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Homeland Theology? Decolonizing Christianity and the Task of Public Theology

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Chapter Twelve

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*Decolonizing Christianity
and the Task of Public Theology*

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THE TASK OF DECOLONIZING CHRISTIANITY

Every time I cross the border to the United States, I thank God that I am a legal immigrant, white, and citizen of the European Union, Germany. Every time my fingerprints and photo are taken, I wonder where these data go, and whether I have a right to ask. To be sure, I never do, because it could mean that I complicate matters with the immigration officer who might have a bad day and "choose me" to be questioned, to be held indeterminately under the rules of Homeland Security. Others are not so lucky. They are not traveling like I do, but rather fleeing from one place to another. They may flee from violence, war, or poverty, ending up at the border between Mexico and the United States, or between Libya and the European Union. There, they are welcomed with a security system that has but one goal: to prevent them from entering the United States or the European Union in a way that the laws determine to be illegal. With almost 70 million people on the move world-wide, the evermore sophisticated technologies of surveillance and the militarization of borders in the United States and in Europe are laughable efforts to keep the migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers out, but these measures are legitimized politically and legally, and increasingly morally justified in the name of national security on the one hand, and cultural identities on the other. What is often called the "refugee crisis" or "migration crisis," is in fact a crisis of *responsibility*, caused by the amnesia in the United States and Europe about the impact its policies have had on the countries people flee

from, and due to the indifference toward the suffering of people who literally risk their lives to find security, freedom, and well-being in the countries who claim to protect and promote exactly these human rights for everyone.[1] When it comes to the cultural and national identities of Northern America and Europe, Christianity plays a central role. Its heritage must be defended, we hear. Its values must be defended, we hear. In Hungary, Poland, and the United States, among other countries, national populism is so intertwined with Christianity that no Christian, and certainly no Christian theologian, can look the other way.

The task of "decolonizing" Christian political theology requires one to critically examine the history and the terms we often uncritically use to describe Christian values or the "Christian culture." Its aim is to counter the narrative of the "threatened" culture of Christianity that is promoted today as part of a political agenda; it critically remembers the often-forgotten chapters of Christian history that question the reemerging glorious imagery of the "Christian heritage" in Europe and the United States. Christianity's "culture of life," protecting especially the unborn life, is held against the "culture of death," as Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict often labeled the modern secular societies. With such a stark juxtaposition, Christianity's own "culture of death" is vastly ignored: the abuse of children in Catholic orphanages, the sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests, the financial corruption of the Vatican's bank—these structural sins must all be ignored,[2] just as the denial of access of lay men and women to the ecclesial governance structures. Historically speaking, the blending of Protestantism and Capitalism in the United States, analyzed by Max Weber, must be forgotten; pogroms against Jews in the name of Christianity are also not a part of the "culture of life." The lack of resistance against Germany's "Final Solution" under Hitler's dictatorship, killing six million Jews in Europe, are silently "forgotten" in the narrative that depicts the glorious past of the "Christian heritage" in Europe. And the fact that in the "Western" countries, white Christians and the all-male Catholic cleric still act as the "masters" of Christianity remains unacknowledged. Decolonizing the political theology of Christianity unmasks these narratives that shape the current public imagery Christians promote. I believe that the effort to "decolonize" the underlying political theology (or theologies) of Christianity has two sides: the one is the claim by the colonized people to finally be included in the Christian narrative, often holding the mirror at the white Western Christianity; the other is the acknowledgment of how thoroughly Christianity has been entangled with the history of colonization, ultimately leading to the current trope of the defense of the "homeland," echoed in what I call a "homeland theology" which is retrieving a tradition of violence that no public theology can ignore.

THE AMBIGUITY OF CHRISTIAN PUBLIC THEOLOGIES

Modern democracies promised to give everyone a voice in matters concerning all, and to hold those who represent the citizens of a polity accountable. The cosmopolitan vision, from its beginning in the 19th century the main target of nationalism and often functioning as dog whistle for anti-semitism, takes this thought one step further, striving to limit the power of nation-states.[3] After World War II and in view of the victims of the war, the Shoah, and the atom bombs, the international response to the "eclipse of reason" (Horkheimer) began as a "never again" movement that was transformed into the ethics of human rights, the universal ethics in the name of human dignity, independent of sex, race, class, or religion, and a cosmopolitan vision for international politics.[4] The Catholic Church only hesitantly learned not to fear this ethics (and still fears women's rights as human rights), but Catholic and Christian theologians certainly have contributed to its interpretation over the last decades.

Freedom, equality, and solidarity have long been the core values of modern societies, and they define human rights as equal rights to freedom and well-being of all, which need to be respected, protected, and fulfilled.[5] Furthermore, because of the de facto asymmetries of power, social positions, and access to social goods, however, struggles for recognition as well as struggles for rights are an inherent part of civil and political activism.[6] Invoking the universality of rights, groups over time have forced those who de facto determine the interpretation of human rights to expand the material concept as well as the subjects of rights. Solidarity matters both as solidarity *among* the disenfranchised and *with* them by their allies. Religious groups, too, engage in struggles for recognition, demanding respect of their religious freedom rights when they are not granted by states or other social groups, or fighting for exemptions from (secular or religious) norms in order to being able to practice their faiths. Religious freedom as a human right requires the *respect* of religions; it *protects* the free practice and exercise of religious practices, and it demands of societies and their political institutions to *fulfill* the religious freedom right by granting spaces for religious institutions and/or providing institutional arrangements which may well differ in the different contexts and with respect to the practices of the different religions.

The public sphere is the *civil* sphere in which the different forms of social life, i.e., economic, cultural and religious life, and political engagement take place; they are visible publicly, and unsurprisingly, conflicts may arise.[7] In his famous conversation with Joseph Ratzinger, the philosopher of the Frankfurt School Jürgen Habermas argued that in order to participate fully in public discourses, religions must "translate" their value claims into the argumentative language of public reason, so that "communicative action" rather than coercive, violent action is possible.[8] Only with some procedural norms

of discourse, he held, can the normative claims underlying the modern values of freedom, equality, tolerance, and solidarity be actualized.[9] In modern societies, values and traditions, Habermas argued, must be subjected to critique by public reason; his student Rainer Forst insisted: everyone has the right that the claims of others are to be justified, and vice versa, the obligation to justify one own's claims on others.[10] After much criticism, especially from the Christian scholars of public theology, Habermas later corrected his view considerably, acknowledging that "secular societies" actually also learn from those dimensions of the religious tradition that go beyond discursive reasoning. And indeed, though not exclusive sources of the "meaning of life," religions do offer, for example, religious rituals such as the "rites des passage" in childhood, marriage, sickness, or death; these are communal practices that structure the personal and social life and foster social cohesion. Furthermore, religions may provide the motivational basis that guides moral agents to act in accordance with their beliefs, something that reason alone cannot offer. In Western societies—no matter how secular they otherwise are—Catholic and other Christian institutions shape multiple parts of the institutional structures, from childcare, health care, or education, and charity organizations to the spaces of contemplation they create over against the dominance of a consumer culture that accompanies the never-resting Capitalist societies. Likewise, the forum of public reason entails the voices of religious-social advocacy, and the practices of conflict-resolution or even civil reconciliation after atrocities. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of post-apartheid South Africa, for example, has become a model for numerous countries to strengthen the different sides in their efforts of peace after wars or other violent conflicts, incorporating, among others, testimonials of survivors and families of victims, and practices and rituals of reconciliation. Hence, the so-called return of religion around the turn of the millennium only highlighted in public *discourses* what had never disappeared in *practice*, namely the contribution of religions to the individual value systems, to the cohesion of communities, and to the overall public life of Western societies, which have functioned as secularized societies only *politically* throughout modernity.

CATHOLIC NATURAL LAW, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND THE GLOBAL ETHIC PROJECT

Catholicism has long been ambivalent about the human rights ethics: the natural law doctrine rather than the human rights framework serves as the normative framework of theological and ethical reasoning of the Catholic Church. It has been considerably reinterpreted recently, bringing it much closer to the human rights framework than it was the case in the 20th-century

Magisterium's interpretation of moral theology. The reinterpretation, taken on by the *International Theological Commission* and resulting in the 2009 Document[11] is a much welcome move:

> 92.· *The norms of natural justice [ius naturalis] are thus the measures of human relationships prior to the will of the legislator.* They are given from the moment that human beings live in society. They express what is naturally just, prior to any legal formulation. *The norms of natural justice [ius naturalis] are expressed in a particular way in the subjective rights of the human person, such as the right to respect for one's own life, the right to the integrity of one's person, the right to religious liberty, the right to freedom of thought, the right to start a family and to educate one's children according to one's convictions, the right to associate with others, the right to participate in the life of the community, etc.* These rights, to which contemporary thought attributes great importance, do not have their source in the fluctuating desires of individuals, but rather in the very structure of human beings and their humanizing relations. The rights of the human person emerge therefore from the order of justice [ius] that must reign in relations among human beings. *To acknowledge these natural rights of man means to acknowledge the objective order of human relations based on the natural law.*[12]

This quote summarizes the tradition that elevates human reason as the capacity to discover the ontological structures of human existence, "the very structure of human beings and their humanizing relations." Whether one follows this ontological metaphysics or not, it creates the space for a public theology that is informed by the sciences and humanities, and human rights. Laws that do not align to the human rights or justice as the structure that enables individuals to realize their natural rights are not binding. "If the law is not just, it is not even a law."[13]

> [F]acing the threats of the abuse of power, and even of totalitarianism, which juridical positivism conceals and which certain ideologies propagate, the Church recalls that civil laws do not bind in conscience when they contradict natural law, and asks for the acknowledgment of the right to conscientious objection, as well as the duty of disobedience in the name of obedience to a higher law (43). The reference to natural law, far from producing conformism, guarantees personal freedom and defends the marginalized and those oppressed by social structures which do not take the common good into account.[14]

Activists who criticize human rights violations of their governments must indeed transcend positive law or policies that are introduced by governments; after all, it is often these laws and policies that allow for specific political procedures that are contested in the name of morality. For example, the so-called Muslim ban, i.e., the prohibition for citizens of particular countries to enter the United States, is a policy that was introduced by the Trump admin-

istration in spring 2018 and upheld at least in general terms by the US Supreme Court in early summer 2018. Yet, it declares foreign citizens a security threat merely because of their nationality. Furthermore, the so-called family separation of migrant infants, toddlers, and minors from their parents at the Mexican/US border in spring 2018 was in fact an orchestrated and intentional *state kidnapping* program, *accepting*[15] that this would result in the *torture* of children.[16]

The clash of positive laws and justice must indeed be criticized—however, not in the name of "divine law" but in the name of those who are treated unjustly. Merely referring to the authority of a "higher law" ignores the problematic legacy of religious authoritarianism that it strives to overcome.

Public theologies are not exclusively shaped by the Pope and Bishops' Conferences or by the leaders of Christian churches. They are, likewise, shaped by the activism and efforts of lay Christians and theologians. In 1993, the Global Ethic Project that had been introduced by Catholic theologian Hans Küng, embraced the United Nations framework of human dignity, human rights, and human responsibility, tying it to the moral visions found in all religions; and it was taken up by the Parliament of World Religions, established in Chicago in 1993.[17] It offered a positive vision of a minimal value consensus that it hoped would help to transform the consciousness of billions of people yearning for a good life, with and for others, in just institutions (Ricœur), and in "our common home" (Pope Francis), planet earth. From the beginning, the World Parliament's vision was interreligious and intercultural, reaching out to all people in good faith. Hence, the 1993 text states:

> We are persons who have committed ourselves to the precepts and practices of the world's religions. We confirm that there is already a consensus among the religions which can be the basis for a global ethic—a minimal fundamental consensus concerning binding values, irrevocable standards, and fundamental moral attitudes.

> . . . An ethic already exists within the religious teachings of the world which can counter the global distress. Of course this ethic provides no direct solution for all the immense problems of the world, but it does supply the moral foundation for a better individual and global order: A vision which can lead women and men away from despair, and society away from chaos.[18]

The Global Ethic Project sees itself as an inspiration for individuals and civil society to embrace the minimal consensus of values spelled out as a civic ethos, the Global Ethic. It echoes the Human Rights Declaration but formulates it as responsibility of religions. In contrast to the Catholic Catechism that upholds the notion that salvatory role of Christianity,[19] it acknowledges that no singular religion can claim to be in possession of *the*

truth of religion, morality, or politics. Hence, an overlapping consensus among all cultures regarding the dignity and rights of human beings seemed to be a precondition for global peace, and the Global Ethic wanted to contribute to this consensus from a religious perspective. It was a necessary and laudable step to declare that

> every human being without distinction of age, sex, race, skin color, physical or mental ability, language, religion, political view, or national or social origin possesses an inalienable and untouchable dignity and everyone, the individual as well as the state, is therefore obliged to honor this dignity and protect it. Humans must always be the subjects of rights, must be ends, never mere means, never objects of commercialization and industrialization in economics, politics and media, in research institutes, and industrial corporations. No one stands "above good and evil"—no human being, no social class, no influential interest group, no cartel, no police apparatus, no army, and no state. On the contrary: Possessed of reason and conscience, every human is obliged to behave in a genuinely human fashion, to do good and avoid evil![20]

THE "NEW POLITICAL THEOLOGY"

Both Hans Küng and Johann Baptist Metz were among the founding members of the International Journal *Concilium* that understands itself as an international forum of Catholic theology that assembles the voices, practices, and reflections from theologians around the world who believe in the Vatican II call to "read the signs of the times."[21] In response to the Global Ethic, Johann Baptist Metz who coined the term "new political theology," articulated the blind spot of an ethos that is based on a minimal consensus shared by all religions. Metz stated, first in 1999:

> . . . But from a strictly theological and not just from a religious and political perspective, ethical universalism is not a product of consensus. It is rooted in the unconditional recognition of an authority—which can certainly be appealed to in all great religions and cultures, too: in *the recognition of the authority of those who suffer.*[22]

Indebted to the Critical Theory of the early Frankfurt School, Metz called, in place of a minimal consensus of values, for a negative universalism that centers on suffering and injustice. It defines as its core task to *remember* what—and who—would otherwise be forgotten; it vows to stand in *solidarity* with and to *advocate* for those who are the victims, the left-behinds of modernity's scientific, technological, and economic progress. It strives to render the undignified, suffering people not the recipients and objects of theology but its subject. The Christian and Catholic ethics entailed in the New Political Theology—like the Latin American liberation theologies—allied itself with

those whose stakes in the current order are a question of survival. It *can* only speak from this perspective if it positions itself in the places it speaks about—the *hypotopias*, as I want to call these spaces.

In consequence of this Christian theology, the suffering subject must be the center of the theological memory of God: the remembrance, narration, and reflection of God *is* embodied in the remembrance, narration, and reflection of the experiences of suffering people; it is, as Metz famously stated, a dangerous memory that speaks "truth to power." The principle of negative universalism means that the others, "the strangers," and the *aliens'* suffering ("Fremdes Leid," in Metz's term) must be *remembered*, it must be given a voice in *narratives*, it must be *judged* as evil that should not be, and ultimately, it must be *responded* to in actions and political praxis. Its truth claim, though formulated negatively, is as universal as the universal claim of human dignity and human rights. Metz therefore insisted on an *indirect* ecumenism of religions,

> the praxis of a common response, a common resistance to the sources of unjust suffering in the world: racism, xenophobia, and nationalistic or purely ethnic religiosity with its civil war ambitions. But it is also a resistance to the cold alternative of a global community in which increasingly the "human being" vanishes amid self-serving systems of economics, technology, and their culture and communications industries; of a global community in which world politics increasingly loses its primacy to a world economics whose laws of the market were long ago abstracted from "human beings" themselves.[23]

Metz, who had no illusions about the United Nations or the lacking power of NGO's nevertheless agreed with Küng and the Global Ethic that the memory of all religions are needed, *as the dangerous memory of those who pay the price for our inaction, for the global political, economic, and technological order*. Metz's insights may well be taken up by the Parliament of World Religions, which is, after all, an ongoing project.[24] With Metz, I therefore argue that Public theologies must activate the religious narratives for a social and political ethics of compassion, as resistance to unjust and innocent suffering or the passion-less world of reification and alienation.[25] Evidently, theology's deck in the public political and moral discourse entails no trump card. All it has is the knowledge of its own ideological theologies, which it strives to discern in critical analyses. It counters the glowing myths with the experiential knowledge of people who live in the *hypotopias* and the commitment to speak with and respond to those who are wounded by the decisions, actions, and structures of the current regimes.[26] Public theologies must therefore critique the disrespect of human freedom, dignity, and well-being of millions of people, among them the millions who are forced to leave their homes. They must critique the disregard of life on earth, and fight for a political and economic order that enables a true global justice.

WELCOME TO OUR HOME: A CRITICAL
POLITICAL THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION TO JUSTICE

We can certainly learn from our plural and diverse religious traditions and narratives and from our different histories in which our religions and cultures originated, and in which our communities emerged, changed, prevailed, or were destroyed. This is the program of interreligious and intercultural dialogues. Ultimately, however, these dialogues require a direction: attending to those who live in the hypotopias, we will feel the *rahamim*, the Hebrew term for compassion, that begins with the screams of the children torn away from their mothers or fathers and the *pain in the gut* that their suffering evokes.[27] We will then see the yearning for justice in the faces of undocumented dreamers who cannot believe how their (!) country is treating them. We will see the desperation and in the faces of those who join the Migrant Caravan on the way to the US border, because they fear for their lives when fleeing alone. We will cry with the mothers and fathers who are still being deported while their children are declared "unaccompanied alien children," who may well end up in foster families as "orphans" whose parents have been "disappeared."[28]

When Christians believe this is no concern for them because they did not cause the crisis, I fear that religions, and Christianity especially, will make the same mistake as the early moderns made: juxtaposing the secular culture of death with a religious culture of life, to be found exclusively within the murals of a church that hides its complicity. The notion of the peaceful coexistence of the "state" and the "church" has always betrayed either the silent acceptance of state policies or the explicit legitimization of them. Public theologies must therefore maintain a position of *critique* not only as a method but as a performative social action.[29] But I am concerned that we become complacent again in our comforting narrative that we all share a minimal, abstract catalogue of values. I fear that we are too happy dwelling on the upper-side of history, while the suffering, once again, are forgotten. I worry that we do not see the multiple signs of a revision history of modern democracies, which places the Christian narrative, again, in the driver seat of national politics. What world we see depends on how—and where—we look. Whose words we hear depends to whom we listen. Public theologies must strive to organize the solidarity with those who do not want to forget the vision of human dignity and human rights. Christian theology is a *counternarrative* to political power, and this narrative must be held against the myth that is re-created by the nationalist populist groups. Religions, I believe, can indeed help us to look differently at our own world, our own identities and societies, because with the notion of the "divine" that calls us to go beyond our family ties as well as beyond our cultural or national bonds, religions

themselves entail an "alienness" (Waldenfels) that is but one dimension of the "otherness of ourselves."[30]

We must resist the narrative of "homeland security" that is echoed in the "homeland theology" of Christian patriotism and nationalism, because it has become just another word for xenophobia and anti-immigrant policies. In our resistance to give in to the political realism that calls us dreamers and idealists who know nothing of politics and the complexities of it,[31] we may want to take Dorothe Sölle's words to heart, spoken when the 1980s German Peace Movement was criticized for its insistence on peace as an alternative to the deterrence politics of the Cold War. After all, in 1983 nobody expected that only a few years later, East German citizens would bring their government down with their protests in the streets *and* churches, ending an authoritarian regime that had violated so many of their rights:

> There are issues for which you must go into the streets, and speak a clear "no" in your workplace or in the union. If they tell you it will not do any good, and has no chance whatever, you must do it anyway, if only for the sake of your own human dignity, if only to be able to look your own children in the eye. If you keep silent today and allow yourself to be used, you are already dead. You have armed yourself to death! In the face of such feelings of impotence and defeatism, you must know exactly why you are doing all this and why it is essential for you, so that you do not cave in if they threaten you and intimidate you with censorship and blacklist you in your profession. We do not want to define our life as do those who are arming us to death.[32]

Quoting what she hears as objection to the Peace Movement: "'You are so naive, you pacifists, such wide-eyed innocents. You do not really know what you are talking about, especially not the women,'" she adds a second response:

> This objection is to the point, in as much as we need to become better informed. This is not so hard; don't be intimidated, even though you do have to overcome government propaganda.[33]

Like Metz, Sölle reminds her audiences to remember the activists and those who came before us and who suffered for their resistance to power. Every society—and every religion— has these witnesses. How they are remembered or listened to defines the public discourses. In my view, religions have a crucial role to pay in this respect: as those who remember the victims of unjust policies and structures, and the witnesses of resistance to these structures. And just as the free press who speaks truth to power is labeled today, once again, the "enemy of the people," Christian witnesses, too, will be the targets of the authoritarian regimes and their Christian supporters: they will not accept the unmasking that they are the "kingmakers."[34]

In sum, the theology that I envision is *critical* in its social and political analyses of power asymmetries, wherever they prevent people from claiming their right to have their rights be respected, protected, and fulfilled; it is *public* in the critique of injustice, arguing for a future that secures the freedom and well-being of human beings, the flourishing of animals and plants, and the environment upon which life on earth depends. It is *political* because it is committed to establish structures and institutions in the social life, in the globalized economy, and national as well as international politics that deserve to be called a political vision of justice. It acknowledges that human rights, de facto, are not the rights of the many but the rights of the few, to which theologians often belong. But from our position of this privilege, we, the "Western" Christian theologians whose rights and well-being are secured, must promote a Christian theology that begins with the acknowledgment that we do indeed refuse to accept the responsibility for past injustices and do little to establish support systems for those mostly in need of them today. Granting hospitality to asylum seekers and refugees should not even be worth a debate; finding solutions for migration may, in contrast, require all elements of practical reason that scholastic theology sought to integrate: prudence is the virtue of practical reason, i.e., the disposition to act in view of insights. They may stem from memory, foresight, circumstantial and contextual knowledge as well as entail docility and shrewdness—in fact, practical and ethical reasoning must be interdisciplinary and multidimensional. To found theological and *ethical* reasoning on the harms *and* vulnerable agency of those whose lives, freedom, and dignity are violated by acts, practices, or structures of coercion, discrimination, or dehumanization will help us not to lose sight of those with whom we are struggling for solutions.[35]

With regard to my own tradition, Catholicism, however, there is yet another task. The critical, public, and political theology and ethics must challenge, in the forum internum, the *image of God* as the ultimate law-giver and emperor of the church; it must challenge *the ecclesial structure* as dichotomy between the clerics and the lay people, and men and women of the church, and *the moral theology* of obedience to the moral authority of the Church. In its place, it will remind the master interpreters of the doctrine that the very tradition of the natural law that they claim guides Catholic moral theology not only permits but *demands* that every moral agent habituates the virtue of practical moral reasoning. Furthermore, public theology will challenge *Christian evangelization* when this prioritizes conversion, doctrine, and religious rituals over the praxis of recognition of and respect for others, including other religions. It will stand in solidarity with those whose trust has been betrayed by the Church, and *demand accountability and reparation* in cases of the Church's moral failures to respect, protect, and fulfill the human rights of its members, children and women in particular. This theology will tell the narratives of the compassionate God who dwells in the undersides as well as

in the upper-sides of societies; who cries with the children and their parents at the border and in the prisons, and who suffers with everyone who is yearning to belong somewhere. Together with them, God will demand justice. Christian ethics is neither romantic kitsch nor a private affair—it is an ethics of compassion, justice, and responsibility, understood as practical response and the willingness of moral agents to be held accountable for their actions and inactions. After all, Christian theology does not only entail the blessing for those who turn to their neighbors; it also entails the vision of the divine judgment for those who do not respect, protect, or fulfill the human dignity and rights of others:

> For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.[36]

Public theologies that commit themselves to critique as a social practice and to the struggle for the liberation to justice must embrace all groups who are willing to repair the old ecclesia of Christianity, and Christians will engage alongside with others to *tear down the walls* of the global order of injustice. They will welcome the stranger to their homes and homelands, and strive to provide the hospitable spaces in which all of us who "aim for a good life with and for others in just institutions"[37] can dwell.

NOTES

1. Hille Haker, and Molly Greening, eds. *Unaccompanied Migrant Children: Social, Legal, and Ethical Perspectives* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2018).

2. Cf., for example, Barbie Latza Nadeau, "The Vatican's Dirty Money Problem," *The Daily Beast* (December 12, 2017), https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-vaticans-dirty-money-problem.

3. Seyla Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism*, ed. Jeremy Waldron, et al. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); *Dignity in Adversity: Human Rights in Troubled Times* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2011).

4. Even though this human rights approach has been criticized, too, by Hannah Arendt or more recently by Christoph Menke, for its shortcomings to secure the "right to have rights" (Arendt) I have defended it, pointing to Paul Ricoeur's concept of capability as responsibility and accountability. Cf. Hille Haker, "No Space. Nowhere. Refugees and the Problem of Human Rights in Arendt and Ricoeur" *Ricoeur Studies* 8, no. 2 (2017). For an analysis and defense of cosmopolitanism cf.

5. I follow Michelle Becka in pointing to the triad of "respect, protection, and fulfilment" that orients the implementation of human rights. Cf. Michelle Becka, "Verantwortung Übernehmen. Christliche Sozialethik Und Migration," *Stimmen der Zeit* 143 (2018); Michelle Becka, and Johannes Ulrich, "Blinde Praxis, Taube Theorie? Sozialethische Reflexion Über Das Menschenrecht Auf Gesundheit," in *Christliche Sozialethik—Orientierung Welcher Praxis?*, ed. Bernhard Emunds (Stuttgart: Nomos, 2018).

6. Hille Haker, *Recognition and Responsibility* (2019 (in preparation)); Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1995).

7. Jeffrey C. Alexander, *The Civil Sphere* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

8. For a critical discussion cf. Maureen Junker-Kenny, *Religion and Public Reason: A Comparison of the Positions of John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas and Paul Ricoeur*, ed. Maureen Junker-Kenny (Berlin, Germany; Boston: De Gruyter, 2014).

9. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (London: Heinemann, 1984).

10. Rainer Forst, *The Right to Justification : Elements of a Constructivist Theory of Justice*, ed. Jeffrey Flynn (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

11. International Theological Commission, "In Search of a Universal Ethic: A New Look at the Natural Law," http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/ rc_con_cfaith_doc_20090520_legge-naturale_en.html

12. Ibid. (translation changed and emphasis added)

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., Par. 35. (http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/ rc_con_cfaith_doc_20090520_legge-naturale_en.html)

15. Hearings in the US Congress have shown that the administration was indeed warned by the Department of Human Health Services of the harms this policy would cause the children. It was implemented anyway, and Secretary of Justice did not shy away from quoting the bible to warn the Christian churches to keep its distance from state policies.

16. According to Erika Guevara-Rosas, Amnesty International's Americas Director of Amnesty International, this "is a spectacularly cruel policy, where frightened children are being ripped from their parent's arms and taken to overflowing detention centers, which are essentially cages. This is nothing short of torture. The severe mental suffering that officials have intentionally inflicted on these families for coercive purposes, means that these acts meet the definitions of torture under both US and international law. Amnesty International, "USA: Policy of Separating Children from Parents Is Nothing Short of Torture," https:// www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/06/usa-family-separation-torture/. The UN Convention against Torture defines torture a) as the intentional infliction of pain, b) by a public official or someone acting in an official capacity, and c) for a specific purpose. The courts have since ruled that the children's "pain" and "suffering" was illegal according to US laws. The term "family separation" is, therefore, a euphemism that conceals the reality of a kidnapping policy at the border, in order to deter other asylum seekers to come to the border, and the harming of children (and their parents!) have been either accepted as collateral damage or it was part of the deterrence strategy.

17. Cf. https://parliamentofreligions.org/

18. Parliament of World Religions, "Toward a Global Ethic: An Initial Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions," https://parliamentofreligions.org/publications/toward-global-ethic-initial-declaration-parliament-worlds-religions.

19. "Hence they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it." Lumen Gentium, quoted in the Libreria Editrice Vaticana, "Catechism of the Catholic Church" (1993), http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM.

20. Parliament of World Religions, "Toward a Global Ethic."

21. Belonging to the next generation of scholars, I have been an editiorial board member of several issues. One example of the direction is the issue on "women's voices in world religion," co-edited by Susan Ross, Marie-Theres Wacker, and me in 2006. For all issues cf. http:// www.concilium.in/

22. Johann Baptist Metz, "In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds: Notes toward a Theological and Political Program," *CrossCurrents* 49, no. 2 (1999): 232. Emphasis is mine. Translation corrected. Metz elaborated on the Global Ethic in "'Compassion.' Zu Einem Weltprogramm Des Christentums Im Zeitalter Des Pluralismus Der Religionen Und Kulturen," in *Compassion. Weltprogramm Des Christentums. Soziale Verantwortung Lernen*, ed. Lothar Kuld and Adolf Weisbrod Johann Baptist Metz (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2000).

23. "In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds: Notes toward a Theological and Political Program," 233.

24. In preparation of the 2018 Assembly in Toronto, a conference was held in Chicago in April 2018 under the title "Grappling with the Global Ethic: Multi-Religious Perspectives on Global Issues." The contributions can be watched at https://parliamentofreligions.org/parliament/global-ethic/grappling-global-ethic-multi-religious-perspectives-global-issues-conference#1958.

25. Cf. Axel Honneth et al., *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). Rahel Jaeggi, *Alienation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

26. Even though this human rights approach has been criticized, too, by Hannah Arendt or more recently by Christoph Menke, for its shortcomings to secure the "right to have rights" (Arendt) I have defended it, pointing to Paul Ricœur's concept of capability as responsibility and accountability. Cf. Haker, "No Space. Nowhere. Refugees and the Problem of Human Rights in Arendt and Ricoeur." Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism*; *Dignity in Adversity: Human Rights in Troubled Times*.

27. Cf. Hille Haker, "Compassion and Justice," *Concilium*, no. 4 (2017).

28. "Disappearance" was a well-known crime against humanity of South-American and Central American regimes, often backed by the United States of America. Speaking truth to power entails the responsibility to resist the political rhetoric of the anti-immigrant and xenophobic regimes and identify the policies as what they are. In the case of the "family separation," this means to call the policies state kidnapping, the treatment of the children (and parents) imprisonment and torture, and the "deportation" the intentional disappearance of parents while their children are still in the custody of US authorities, and the "zero tolerance" asylum and immigration policies crimes against humanity.

29. Robin Celikates, *Critique as Social Practice: Critical Theory and Social Self-Understanding* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2018).

30. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). Cf. Bernhard Waldenfels, *Phenomenology of the Alien: Basic Concepts* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2011).

31. Hille Haker, "Political Ethics and the Rights of Unaccompanied Migrant Children," in *Unaccompanied Migrant Children: Social, Legal, and Ethical Perspectives*, ed. Hille Haker, Greening, Molly (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2018).

32. Dorothee Soelle, "Unilaterally for Peace," *Cross Currents* 33, no. 2 (1983): 143.

33. Ibid.

34. Maegan Vazquez, Brusk, Steve, "Pastor at Trump Rally Asks God to Protect President from 'Jungle Journalism,'" *CNN* (August 4, 2018), https://www.cnn.com/2018/08/04/politics/ohio-pastor-invocation-donald-trump-rally/index.html. In his prayer, Pastor Gary Click compared Donald Trump with David, fighting against Goliath.

35. Cf. a thorough examination in Hille Haker, "Vulnerable Agency: A Conceptual and Contextual Analysis," in *Dignity and Conflict: Contemporary Interfaith Dialogue on the Value and Vulnerability of Human Life*, ed. Jonathan Rothschild and Matthew Petrusek (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2018).

36. Matthew 25, 42–43.

37. Cf. from a feminist perspective that I fully embrace: Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklēsia-Logy of Liberation* (New York: Crossroad, 1993); *Empowering Memory and Movement: Thinking and Working across Borders* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision: Exploration in Feminist Theolgy* (Augsburg Fortress Press, 2014).

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