹⁰ Further tragedies followed the Afghanistan and Iraq war: on Bali, in Casablanka.in Riad, in Istanbul, in Madrid, in London, in the Egyptian resort town of Sharmal El Sheikh. In Madrid, on March 11, 2004, and in London on July 7 2005 the massacres touched Europe, and became a warning signal for all European countries, including those who had not participated in the Iraq war, that the world crisis had dramatically sharpened. The tensions of the worldwide antagonism between the religious and the secular had led to permanent explosions. This was so, because the war against two Islamic countries, Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the decades of Western application of double standards in reference to the degrading and despising occupation policies of the State of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories under disregard not only of the Mosaic Decalogue and the 613/614 Mitzvoth, but also of all UN – resolutions, had thrown the whole Islamic world into indescribable rage and fury, embitterment, and hardening.¹¹ In 2004, a high official of the Sharon Cabinet in Jerusalem saw a picture of an old Palestinian grandmother, who crawled on the dirty floor of her bulldozed-down home and searched for her pills: she reminded him of his relatives in Auschwitz. Now Huntington's clash of civilizations appears as self-fulfilling prophecy. On July 24, 2005, Pope Benedict XVI offered a public prayer in Rome, that God might stop the terrorists. God may not do that without the so - called Christian West removing the factors, which

have produced the religious terror of the Jihadists in the first place, and which continue to do so: particularly the secular terror, e.g. the massacres of Taliban after the siege of Kunduz in Afghanistan, or the torture and humiliations of prisoners in Abu Ghraib. and at Guanaco Bay, and the bombardments of open towns and villages in Iraq, which produce high numbers of civilian casualties, the so called collateral damages, e.g. in Felujia, and the use of cancer-producing down-graded uranium in weaponry in Basra and elsewhere, without cleaning it up afterwards, etc. ¹²

Religious Fundamentalism

To be sure, religious fundamentalism is not limited to Islam, but is massively present also in the other two Abrahamic religions and has spread to the other world religions as well. ¹³ Every world religion has its Taliban, who furiously resist the bourgeois as well as the socialist modernization and secularization process. Some Europeans called the late John Paul II their European Taliban. Paradoxically enough, fundamentalism is in spite of its religious language, like nationalism, with which it often cooperates, a completely modern phenomenon. Fundamentalism presupposes modernity, enlightenment and secularity. A religious fundamentalist is a person, who has been shocked by the onslaught of the bourgeois, Marxian or Freudian enlightenment movements, and has experienced, that the religious center seems not to hold any longer, and that thus all religious and moral values seem to get lost. The fundamentalist reaction is quite understandable, and deserves our human empathy and sympathy. However, instead of struggling his way through the secular enlightenment, which will simply not go away, and thus arrive on the other side in what Riceur has called - a

second naiveté,

after the first one is hopelessly lost, he fundamentalist tries to escape by regressing back to the old religious Fathers and their orthodoxy, before mysticism and enlightenment, without ever really reaching them. Often the fundamentalists ask the right questions, but they give insufficient answers. The former Cardinal Josef Ratzinger and present Pope

Benedict XVI experienced the Second Vatican Council as a rather liberal theologian. The Council wanted to open up the windows of the Church toward the modern world. But the Cardinal was shocked by the disintegrative turmoil, which followed the Council, and reacted by moving very closely to a fundamentalist and authoritarian position. His colleagues, the liberal theologian Hans Küng and Johannes B. Metz, the father of the new political theology and one of the fathers of the Central and Latin American liberation theology, did not fall into the same fundamentalist-authoritarian temptation. As Prefect of the Roman Congregation for the Preservation of the Faith, the former Holy Inquisition, Cardinal Ratzinger did not reinstate Küng, who had been deprived of the right to teach as a Catholic theologian in December 1978, and repressed the liberation theologians in Central and Latin America, and elsewhere. But no matter, how powerful it may be sometimes, the fundamentalist anachronism cannot possibly reproduce the original religious orthodoxy and its first naiveté. Power is not truth, and cannot create or preserve it. . The old religious Fathers did not, like the modern fundamentalists, take the religious texts literally. Paradoxically enough, the religious fundamentalists only promote, to be sure unintentionally, what they would like to stop: their opposition, the modern and post-modern enlightenment. The fundamentalists only intensify the culture war. Fundamentalism is not an adequate way to make non-contemporaneous semantic and semiotic materials and potentials from the world religions contemporaneous in the modern or post-modern paradigm: be it alternative Future I, II or III.¹⁴

Non-Contemporaneity.

The - what Ernst Bloch had called - non-contemporaneity of the motives or goals on one hand and the contemporaneity of the means on the other of the Gihadists in New York and Washington D.C. on September 11, 2001, reflected a non-contemporaneity of culture and society in their home lands, e.g. Saudi Arabia, or Pakistan, or elsewhere in the Near East.¹⁵ This non-contemporaneity was the result of an accelerated and radically uprooting modernization process in Near Eastern countries. Under better circumstances, this modernization process had been experienced in the West since the Renaissance as a dialectical process of

creative destruction.¹⁶

To be sure, the Christian Churches suffered no less from this modernization process than Islam does today. Islam stands today, where Catholicism found itself in the 15th or 16th centuries. Since then, the Christian Churches have lost all rearguard struggles against the modern enlightenment from Galileo and Copernicus through Darwin to Marx and Freud. However, for the present - day Near Eastern nations the modernization in its bourgeois or socialist form does not – as it once did for the European nations - promise any compensation for the painful disintegration of their traditional life forms. To be sure, the prospect of better material life conditions is only one aspect of a possible compensation for the cultural losses in the Near East and elsewhere. It is much more decisive, that in the Near Eastern nations the feeling of personal and national degradation is blocking the necessary modern transformation of consciousness: which expresses itself philosophically through the radical separation of the religious and the secular, and politically through the separation of religion and state, including society and family. It took Europe and America centuries, in order to find a reasonable attitude toward the ambiguity of the modernization process. But even in Europe, and particularly in America, the modern secularization process is still connected with ambivalent feelings. This is only too obvious from the public arguments and disputes about abortion, contraception or negative artificial birth control, pedophilia, homosexuality, lesbianism, gay marriage, divorce, stem cell research, etc.

The Non-Concluded Dialectic

In the perspective of the critical theory of religion, there are obviously hardened and petrified religious orthodoxies not only in the Near East and the Far East, but also in the West.¹⁷ There are hardened orthodoxies in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and in their particular paradigms, as well as in other world religions. Whoever wants with Küng, Metz or Habermas, and against Huntington, avoid alterative Future II - a collision of civilizations and conventional wars and civil wars, and finally a third world war, has to

remember, that the dialectic of the occidental process of modernization and enlightenment and secularization has not yet been completely decided and concluded.¹⁸ On one hand, the present American war against terrorism is no war at all, since a war can take place only between nations, and not between a nation and a global Islamic movement, of which Alcaida is only a small part. On the other hand, in the religious terrorism expresses itself also the fateful-speechless collision of cultural worlds, which must develop a common language. beyond the silent and dumb force of the religious terrorists, as well as of the secular rockets, directed against them.¹⁹ Already years ago the great Iranian leader Chatami wished, that the Americans had more communicative rationality, so that one could talk with them. Americans appear as being completely overcome by instrumental rationality. They continually speak about either tools or weapons of all kinds in terms of functional rationality, instead of language-mediated relationships between persons or nations. In a Frankfurt newspaper Chatami expressed his appreciation for the great accomplishments of modernity, but also insisted on Islamic identity. Should there not be a possibility of reconciliation, or at least mutual openness? However, neither the Christian-Democratic nor the Social - Democratic German Government answered Chatami. The answer came finally from the critical theorist Jorgen Habermas, when at the occasion of receiving the Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels 2001 in Frankfurt's St. Paul's Church, he spoke on the old theme of faith and knowledge, and recommended an open dialectic between the religious and the secular, between Islam and the secular West,²⁰

The Return of the Political

Many Europeans and Americans had hoped for the return of the political in a new form, in the face of the intensified globalization of civil society, which asserted itself through the opening up of markets.²¹ It gives a priority to the economic subsystem, characterized by functional rationality and steered over the medium of money, over the political subsystem, also determined by instrumental rationality, but steered over the medium of power, of civil society over the state,²² Many Europeans and Americans thought of the return of the political not in the original form of Hobbes', or Carl

Schmitt's, or Huntington's globalized security state, i.e. in dimensions of police, secret service and military.²³ Even the European Left hoped, that the United States would remain the carrier of universal political values, which in the 1940s and 1950s had found their expression and incarnation in the founding of the United Nations, as well as in the Nürnberg Trial and the Tokyo Trial. Many Europeans and Americans hoped for alternative Future III - the political as worldwide, discourse-mediated, civilizing power of formation.²⁴ However, at this moment in world history, for those many Europeans and Americans there remains unfortunately not much more than the pale longing and hope, for - what Hegel had called in his philosophy of history - the

cunning of reason,

and a little bit of remembrance, self-reflection, and self-confidence.²⁵ This is so, because the tear of speechlessness carries disunion also into the West's own house. Americans and Europeans can encounter the risks of a secularization, which derails in other parts of the world, e.g. in the Near East, adequately only, if they are clear about the meaning of secularization in their own post-secular societies. For the secular thinkers of the West, the new concept of post-secular society does not mean, that religion has not become obsolete, because it can no longer answer the theodicy problem after Auschwitz and Triblinka, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq, but that the disappearance of religion happens at a slower pace than the enlighteners had originally thought. This slowing down happens, because positive science is still unable to give meaning and ethical values to people.²⁶ For the agnostic or atheistic natural or social sciences to try to rescue an unconditional meaning without God is utter vanity.²⁷ No natural or social science professor can tell his students, why it is better to love than to hate, except that it is better for business. But even that exception is precarious, because sometimes it is better for business to hate: e.g. in fascist Europe the Jews, or in the old American Confederacy the black people. With the intention to clarify, what secularization means in the post-secular civil societies, the critical theory of religion concentrates once more on the old dichotomy between faith and reason, revelation and enlightenment.²⁸ The intent is not to

polarize, but to come to a mutual understanding between religious and secular people in the West, and globally.

Secularization

From the time of the bourgeois enlightenment and revolution and of Napoleon Bonaparte on, the word

secularization

had first of all a legal meaning.²⁹ It meant the forced expropriation of Church property by the secular state. Religious and secular thinkers have transferred this meaning of secularization to the social and cultural modernity in its totality. Since that time, opposite evaluations and assessments have connected themselves with the process of secularization. The religious thinkers put into the foreground of their evaluation of secularization the secular state's act of unlawful expropriation. The secular thinkers emphasized the successful taming of the ecclesiastical authority through the profane state power. According to the religious thinkers, secularization discredits the modern forms of life and thinking as illegitimately purloined or stolen possessions. According to the secular reading, secularization meant that religious modes of thinking and life forms were replaced through rational, and in any case superior equivalents. The religious expropriation model of secularization suggested a decadence-theoretical interpretation of the shelter - less and home-less bourgeois and socialist modernity. The secular displacement or repression model of secularization introduced a progress-optimistic interpretation of the disenchanting bourgeois and socialist modernity. In the perspective of the critical theory of religion, both, the religious and the secular reading and model and evaluation and assessment of secularization made the same mistake, Both models consider the secularization process as a kind of zero-sum game between the capitalistically unleashed productive forces of science and technology on one hand, and the conservative holding forces of religion and church, on the other. One side can win only at the expense of the other, and that according to the liberal rules of the game. Of

course, these liberal rules of the game favor the driving forces of the bourgeois modernity.

Rationality in Religion

In the perspective of the critical theory of religion, this zero-sum game image does not really fit a post-secular society, which has adjusted itself to the continuation of religious faith communities at least for some time, in an environment, which secularizes itself continually.³⁰ The image is unfit, because it fades out the civilizing role of a scientifically and democratically enlightened commonsense, It tries to find its own way - so to speak as

Third Party –

between religion and science in the context of the raging culture war and its tangle, maze and chaos of contradictory voices. Of course, out of the perspective of the liberal constitutional state, only those religious faith communities deserve the predicate

rational,

who renounce, forego and give up out of their own internal insight the forcible enforcement of their interpretation of reality and orientation of action, their truths of faith and principles of personal and social morality, and the militant compulsion, coercion or constraint of conscience against their own members, particularly any manipulation toward suicidal assassinations.³¹ This internal insight of religious faith communities owes itself to a three-fold reflection of the believers concerning their position in a secular pluralistic civil society. First of all, the religious consciousness must process, assimilate, and digest ecumenically the cognitive dissonant encounters with other paradigms of its own world-religion, as well as with other world – religions. Secondly, the religious consciousness must adjust itself to and tune in to the authority of the positive sciences, which possess the social monopoly of world – knowledge...Thirdly; the religious

consciousness must get involved with the premises of the secular constitutional state, which are grounded in a profane personal and social morality. Without such three

pushes of reflection

inside of the religious faith communities, particularly the three monotheistic Abrahamic religions would necessarily unfold and develop a destructive potential in recklessly and ruthlessly modernizing civil or socialist societies. The word push of reflection may, of course, suggest the false representation of an one-sidedly performed and concluded process of secularization. In reality, however, this reflexive push or work continues with every newly breaking or bursting open conflict in the distribution centers of the democratic public.

Cultural Pluralism

In the view of the critical theory of religion, as soon as an existentially relevant question – be it stem cell research, or gay marriage, or abortion, or death penalty, or euthanasia - reaches the political agenda, the citizens of the constitutional state, be they believers or disbelievers, bounce against each other with their convictions, determined by their different and even opposite philosophies of life.³² While the citizens slave away at the shrill dissonances of the public argument of opinions, they experience the offensive factum of the cultural pluralism.³³ If the citizens learn to know, how to handle in the consciousness of their own fallibility and non-violently, i.e. without tearing apart the social bond of their political community, this factum of cultural pluralism, then they shall recognize, what the secular decision-foundations, which have been firmly written into the constitution of their state, mean in a post - secular society. This is so, because in the dispute between the claims of religious faith and scientific knowledge the culturally, i.e., aesthetically, religiously and philosophically, neutral liberal constitutional state does in no way prejudice necessarily political decisions in favor of the religious or the secular side. The pluralized communicative and anamnestic rationality of the public sphere of the citizens follows the dynamic of the secularization as it compels and forces in the

result

the even and equal distance between strong religious and secular traditions and cultural contents. However, the communicative and anamnestic as well as proleptic rationality of the public sphere of the citizens remains ready to learn, and thus osmotically open toward the religious and the secular side without losing its independence and autonomy. In this context, the scientific enlightenment of the commonsense, which is often full of prejudices, illusions and delusions, has to be accomplished. In this context, the cooperative translation of religious material and potentials from the depth of the mythos and religion into the secular discourse of the expert cultures and beyond that into the communicative action of the everyday life world and even into the economic and political subsystems of civil society, has to be performed.³⁴ In this context, the long inherited dispute between religious faith and secular knowledge has to be carried out, In this context, ethical problems, like gene technology, euthanasia, gay marriage, death penalty, conventional and NBC wars, etc. have to be resolved. In this context, alternative Future I has at least to be mitigated, and alternative Future II has to be avoided under all circumstances, and the institutional preconditions of alternative Future III have to be prepared.³⁵

Crisis Situation

In the perspective of the critical theory of religion, without doubt, the post-secular civil society finds itself in an awkward and thorny key - situation for the new formation of the international relations: of the relationship between the secular West and Islam; and also of the relationship among the three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.³⁶ Nevertheless, the options have become quite clear: either alternative Future II - rivalry of the religions, collision of the cultures, wars among the nations, or alternative Future III - discourse among the cultures and peace among the nations.³⁷ There will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions. There will be no peace among the religions without discourse among them. There will be no discourse among

the religions, without foundation research in the religions. In this research, religious and secular public education should and can cooperate. Religious thinkers like Hans Küng and Johannes B. Metz, or secular thinkers like Jürgen Habermas, are fully aware, that such discourse is the most fragile form of mediation among the religious communities as well as between them and the secular world. Every encounter in the secular and disenchanted life world of civil society among members of different faith communities as well as between them and secular people, demonstrates concerning each topic discussed – wars, death penalty, stem cell research, abortion, gay marriage, euthanasia etc. - the vulnerability of such discourse through different forms of irrationality and collective insanity: be it nationalism, or racism, or religious or secular fanaticism. But such discourse is, nevertheless, the only healthy alternative to alternative Future II – the more and more militarized society, more and more conventional wars and civil wars, and finally the clash of whole civilizations, and a third world war with real weapons of mass destruction on all sides.³⁹ An American public opinion poll of July 24, 2005, discovered, that 6 out of 10 Americans firmly believe, that a third world war is unavoidable and that it will break out in a not too distant future.

Mutual Openness

In the perspective of the critical theory of religion, it is obvious, that the explosion of the antagonism between the religious and the secular, which happened on September 11, 2001, and which has continued ever since in the form of retaliation and counter-retaliation, terror and counter-terror, concerns more than just the separation of church and state, religious and secular education, or the privatization of religion, or creationism versus evolutionism, or vice versa, or stem cell research, abortion and euthanasia.⁴⁰ We must admit, that in the present world - historical situation no real reconciliation between the religious and the secular, revelation and autonomous reason is possible. Precisely therefore, we suggest, that the discourse between the religious and the secular should at least not be closed up fundamentalistically, or scientistically and positivistically. To the contrary, we suggest an open dialectic between faith and knowledge, revelation and enlightenment, in order from there to derive guidance also for the relationship between

church and state, religious and secular education. Such openness does not hope for the return of mysticism to religious orthodoxy, or from secular enlightenment to mysticism. The secular may concretely supersede the religious: the secular may not only critique the religious, but it may also preserve, elevate and fulfill it in alternative Future III – the reconciled society.⁴¹

Golden Rule

However, already in the present transition period from modernity to post-modernity such open dialectic between the religious and the secular, revelation and autonomous reason, faith and knowledge can, nevertheless, make possible the cooperation between religious and secular people, believers and enlighteners toward a project world ethos,⁴² It could be centered in the Golden Rule, which the Chinese Religion, Hinduism Jainism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam and other world religions have in common.⁴³ The Golden Rule embraces not only the whole Hebrew Law and the Prophets, but also the New Testament and the Koran. Also many enlighteners and humanists have no problem to accept the Golden Rule as the foundation of a global ethos. The Golden Rule states in its Chinese form:

Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you .⁴⁴

The Golden Rule says in its Hindu Form:

This is the sum of duty: do nothing to others, which would cause you, pain if done to you.⁴⁵

The Golden Rule teaches in its Buddhist form:

A state that is not pleasant or delightful to me must be so for him also; and a state which is not pleasant or delightful for me, how could I inflict that on another?⁴⁶

The Golden Rule of Jainism says:

A person should treat all creatures as he himself would be treated.⁴⁷

The Golden Rule says in its Jewish form:

Do not do to others what you would not want them to do to you.⁴⁸

The Golden Rule teaches in its Christian form:

In everything do to others as you would have them do to you.⁴⁹

The Golden Rule states in its Islamic form:

No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.⁵⁰

One may even extend the Gold rule to non-human living beings: men would do to animals, as men would have animals do to them: e.g. Pull the ox out of the fountain even oin the Sabbath. If men would not like to be eaten by sharks or lions or bears, they should not eat them. Before Noah all people were vegetarians.⁵¹ If men would respect animal rights in terms of the Golden Rule could they still establish coos or keep domestic animals not to speak of having huge slaughterhouses.

The End of the Lex Talionis

The Golden Rule in all its different forms can conquer the jus talionis.⁵² The practice of the Golden rule would be the end of the lex talionis. The analysis should not stop with the realistic assertion that the Golden Rule can not be practiced and thus the lex talionis can not be broken, Men like Mahatma Ghandi, Martin Luther King and Archbishop Romero practiced the Golden Rule even in its extreme form by following the fourth and fifth

commandment of the Sermon on the Mount. It is rather so that the psychoanalytical and critical sociological and critical theological analysis must begin precisely with the question: why is it not possible for some people to practice the Golden Rule and why must they remain under the spell of the mythological *jus talionis*? When others can liberate themselves from this ban and do to others, as they want to be treated. In any case, who does not want to lose his eye, should not take it from his brother. Who does not want to be stolen from should not steal or engage in usury, or colonialism, or imperialism. Who does not want to be murdered, should not murder or engage in war, or torture, or terror, religious or secular. Who does not want to be lied to should not lie and engage in false advertisement, or false propaganda, or ideology understood as false consciousness, the masking of national, or racial, or class interests, shortly the untruth. Whoever does not want his personal autonomy or national sovereignty to be violated, should not attack that of other persons or nations. Whoever does not want his own country to be devastated by natural or historical agents, should not devastate other peoples' countries: otherwise New Orleans of August/September 2005 and the surrounding states, cities, towns and villages suddenly look with their thousands of wounded and dead, and refugees, and homeless, and hostages, and fires, and shootings and killings and rapes and disorganization and chaos like Baghdad and Basra and surrounding Iraq, and Kabul and surrounding Afghanistan from 2003 until now. Who does not want other life forms to intervene into his own, should also not intervene into other peoples' life forms. Whoever does not want other nations to have or to use weapons of mass destruction, should also not have or use them himself. The Israelite, Hebrew, Jewish, Christian and Islamic prophets and the Hebrew psalmists, would have said: repent! The Lutheran Christian Hegel would have said: world-history is world judgment! The Black Muslim Malcolm X would have said: the chickens are coming home to roost!

Egalitarianism

The Golden Rule implies a true egalitarianism among individuals and nations, without which there cannot be any true discourse, or personal or social morality. Whenever the Golden Rule is not actualized, the *lex talionis* will take its place. If we do

continually do to others, as we would not have them do to us, then there will necessarily be endless retaliation. Wars of revenge can not be won, except through the total annihilation of the other, the enemy. If the wars of retaliation are not directed against another state but rather against a worldwide religious movement, then - since they are no wars at all in the first place - those non-wars can be won even less. There remains only either the practice of the Golden Rule, and thus the inclusion of the other, or cold, universal despair, and finally alternative Future II: a third world war between the civilizations a la Samuel Huntington's.⁵³ The Christian theologian and ecumenist, Hans Küng, has presented such project world ethos, centered in the Golden Rule, to the World - Parliament of Religions as well as to the United Nations, and found full and universal acceptance. While Huntington's prophecy of the clash of civilizations has admittedly and unfortunately at this moment in world history the tendency to fulfill itself, we, nevertheless, side with Küng's project World Ethos, and the discourse among the religions and the civilizations in the hope, that it will help to produce peace among the nations.⁵⁴

Fundamental Principle

According to the critical theory of religion the fundamental principle of the Golden Rule and four ethical and socio-ethical directives derived from it can show the way to global alternative Future III: a free society, characterized by personal autonomy as well as by universal, i.e. anamnestic, present, and proleptic solidarity.⁵⁵ The fundamental demand is the Golden Rule. This principle was found and has persisted in many religious and ethical traditions of humankind for thousands of years: what you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to others. In the perspective of the critical theory of religion, this fundamental principle should be the irrevocable, unconditional norm for all areas of life, for families and communities, for races, nations and religions. It should be supported by the insurmountable longing for the totally Other, than what is the case in nature and history with their often most cruel laws.⁵⁶ This totally Other stands for what once was called in Judaism and other world religions infinite power, perfect justice, unconditional love, and absolute truth.

Ethical Directives.

On the basis of this fundamental principle of the Golden Rule, four ethical directives, found in all the great world religions of humanity, have to be remembered, if global alternative Future III should be realized:

1. You shall not murder, torture, torment, wound. This directive means in positive terms: you should have reverence for life. You should be committed to a culture of life and love, rather than to a culture of death.
2. You shall not lie, deceive, forge, manipulate. This directive means in positive terms: You should speak and act truthfully. You should be committed to a culture of truthfulness and tolerance.
3. You shall not steal, exploit, rob, bribe, and corrupt. That directive means in positive terms: You should deal honestly and fairly. You should be committed to a culture of fairness and a just economic order.
4. You shall not abuse sexuality, cheat, humiliate, dishonor. This directive means in positive terms: You should respect and love one another. You should be committed to a culture of partnership and equal dignity of men and women.⁵⁷

While all four ethical directives can be found in the Mosaic Decalogue, which all three Abrahamic religions have in common, the first and fourth directive is also part of the specifically Christian Sermon on the Mount.⁵⁸ However, its third, fourth and fifth commandment could also serve as ethical directive some day on a higher level of social and cultural evolution on the way to alternative Future III: no oath, cancellation of the *lex* or *jus talionis*, and love of the enemy. Jews, Christians and Muslims, as well as committed believers of other world religions, are under the obligation, to seek every opportunity to practice kindness and love or - in secular terms – solidarity, and to bring relief and blessing, wherever they go.⁵⁹ They see providential happenings in history: that there is Divine control of human conditions and that many humanly unaccountable things happen in individual and collective life. Already now the above four directives constitute a global ethic, able to lead humankind toward alternative Future III.⁶⁰

Global Ethic

In the perspective of the critical theory of religion, such global ethic should not be imposed by law but be brought to public awareness and be based on the consensus of the unlimited, universal communication community.⁶¹ Such global ethic is simultaneously applicable to individual persons and to collectives and their institutions. Such global ethic does not only focus on the collective responsibility to the relief of any responsibility the individual may hold, and vice versa. Of course, often the social conditions, or history, or the system must be blamed for specific injustices, abuses, and crimes. But also the individuals may be responsible for them at least to some extent. The global ethic focuses equally on the responsibility of each individual in his or her place in society, as well as on the collective. Individual and collective are mediated through each other. They reproduce each other. As the individual is a product of society, so society is a product of the individuals. They reproduce and thus change each other. In order global alternative Future III to be reached, individual and society will have to go through mutual revolutionary changes.

The Support of Law

In the view of the critical theory of religion, the free commitment to such global ethic, does, of course, not exclude the support of the law.⁶² It rather includes it. In some circumstances the global ethic can appeal to the law. Such circumstances include cases of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, international assassinations and aggression contrary to international law. Meanwhile, following its ratification by more than sixty nations, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has been established. According to the global ethic, it is to this court that such violations can be brought. This is specifically the case, when a signatory state is unable or unwilling to inflict legal penalties on atrocities committed in its territory or under its control.

Peace

Up to this point in history – October 2005 - the illegal and immoral wars against Afghanistan and Iraq have not brought the promised peace to either country, nor have they diminished terror around the world.⁶³ As the two wars and civil wars continue, the decisive question arises more than ever before: what international commitments are to be made? In the perspective of the critical theory of religion, not the alternatives of the passing Modern Paradigm, but the alternatives of the future Post-Modern Constellation are most relevant. There are alternatives, if the billions that are being spent on sinfully expensive new weapon systems, in order to fight terrorism and in preparation of new wars among the civilizations, were being spent on kindergartens and schools, health care, hospitals, cancer research and public services at home and abroad, and on fighting against poverty, hunger and misery in the world. To promote the prophetic concept of

shalom,

Particular demands will be put on all world religions, not to support uncritically the official politics and policies of their respective governments, which only too often conduct politics as identification and demonization of the enemies, a la Carl Schmitt and Samuel Huntington: be these enemies the communists or the Gihadists, but to fulfill their own critical role in antagonistic civil society.⁶⁴ The critical theory of religion does not promote a vision of war, but rather a vision of global alternative Future III – a peace society, in which the main antagonisms of modern civil society will have been fought through and will have been reconciled. The critical theory of religion summarizes this vision of alternative Future III in five propositions:

1. There will be no peace among nations without peace among the world religions.
2. There will be no peace among the world religions without discourse among them.
3. There will be no discourse among the world religions without comparative foundational research in them and among them.
4. There will be no discourse among the world religions without global ethical standards: particularly the Golden Rule and its ethical directives,

5. There will, therefore, be no survival of this globe without a global ethic.⁶⁵

Such global ethic – driven by the longing for the imageless and nameless totally Other than the horror and terror of nature and history – must guide the discourse and cooperation among civilizations, if they want to avoid further collisions, and the alternative Futures I and II, and if they want to survive, and if they want to find their way to global alternative Future III – a genuine peace society, characterized by the freedom of all, beyond the realm of natural, economic, political, and historical necessity.⁶⁶ Shalom – It shall be well!⁶⁷

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