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Vittorio Hösle (Tübingen)

The Third World as a Philosophical Problem[1]

The title of my lecture may seem strange for two reasons. First, one can deny that the concept "Third World" is a legitimate one. After the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact there seem to be only two worlds--the world of the poor and that of the rich--and the fundamental political question of the next years seems to be whether the Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union will become parts of the First or the still so-called Third world (which should then be rebaptized "Second World"). Further, the use of the word "world" is highly questionable--in fact it implies that the different worlds have autonomy and fails to recognize that all human beings are living in one and only one interdependent world. Finally, the application of different ordinal numbers to the different worlds clearly serves not only have nomenclatural purpose. It suggests that the different worlds have different places in a value hierarchy: the First World is somehow superior to the Third, and it is the telos of the Third World to approximate the First. This is in any case implied by the terms "developing countries" and "developed countries".

But even if we could succeed in elaborating a better concept for that complex reality we normally refer to by the term "Third World", a second issue would arise: Why does this reality constitute a philosophical problem? One would readily grant that economists, sociologists, political scientists, anthropologists, and in increasing numbers natural scientists, especially geographers and biologists with ecological interests, have to deal with this reality; but why philosophers? In fact the majority of contemporary philosophers ignores this problem and prefers to elaborate subtle theories which seem to contribute little to an understanding of the world in which we are living. Of course, this

[1] I want to thank Richard Bjornson, Thomas Kesselring, and Mark Roche for many fruitful discussions on the subject. Mark Roche furthermore was kind enough to correct my English.

complaint is not an argument; it could be the fate of philosophy to become less and less relevant to the modern world, a world far more intricate than all past cultures.

In a certain sense, however, just the fact that we can address the first issue answers our second problem. The clarification of concepts is a classical philosophical task; in uttering the term "Third World" we presuppose a number of highly questionable things, making us ill at ease, and this unease can be answered only with philosophy. Since Plato philosophy has again and again been understood as the universal metascience, as that discipline which deals with the general concepts and presuppositions from which the single sciences start, usually without any reflection on their validity; therefore, I am firmly convinced that the progress of the sciences and humanities will never render philosophy superfluous. On the contrary: The obliteration of boundaries between the different sciences may render philosophy even more necessary; we recognize more and more that in order to address appropriately an issue like the Third World, different disciplines have to cooperate, and although we still lack a theory of science that thematizes interdisciplinary work, philosophy, understood as the science of the principles of the different sciences, might well develop such a theory. The importance of philosophy is especially obvious if we reflect on the normative presuppositions of the sciences and humanities; normative propositions are in fact neither analytic nor empirical, and therefore only philosophy can hope to deal with them in a rational way. We have already seen above that in the word "Third World" hidden evaluative nuances are present; and even more we need philosophy if we want to answer the explicitly normative question what should be done in the face of the ethical and political problem which the Third World represents. For it is clear that the increasing gap between First and Third World raises some of the most difficult moral questions of the modern world. It not only calls in question the most elementary ideas of justice; together with the ecological crisis[2] and the accumulation of weapons of mass extinction, it threatens the survival of humankind. Almost all traditional questions regarding our moral behavior seem strangely obsolete with regard to these three problems-- for if we don't succeed in solving them, future generations will hardly have any moral problems to worry about. It

[2] The most important book on the subject is in my eyes: H. Jonas, The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age, Chicago 1984. I myself have dealt with the issue in: Philosophie der ökologischen Krise, Munich 1991.

speaks not only against the adaptability of our Western societies that we have not yet succeeded in integrating new norms concerning ecology and the Third World in the system of rules which guide our behavior; it speaks also, at least to a certain degree, against the research system in our universities that we haven't yet addressed our new tasks in a convincing way in our moral reflection.

In the following I shall, first, try to analyze the historical genesis of the Third World problem; for it seems to me that without reflections on the philosophy of history, most moral and political inquiries remain abstract and often fruitless. We must know the theoretical essence of the problems that we address under an ethical point of view; and the essence of cultures cannot be grasped without knowledge of their history. This historical approach in the case of the Third World has the further advantage that already in the sixteenth century an astonishing theoretical level with regard to the relevant normative problems had been achieved: Reading the great texts of Victoria and Las Casas we find arguments that can help us with our actual problems. Second, I shall attempt to discuss the different moral questions our relation to the Third World implies; I'll focus on economic, political, and cultural aspects. However, I shall not be able to give any definitive answers; I shall be content to ask some precise questions.

I.

The situation represented by the opposition between the so-called First and Third World seems, at first glance, nothing new in world history. At least since the formation of high cultures--which did not take place simultaneously all over the world--we can speak of the "asynchrony" of the human world: There are some cultures which are more "developed" than others, and it is this different degree of development which is the main reason for the enormous ethical difficulties involved in relations between them. I want to insist on the fact that this "asynchrony" is an almost necessary trait of human history; at least it is much more probable that different cultures in different regions would develop with different speed, than that they have developed

simultaneously. Asynchrony, therefore, is nothing accidental, but belongs to the human condition.

By using the term "more developed" I do not imply that this development is necessarily good, that it necessarily leads to a higher form of being: This very difficult question can be addressed only later.[3] I mean simply the fact that cultures change, and that there are laws of this change: Certain stages come necessarily after others. The new stage of a culture is characterized by some features which didn't exist earlier and which constitute a step forward in the process of rationalization[4] -- whatever the last evaluation of this process may be.

Although we can speak of rationalization with regard to various cultural subsystems, I think it is useful if we restrict our distinctions here to the basic dichotomy of technical (instrumental) and value rationality. The first rationality aims at finding ways for realizing our ends, whatever their nature may be; it culminates in the incredible power over nature and society that modern science and technology (including social technologies) give to humanity. The second type of rationality tries to find criteria for justifying our ends; and I presuppose here (again without already evaluating this development) that the history of the moral consciousness of humankind is characterized by progress towards universalistic ideals, as they appear first in the monotheistic religions and achieve their philosophical articulation during European Enlightenment. The political realization of these ideals presupposes of course also technical rationality; the difference between the two forms is therefore not absolute. Nevertheless it is extremely useful to distinguish between the two.

The "progress" with regard to technical rationality usually (although not always and never immediately) guarantees to the more developed culture a greater power over less developed ones--either its political structures are better organized, its economy works more efficiently, or new insights into science allow for a better military technology. The

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[3] I agree with Max Weber that social sciences as social sciences have to be value-free (see his essay "Der Sinn der 'Wertfreiheit' der soziologischen und ökonomischen Wissenschaften", In: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre, Tübingen 1973, 489-540). But this does not imply that philosophy cannot rationally argue for values.

[4] On the concept of rationalization see M. Weber, Economy and Society; An Outline of Interpretive Sociology, New York 1968.

progress with regard to value rationality leads to a feeling of moral and often also intellectual superiority which in the eyes of the superior culture legitimizes an asymmetry in its relation to less developed cultures; I recall only the attitude of the Hebrews towards the polytheistic nations surrounding them and the Greek's division of the world into themselves and the barbarians. Technical progress, on the other side, usually does not lead to a comparable feeling. It is, however, not excluded--it is even natural--that a society which is superior only on the technical level tries desperately to view itself as superior also on the moral level in order to legitimize its use of power.

The technically superior culture may or may not use its advantageous position to subject other cultures; it may limit itself to self-defense, or it may try to expand its influence by cultural, economic, and/or military means. The culture that is advanced with regard to value rationality may wish to do the same (but this is not necessary); it is, however, obvious that if its superiority is based only on value rationality, it will not be able to expand. Till the fourth century B.C. the Greeks (who certainly signify a new step in the development of scientific and moral rationality) had neither the ambition nor the possibility of subjecting other nations, but wanted to preserve their independence from the Persians; and if we abstract from the grounding of colonies in areas that were not previously densely settled, an expansion of the Greek culture began only after the Greeks themselves had been subjected by a nation they had always regarded as culturally inferior: the Macedonians. With Alexander the Great, the first European imperialist, the first attempt to impose Occidental culture on (very ancient and complex) non-Occidental nations takes place[5]; it is with his great expedition that the moral and political issues which are linked with the topics of this essay arise for the first time. It is probably not exaggerated to state that the failure of his plan had to do not only with his early death, but also with the fact that the Greeks were emotionally and intellectually not yet prepared to deal with these issues; the resistance against Alexander's attempts to blend Greeks and Orientals and to assume some aspects of the Oriental style were enormous.[6] His expedition, however, promoted

[5] See the classic work of P. Jouguet, Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic World: Macedonian Imperialism and the Hellenization of the East, Chicago 1985.

[6] Still in Vergil's Aeneid the war between Octavianus and Anthony is seen as a clash between the superior Western and the inferior Eastern culture (VIII 671ff.). I remind the reader also of Shakespeare's Anthony and Cleopatra.

also the development of certain intellectual ideas that contributed to a solution of the problems created by the clash of cultures: In Hellenism the ethics of the polis so characteristic of Plato and Aristotle is more replaced by a universalistic moral philosophy; the idea of cosmopolitism arises.

The next great step in the history of European imperialism is represented by the Roman Empire. Remarkable here is the fact that the Romans subjected not only cultures that were less developed with regard to both concepts of rationality; they subjected also the Greeks, whose inferiority in political and military matters was compensated for by a superiority in the arts and in philosophy. The peculiar relations that resulted from these asymmetries would be worthy of an independent study; for my purpose it is sufficient to remember that one of the reasons for the greatness of the Romans consists precisely in the fact that they soon recognized the partial superiority of the Greeks and tried to learn as much as possible from them: In a certain sense there has been a Greek revanche on the Romans.[7] With regard to the less developed cultures subjected by the Romans two aspects are especially relevant: The Romans integrated them quite well into their own political system by granting them different rights, administrating them rather fairly, and respecting their customs; they also strengthened their interest in becoming or remaining members of the Roman Empire by accustoming to the comfortable aspects of the Roman way of life.

On the other hand it is well known that the barbarians finally prevailed on the Romans; since the third century several Roman emperors were natives from less developed cultures, and in the fifth century the Western Roman empire succumbed to the Germans. From the late Roman time till the present the greatest historians, philosophers, and theologians have dealt with the empirical causes and the deeper meaning of this almost unique case in world history, the fall of a great culture caused by nations less developed politically, juridically, artistically.[8]

[7] Remember the famous verse of Horace: "Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artes/ intulit agresti Latio" (Epist. II,1,156.)

[8] See A. Demandt, Der Fall Roms: die Auflösung des römischen Reiches im Urteil der Nachwelt, Munich 1984.

As the central elements of the Greek and the Roman civilization were internalized by the Celts and the Germans, that culture was shaped which forms today the basis of the First World. Certainly the amalgamation of Romans and Germans was rendered easier by the fact that the central legitimacy system of the new culture was a religion which on the one side was more universalistic than any preceding one, and on the other side appealed to the mythical needs of the former barabrians.[9] Despite all the changes from the early Middle Ages till now no singular event destroyed the European culture in a way comparable to the end of the Greek or Roman culture; the structural transformation of European culture is due to internal changes and to its expansion to other parts of the world. Through the latter the fate of Europe has become the fate of the world; and the Third World is the last result of these two factors: the European expansion and the huge progress modern Europe has made with regard to both concepts of rationality.

In a certain sense one can say that something analogous to our actual Third World problem begins with the discovery of America. Since the forteenth century different European nations begin to settle other continents - Africa, the two Americas, Asia, finally Australia. It would be onesided to regard as the main catalyst of this colonization the perennial Malthusian problem; people starved also in the early Middle ages, and nobody thought of leaving Europe. A mentality change was needed in order to leave the pillars of Hercules behind one's back[10]; and it is not exaggerated if one links this change to the destruction of the finite Aristotelean cosmos, which characterizes the transition from the Middle Ages to modernity.[11] The negation of any given boundary is one of the main features of the modern world; and it is difficult for us not to admire the intellectual curiosity, the absolute belief in a theoretical idea, and the strength of will that animated Columbus' enterprise.

[9] I am convinced that also today has an irreplaceable importance as a possible bridge over the gap between First and Third World. The Theology of Liberation is undouptedly one of the most positive developments in Latin America. See G. Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, Maryknoll 1973; E.D. Dussel, Ethics and the Theology of Liberation, Maryknoll 1978.

[10] Compare only Dante's famous description of Ulysses in the Inferno XXVI 90ff.

[11] It is remarkable that even in Os Lusiadas, an epos dedicated to the praise of the discoveries and conquests of the Portuguese, Camoes volces at one point a sharp condemnation of Vasco da Gamas' enterprise (IV 94ff.).

Of course behind the colonization of America there were strong economic interests; the quick development of trade capitalism was certainly promoted by the discovery of gold.[12] Besides the intellectual curiosity and pure greed the wish to convert the natives to Christianity played a role; the missionary impulse followed from the universalist character of Christianity. One grasps an important feature of the relations between the First and the Third World from the fifteenth century to the present, if one recognizes the peculiar mixture of brutal exploitation together with the sincere wish to help the natives, which is characteristic of these relations. In fact Spain's relation to the American colonies in the sixteenth century remains astonishing for both the unspeakable atrocities commited on the natives and the quest to find criteria of justice that could govern behavior towards the Indians.[13] The reader of Bartolomé de las Casas' Brevisima relacion[14] should not lay aside the book without reflecting on the fact that all these crimes could at least be denounced and that a public in Spain was appalled by what was going on thousands of miles away and sincerely struggled for justice. It is certainly not easy to answer the following question: Were the priests who accompanied the conquistadores also responsible, even if they condemned the violence committed, insofar as their presence in a certain sense legitimized the enterprise? It is impossible to deny that by their mere presence they contributed to Christianity appearing as an extremely hypocritical religion, which spoke of universal love and nevertheless was the religion of brutal criminals. Yet it is clear that without the missionaries' presence even more cruelties would have been committed. Hypocrisy at least acknowledges in theory certain norms, and by doing so gives the oppressed the possibility to claim certain rights. Open brutality may be more sincere, but sincerity is not only

[12] See, e.g., J.H. Elliott, The Old World and the New 1492-1650, Cambridge 1970, 54ff.

[13] See L. Hanke's classic work: The Spanish Struggle for Justice in the Conquest of America, Philadelphia 1949. Sources on the relations between Indians and Spaniards--as the Laws of Burgos (1512), the Requirement (1513), the New Laws (1542)--can be found in: History of Latin American Civilization: Sources and Interpretations, ed. by L. Hanke, 2 Vols., Boston 1973, I 87ff. It is significant that Alonso de Ercilla begins the last song of his famous epos La Araucana with reflections on the difference between just and injust wars.

[14] Altough many of the numbers Las Casas communicates are not correct, most of the crimes he describes probably happened. The Leyenda negra was, unfortunately, reality.

value. Sincere brutality generates nothing positive; hypocrisy, on the other side, bears in itself the force which can overcome it.

The discovery of the New World changed the life of the natives in a terrible way: The great mesoamerican and Andean cultures[15] disappeared, millions of persons died - partly intentionally killed, partly through diseases imported by Europeans. Almost as terrible as the wounds inflicted to their bodies was the identity crisis in which the natives fell[16]: They belonged no longer to their old culture and not yet to the European. Asynchrony became the mark not only of the relation between the two different cultures, but also of their own culture, which could no longer organically develop. Intrinsic asynchrony is in fact the most striking characteristic of Third World cultures.[17]

The European mind, too, was transformed by the encounter.[18] The discovery of other cultures and of a new world enlarged the horizon and showed new intellectual possibilities. However, it contributed to the crisis of the European belief in their own culture; and this crisis was only reinforced by the crimes committed by Europeans. Many works of the later literature on colonialism--I recall especially Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness--describe with horror the barbarism into which the Europeans fell; and they all presuppose rightly that the repetition of some cruel rituals of the natives by the Europeans is something morally much more outrageous than the originary deeds of the barbarians. For regression is always worse than lack of development. In this context it is remarkable that already in the 16th century an idealization of the noble savage begins. The nostalgia for the archaic mind and the disgust with the barbarism of reflection go hand in hand, and only when in the last two centuries subjectivity lost all contact to an objective value order did this idealization become dominant.

[15] See on these cultures: The Inca and Aztec States 1400-1800. Anthropology and History, ed. by G.A. Collier, R.I. Rosaldo, J.D. Wirth, New York 1982.

[16] Compare: N. Wachtel, The Vision of the Vanquished. The Spanish Conquest of Peru through Indian Eyes 1530-1570, Hassocks 1977.

[17] In G. Giacosa's and L. Illica's libretto for Puccini's Madame Butterfly the terrible situation resulting from no longer belonging to the old and not yet belonging to the new culture is eloquently described.

[18] This is very well shown in T. Todorov, The Conquest of America. The Question of the Other, New York 1984. The book is extremely important because it finds a logic in the history of the European approach to the New World. I owe much to it.

Out of the clash between Europeans and native Americans already in the sixteenth century two important disciplines developed: international law and anthropology. Vitorias Relection de iure belli, the first attempt to find legal criteria for just wars, was, as he says in the preface, motivated by the conquest of America;[19] and whoever studies his Relectio de Indis remains astonished by the level of argumentation of the book. Vitoria dispenses with attempted justifications of the conquest that make no legal and moral sense and recognizes those legal titles which still today are accepted as just. It is especially remarkable that the dominican friar disapproves of the idea that the rejection of the Christian faith may legitimize a just war against the Indians (II 4); he believes, however, that a refusal to listen to Christian missionaries could justify a war (III 2). But again and again he repeats that the legal situation between Spanish and Indians must be symmetric; to any right valid for the Spanish there must correspond a right valid for the Indians II 3). We see here the central universalistic ideas of Christian natural law applied to international and intercultural relations; and in fact the further development of the philosophy of right in the age of Enlightenment continues these argumentative lines, the last result of which is Kant's universalistic ethics and the modern constitutional state. 'All men are rational beings' and 'The Indians are no slaves by nature' will be two of the most significative statements of Las Casas in his dispute with Ginesius de Sepulveda, who used Aristotle's doctrine of natural slavery in order to legitimize Spanish behavior against the Indians.[20]

But the application of universalist ideas to foreign cultures is not the only great discovery of the 16th century. The second important discovery is, as I have already said, anthropology. While the non-Christian cultures known to medieval Europe were based on the two other monotheistic religions and shared therefore many standards of rationality with the Christians, the most disconcerting fact about the Indians was their otherness. It is of extreme importance to realize that urging the difference of the Indians in the context of the 16th century was a topos of the conservatives; for if the Indians were not like the

[19] Vitoria's lectures are accessible in French translation with an excellent introduction in the following edition: F. de Vitoria, Leçons sur les Indiens et sur le droit de guerre. Introduction, traduction et notes par M. Barbier, Genève 1966.

[20] See on this famous dispute L. Hanke, All Mankind is One. A Study of the Disputation Between Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Gines de Sepulveda in 1550 on the Intellectual and Religious Capacity of the American Indians, De Kalb 1974

Europeans, why should they be granted the same rights? The anthropological interest in differences between cultures seemed to contradict the universalist pathos of a fundamental identity of all human beings with regard to basic rights. It is this tension between the unbiased decription of otherness and the normative idea of equality that constitutes till today the main problem in any theory of just relations between different cultures; and I believe that we are still far from a satisfying theory.

However, the situation is not simply such, that the interest in otherness is necessarily linked with a disregard of the rights of the other culture. Let me recall one problem with which the Spanish were deeply engaged--I have in mind, of course, the human sacrifices. There can be little doubt that the Spanish conquistadores (certainly persons accustomed to bloodsheds) were sincerely shocked by the sacrifices;[21] they often legitimized their brutality with this institution. Here in a curious way universalist ideas--which include the respect of innocent human life--were used as a pretext to act against the Indians in a way incompatible with these ideas. Even Vitoria accepts as a legitimate title of conquest the concern for the innocent lives which otherwise would be sacrificed (also in the case that the victims agree with their being sacrificed: III 5). (Las Casas, however, insists that this title would become invalid, if it led to a war in which more people were killed than would actually be saved from sacrifices.[22] Now it is difficult to deny the plausibility of Vitoria's argument. If one accepts, on the basis of a universalist ethics, the fundamental rights of the Indians, one can hardly deny these rights to their victims; and so universalist ideas which alone seemed to protect the Indians seem also to legitimize, at least as ultima ratio, the violent interferences with their culture.

It is in this context that Las Casas tries for the first time in world history to develop an immanent historical understanding of a less developed culture. First, he reminds his contemporaries that also the European nations in their past had committed sacrifices--Abraham had been willing to kill his own son. Second, he sees a deep moral sense in human sacrifices: The Indians want to sacrifice to God the most

[21] See B. Diaz del Castillo, Historia verdadera de la conquista de la nueva España, edición de R. Leon-Portilla, 2 vols., Madrid 1984, I 334ff. (Ch. XCII).

[22] B. de Las Casas, In Defence of the Indiens, translated, edited and annotated by S. Poole, De Kalb 1974, 204ff. (Ch. 31).

precious thing they know, and that is human life. What seemed to be a sign of the greatest disrespect of human life results in truth from the highest possible elevation.[23] Of course Las Casas is convinced that in the long run human sacrifices have to be abolished; but the evaluation of this custom in the context of its culture enables him to see it as less repellent that it seemed to all his contemporaries.[24]

It seems to me that one of the reasons for Las Casas' theoretical (and not only political) greatness is that in his approach to the Indian culture anthropologic-ethnographic interests are linked to a universalist pathos with regard to fundamental human rights. Few persons after him have been able to combine both approaches: Kant and Mill on the one side developed two different variants of universalistic ethics; but none of them deals with the fact that universalistic ethics is itself the result of a long historic process. Kant does believe that the categorial imperative is timeless not only with regard to its validity, but also with regard to its recognition by humans; therefore cannot even ask the question (let alone answer it) how we ought to act towards cultures to which universalist principles are still alien. The main ethical problem of Kant's ethics is that it presupposes symmetrie: Non-humans therefore can be its subjects just as little as cultures with a mentality that is not yet compatible with universalist ideals. His universalism, which ignores the history of moral consciousness, indeed cannot be the basis of an appropriate normative theory of intercultural relations.

On the other side, the increasing concern to otherness and Kerence in modern anthropology seems to undermine the possibility of normative propositions and even of theoretical understanding. There must be some common element in order to approach another culture. If there were no identity, I could not even point out differences, but would have to be silent with regard to the other culture; it would not be possible to say that the modern analysis of the archaic rationality

[23] Ibidem, 221ff., esp. 234 (Ch. 34ff.). Todorov rightly sees in this attitude of Las Casas a new step in the recognition of otherness (op.cit., 186ff.).

[24] In some respects Las Casas' approach recalls Max Scheler's theory that no culture ever justified murder--the killing of slaves, e.g., was not regarded as murder, because slaves were not regarded as persons. What seems a deviation with regard to basic moral principles, is in his view an error of subsumption. See: Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values, translated by M.S. Frings and R.L. Funk, Evanston 1973, 309ff.

signifies a progress with regard to the ahistoric view of Enlightenment.[25] Even more dangerous is our postmodernists' confusion of genesis and validity. If from the fact that the idea of human rights is a product of history it followed that it had no intercultural validity, then certainly any attempt of finding criteria of justice in the relations between First and Third World would be futile: for the idea of justice would not apply to intercultural relations.

It seems therefore obvious to me that only universalist insights based on the tradition of natural right combined with a historicist consciousness can help us address our problem. The first European Thinker who elaborated a normative philosophy of human culture that accomplished both was Vico;[26] and in the last decades it is especially the work of Kohlberg on the ontogenesis of moral consciousness that has given us a solid basis for the realization of this program. The application of Kohlberg's studies to the reconstruction of the phylogenesis of moral consciousness by Apel and Habermas is in my eyes the most promising approach to the problem of intercultural relations. As is well known, Kohlberg, Apel, and Habermas distinguish six different steps of moral consciousness, the last of which is characterized by universalistic ideals.[27] I do believe, however, that a seventh step has to be added[28]: a step in which the universalist mind recognizes that its position is the highest, but also the last, and that therefore it has to live with cultures which have not yet achieved it. Even

[25] Wittgenstein's theory of language games has been applied by P. Winch to the Theory of cultures: The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy, London/New York 1958. For a criticism of this approach see my essay: "Eine unsittliche Sittlichkeit. Hegels Kritik an der indischen Kultur", in: Moralität und Sittlichkeit, ed. by W. Kuhlmann, Frankfurt 1986, 136-182.

[26] On Vico and his actuality see my introductory essay "Vico und die Idee der Kulturwissenschaft" in G. Vico, Prinzipien einer neuen Wissenschaft über die gemeinsame Natur der Völker, translated by V. Hösle and Ch. Jermann, Hamburg 1990, 2 vols.

[27] L. Kohlberg, Moral Stages. A Current Formulation and a Response to Critics, Basel 1983; J. Habermas, Moralbewußtsein und kommunikatives Handeln, Frankfurt 1983; K.-O. Apel, Diskurs und Verantwortung, Frankfurt 1988.

[28] In truth Kohlberg, Habermas, and Apel have discussed whether there is a seventh step; but they have something very different in mind then I. See Apel's essay "Die transzendentalpragmatische Begründung der Kommunikationsethik und das Problem der höchsten Stufe einer Entwicklungslogik des moralischen Bewußtseins", op.cit., 306-369.

the greatest enlighteners did not overcome the sixth stage: This seems to me the most serious limit of the modern bourgeois consciousness.

What we have stated till now is necessary, but not yet sufficient in order to understand the essence of the Third World. The conquest of America was only the first step in the genesis of the Third World. A qualitative leap in the relations between European and non-European cultures happened with the Industrial Revolution; and the differences between the colonization of America in the sixteenth and of inner Africa at the end of the nineteenth century are due mainly to the profound change that in the meantime had taken place in the technology and in the soul of Europe. The last step has been decolonisation.[29]

The main changes occuring in Europe after the discovery of America were constituted by a new push in the process of rationalization which led to a new idea of science, very different from that of the Greeks, and which allied itself with a technological program and a new form of economy, capitalism.[30] The unity of the medieval culture split; different cultural subsystems such as love, economics, politics, the military, art, and religion became autonomous;[31] technical rationality developed to an extent never before seen in human history. The Industrial Revolution gave to cultures of European background a lead with which it has been very, very different to catch up; their superior power has been consolidated for centuries; the asynchrony of the world has been sharpened in a way unique in world history. This is all the more valid when one considers that the triumph of modern technology is rooted in a radical change of mentality and that it has probably changed the human soul as no other event since the Neolithicum. This, by the way, easily explains the difficulties of technology transfer: Cultures that did not undergo this mentality change are very likely to fail if they adopt Western technologies. (The main exception to this rule, Japan, is extremely hard to understand.)

[29] On the "Three phases of dependence" see S.C. Toton, World Hunger. The Responsibility of Christian Education, Maryknoll 1982, 21ff (with reference to Th. Dos Santos). On colonialism and decolonialization see, e.g., St.C. Easton, The Rise and Fall of Western Colonialism, New York/London 1964 and R.F. Holland, European Decolonization 1918-1981: An Intorductory Survey, Houndsmills 1985.

[30] See A. Gehlen, Die Seele im technischen Zeitalter, Hamburg 1957.

[31] Compare H. Broch, Die Schlafwandler, Zürich 1952, 525ff: Zerfall der Werte (6) (=Huguenau 44).

Simultaneously with the development of the new scientific program important progress has been made with regard to universalistic ideals; based on the other great discovery of modernity, the sovereign subjectivity, political systems were created that guaranteed the individual's right to selfdetermination in a degree unique in world history. The essence of the United States of America is that it could develop these two ideas of modernity in a much purer way than the Europeans; being situated in a new continent, it could at least partially abstract from all foregoing history. The autonomy of technology led to an increasing gap between technical and value rationality, a gap extremely dangerous for the intellectual and moral stability of Europe. The process of rationalization has become more and more empty; the capacity of emotional identification with a community--a necessary condition for happiness--has quickly decreased; and the centrifugal forces of extreme individualism increasingly threaten the belief of traditional rationalism in the world as a structured order. Since sacrifice and renouncement no longer seem necessary to most of us, the will to sacrifice oneself, or at least to renounce, disappears.

The link between the new political system and the new technology is given by capitalism. No other economic system has had the dynamics to produce as many commodities and guarantee as much individual self-determination; promoted by the evolution of science and technology, it strongly accelerated their development.The negative consequences of capitalism, however, are no less striking than its advantages: at least temporary accentuation of the polarisations between poor and rich, a shift in the value system of the individual, and a desperate need of cheap resources in order to satisfy the needs that it generates. The demographic explosion which the world has witnessed since the last century began in the industrialized countries (where alone it had become possible). The increased number of citizens as well as ideas of equal distribution which led to increased needs inevitably caused two of our main contemporary problems: the ecological crisis and the Third World. Colonies were needed partly in order to get resources, partly in order to find new markets: One need not be a Marxist in order to recognize the economic rationale behind the colonial policy of the imperial age. The imperialism of the late 19th and the early 20th century was based on nationalist ideas: a plurality of completely sovereign states competed for economic and political power. The antiuniversalist character of nationalism is clearly in conflict with the main

tendency of modern development; one of its results was the two World Wars.[32]

It is of extreme importance to see that modern colonialism was, despite its antiuniversalist character, an almost necessary outcome of modern individualism. The Western ideas of freedom and social justice led paradoxically to the subjection of the industrialized states, many resources of the Third World were and are desperately needed. Superfluous, and even counterproductive, was, however, the struggle between the industrialized powers; and after World War II a new political order was created which for the first time in modern history united almost all capitalist industrial countries in one political and military structure. Till 1989, however, the Western countries were opposed by the Scocialist countries. Their ideology negated the ideas at the basis of modern capitalism, however, it accepted the modern "industrialist" option for a technological society.

The development of the Third World after World War II is characterized by three tendencies. The most important was, of course, decolonization, which with regard to the oldest, the American colonies, had begun already in the late eighteenth century. The European idea of nationalism, which had entered the minds of elites of the Third World, became one of the main causes of the strive for independence. There is clearly something paradoxical in this fact: The very idea that had proved to be Europe's most dangerous contribution to world politics was used to ground the colonies' claims for freedom. The reader of F. Fanons famous book Les damnnés de la terre can't help feeling that all the categories he uses to question the political and cultural dominion of Europeans on the colonies are typical results of Western intellectual history, especially the idea of nation.[33] Africa had known tribes and perhaps a panafrican solidarity, but certainly not nations in the European sense.[34]

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[32] On imperialism see the still important book of J.A. Hobson: Imperialism: A Study, New York 1902.

[33] F. Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, with a preface by J.-P. Sartre, New York 1968, Cp., e.g., p. 50.

[34] See R. Bjornson, The African Quest for Freedom and Identity: Cameroonian Writing and the National Experience, Bloomington/Indianapolis 1991, 3.

Second, the rash decolonisation did not end the dependence. It was merely transformed from a constitutional into an economic. On the one hand, this is to be welcomed--brutal military interventions from the side of the colonial powers have become rarer. On the other hand, economic dependence, although no longer as manifest as before, partly worsened the situation. Multinational corporations are more anonymous and therefore more difficult to control than governments. The formal sovereignty of the new states weakened the sense of responsibility of the former colonial powers; in several states it rendered help in cases of emergency more difficult. The new elites were and are often extraordinary corrupt; they usually identify with the Western way of life and in order to share it they have to get money wherever they can. The intrinsic asynchrony of the Third World countries is the main reason for corruption--the fact that they often have not even internalized a law and order morality, but are confronted with the temptations of modern wealth. Insurgence, as understandable as it may be, rarely eases the situation (at least if it is not immediately successful); and the instrumentalization of the Third World during the Cold War when the conflicts between the two superpowers were fought by the poorest countries hardly contributed to an improvement of the situation.[35]

The third aspect of the post war Third World is the widespread belief that it is merely a question of time before the developing countries will reach the level of the First--or at least the Second--World. Universalist ideals as well as the faith, reinforced by technology, that in principle all can be achieved have led to this belief. Furthermore, the disparities between First and Third World in this way become bearable; as telos of the world a state was imagined in which in principle all people could live a life comparable to that of the First World. Now this hope has not been fulfilled, and we know today that it will not be fulfilled, because it cannot be fulfilled. The Western way of life is not universalizable--if all inhabitants of this planet consumed as much energy as average European and Northern American, numerous ecosystems on our earth would have already collapsed.[36] But even if a universalization were

[35] Despite his sympathy for violence, even Fanon rejects the Cold War. "Those engeneers who are transformed into technicians of nuclear war, could in the space of fifty years raise the standard of living of underdeveloped countries by 60 per cent. So we see that the true interest of underdeveloped countries do not lie in the protaction nor in the accentuation of this cold war." (op.cit., 82)

[36] Cp. E.-U. von Weizsäcker, Erdpolitik. Ökologische Realpolitik an der Schwelle zum Jahrhundert der Umwelt, Darmstadt 1989.

possible--is the intrinsic value of the First World indeed so high that we could wish ist becoming universal? It is with this prehistory and these doubts in mind that we now must address the ethical questions concerning the relations between First and Third World.

II.

After having described the main course of the events and the logic behind them, let us try to evaluate them and to find moral criteria for the relations between the First and the Third World. I want to begin with the statement that the First World has a responsibility to improve as much as possible the situation in the Third World. Three reasons speak for such a responsibility. First, it is in the rational self-interest of the West to prevent at least a further polarisation of both worlds. It is extremely improbable that a world can be peaceful in which less than 10% of the population disposes of more than 3/4 of the wealth of the world; people who have nothing to lose can hardly expected to renounce the use of violence, if this is the only way to satisfy their basic needs. Especially in connection with the likely ecological catastrophes of the next century migrations are very probable, for which we are prepared neither morally nor politically. In general it is one of the main errors of modern civilization to want to repair rather than prevent; our medicine in differnce from that of the ancients insists much more on therapy than prevention. Analogously, national security is regarded more in terms of winning a war than in preventing it; especially after the probable end of the Cold War it is obvious that the North-South-Conflict is the most dangerous conflict now on the globe. The right to self-defense cannot be denied; it is, however, clear that the use of this right becomes questionable or is at least not free of guilt if not all has been done in advance to avoid a situation in which self-defense becomes necessary.

The second reason has to do with the prehistory of the Third World. Since the First World has intervened in these cultures, has destroyed their natural development, has forced unto them an intrinsic asynchrony and deprived them of their anterior organic unity, it has a responsibility for their actual situation, comparable to the civil responsibility of a person who has caused damage. By having taken

away their resources and a lot of their labor force, it has contributed to its own wealth and their poverty; it is therefore only just that it give back a part of what it has taken. Of course there are a number of objections to this argument: For example, prescription is rightly regarded as an important principle of law, and it is not at all clear to whom the money should be returned. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the core of the argument is valid at least on the moral, if not on the political level, and that it should enter our consciences deeper than it has until now. This is the more the case, as the exploitation of the resources and of the labor force of the Third World continues.

It is, however, clear that it does not make sense for the Third World countries to fall into self-pity and to complain about the crimes of the colonial powers--self-pity is the greatest obstacle against mastering the future. What has happened, has happened; and maturity consists in making the best of it. And in fact it cannot be denied that the forced introduction of certain standards of Western rationality has given the developing countries also the chance to overcome earlier calamities and injustices. The general problem whether one should sharpen peoples' awareness for injustices applies also here: On the one side, only in this way can injustices be overcome; on the other side, resentment with regard to the past is one of the most useless things of the world. A change of consciousness is the first condition for overcoming oppression;[37] lack of realism and hatred are rarely helpful.[38]

While the first two arguments have primarily to do with the moral responsibility of states and cultures, the third argument applies to the individual; it does not presuppose any personal or collective guilt. It was stated, as far as I know, for the first time by A. Schweitzer who describes how as a boy he once suddenly realized how lucky he had been to be raised in a good family. He felt that he had to give away something for this luck; and it was this feeling that finally led to his life decision.[39] Schweitzer does not attempt to argue for this principle; this has been done by other philosophers on the basis of the existentialist concept of

[37] See the works of P. Freire, e.g.: Education for Critical Consciousness, New York 1973.

[38] This has to be said against the grotesque ideas of world revolution circulating in the late sixties. See, e.g., Sartre's preface to Fanon's book, which is full of errors both on the descriptive and the normative level.

[39] A. Schweitzer, Aus meinem Leben und Denken, Leipzig 1932, 70.

freedom. According to them an essential property of a person is one which is acquired by oneself, and innate properties can become freely acquired only if we act order to deserve them. Only by expressing solidarity with the less fortunate, do we truly deserve our luck and become genuinely free.[40]

But why should we practice solidarity with the poorest? Our everyday morality is strongly determined by an idea which goes back to the Stoic doctrine of oikeiosis and finds its expression also in the precept of the Gospel: Love thy neighbor. According to this idea our moral duties diminish in direct proportion to the physical distance of possible subjects of these duties. Now, on the one hand, it is obvious that it would be absurd to feed a person thousands of miles away while my brother is starving. On the other hand, the rule should be supplemented by taking into consideration the intensity of the need. It seems to me more moral if, e.g., family members ask each other to send money to intelligent Third World organisations instead of bying each other Christmas presents that do not fulfill any genuine needs. I know, of course, that--although this principle makes full sense before reason--it is extremely difficult to render it workable on the motivational level. In the past no culture has regarded it as its duty to help cultures far away that were suffering from starvation. The fact, however, that through the modern media we have direct knowledge of what is going on far away changes the situation; and also the awareness that in principle through modern technology hunger could be overcome increases our guilt in cases of omission.

It is, however, clear that the help of private persons--as important as it is--can never be sufficient to solve the problem; and unfortunately, it cannot be denied that many wellintentioned projects have increased the desperate situation in the Third World.[41] Incisive changes on the economic, the political, and the cultural level are necessary.

[40] H. Spiegelberg, "Good Fortune Obligates: Albert Schweitzer's Second Ethical Principle", in: Steppingstones Toward an Ethics for Fellow Existers. Essays 1944-1983, Dordrecht/Boston/Lancaster 1986, 219-229; O. Wiggins, "Herbert Spiegelberg's Ethics: Accident and Obligation", in: Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology 21/1 (1990), 39-47.

[41] On the causes of world hunger see S. George, How the Other Half Dies. The real Reasons for World Hunger, Montclair 1977; S.C. Toton, op.cit.; F.M. Lappé/J. Collins, World Hunger. Twelve Myths, New York 1986.

To begin with the economic relations between the First and the Third World, an appropriate moral evaluation is extremely difficult. On the one hand, we have the later neoclassic theory that every price which results from a free contract is per definition the right price; the prices which we pay today for products from the Third World are then per definition just. But this theory--the pendant of legal positivism--is clearly unacceptable: It solves the normative problem only by eliminating it. On the other hand, we have the Marxist doctrine of exploitation, and this is equally unacceptable, not only because its aim--the introduction of a planned economy--would increase exploitation, but also because the doctrine presupposes a value theory which simply does not make sense anymore, although it was also the doctrine of Smith and Ricardo. What we would need in order to criticize in a profound way the economic relations between First and Third World is an appropriate value theory; and our culture does not dispose of such a theory. Good criticism of capitalism is certainly important, but unfortunately not easy--Marxism, in any case, cannot be its basis.

Nevertheless, let me name four objections which are already now possible against the actual world economic system. In the last decades economists have argued that the overly low prices of natural resources are one of the main reasons for the destruction of our environment.[42] I am convinced that the argument is correct and that the costs, e.g., of reforesting should enter the price of wood or the costs of planting new trees (which could limit the greenhouse effect) should enter the price of gasoline. Now it is clear that higher prices would improve the economies of those countries which dispose of important resources; it would, however, worsen the economy of those countries without such resources. One can question the justice of a world in which economic power would depend even more than today on the contingencies of the distribution of important resources; but certainly limits to the pillage of the earth would be in the long-term interest of the countries that live from exporting their scarce resources.

The moral superiority of capitalism over feudalism is based on the idea that every agent is, at least at the beginning, equal and free. It is, nevertheless, obvious that not only merit determines one's power in the economic game; also luck and heritage contribute to one's chances.

[42] See, e.g., H. Bonus, Marktwirtschaftliche Konzepte im Umweltschutz, Stuttgart 1984.

Within the same country's economy, however, there are some redistribution mechanisms (such as taxes) which, although always only partly, correct inequality that have become too gross. These mechanisms exist only within the developed countries; they do not apply to most Third World countries and they do not apply international economic relations. Therefore the gap between poor and rich countries is very likely to deepen, if nothing is done against it.[43] For the institute of free contract, as important as it is, leads to just prices only if both sides have comparable contractual power; and it is obvious that the contractual power of a person (or a country) that desperately needs food is far inferior to that of a rich person, for the poor cannot hide his or her preference order. The poorer one is, the more one has to work in order to satisfy one's basic needs--hardly a just principle. I abstract completely from the fact that in most Third World countries there are no possibilities of organizing laborers in a way comparable to ours. This contributes to the low price of the laborforce of which not only the elites of the Third World, but also the First World takes advantage.

The third objection against the justice of the actual situation results from Weber's pioneering work on the intellectual presuppositions of capitalism.[44] Where these mentality changes did not take place, capitalism hardly can lead to universal wealth--this seems to be the logical consequence of Weber's analysis. Of course, it is easy to blame the Third World for its lack of the classical secondary virtues of capitalism, self-discipline, parsimony, etc.; but it is naive and ahistoric to assume that the homo oeconomicus always existed. The apparent justice of treating every human being as having the same economic rationality is in truth the greatest injustice.[45] Certainly it is necessary that in the long run the Thirs World internalize at least the essentials of capitalist work ethics (this, by the way, seems easier in Asian than in African cultures); but as long as this is not yet the case, a credit policy as that of the last twenty years is highly immoral.[46] The corruption of the elites was well-known (and welcome, because corruptibility is always to

[43] On Third World economy a classical work still is: G. Myrdal, Asien Drama. An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations. An Abridgment by S.S. King, New York 1972.

[44] M. Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, New York 1976.

[45] In this famous film "Taboo" Murnau shows in a very expressive way how the introduction of money destroys an archaic society.

[46] See Ch. Payer, The Debt Trap: the IMF and the Third World, New York 1974.

the advantage of the richer); and for any person who had even the most modest knowledge of the cultural presuppositions of technology it was obvious that all the giant projects for which the credits were granted were doomed to fail, leaving only depts. The social and political importance of the actual dept problem recalls ancient history, with the important distinction, however, that the creditors and the deptors now belong not to different classes, but to different countries; and a just solution of the problem in my eyes cannot consist in insisting on the formal principle that depts have to be paid back completely. "Dept for nature" is a good alternative.

The fourth and last argument against the actual situation is that many of the needs that have developed in Third World countries in the last decades have been inculcated by the First World, although their introduction could have only fatal consequences for the Third World. One example is the advertising of wheat bread in Africa, which undercut the local production of millet, soghum, and cassava, although only few African countries can grow wheat economically[47]; thus the dependency on the First World increased. Of course one could argue that the consumer remains sovereign in his or her decision; but it is quite obvious that the average citizen of the Third World can foresee the probable consequences of the change of his taste much less than Western companies with a far easier access to information. Who knows more, also has more duties--this principle applies here as well. It is not only the fault of the Third World that food production is neglected in favour of export articles with which the elites of the Third World can finance their luxury. Their partner in the First World--and of course also the consumers who finance them--take part in their guilt, for they must know that by their demand they are destroying the basis of every economy, namely agriculture, in the Third World countries.

It is impossible to speak about Third World economy without addressing the demographic issue. Although it is certainly not true that we are already too many to be fed and although it is clear that world hunger is a result of distribution and not of production, two things must be stated. First, there are limits to production (as well as to the human burden on the environment), and even in a world with ideal distribution

[47] See Lappé/Collins, op.cit., 13.

and only with vegetarians[48] the Malthusian problem would arise very soon, if there were no checks to the birthrate.[49] Second, it is naive to assume ideal distribution: Given human nature and the distribution mechanisms that exist now, it is unrealistic to want to overcome hunger without checking the birthrate. Nevertheless, it is clear that already on the theoretical level this problem is much more complex than others. A financial penalization of a family with more than two or three children through tax policy would hit the children who are clearly not responsible for their having been born; and an invitation to sterilisation of every man or woman after having given life to two or three children would in most Third World countries clearly be regarded as the violation of a sacred right. In fact we must not forget that even if we rightly reject the idea (which cannot be universalized that there is a natural right to have as many children as one wants, two problems still remain. First, it is not necessarily just to say that every couple has the right to have two children; for not only individuals, also cultures have rights. When we are shocked by the birthrate in Africa, we should not forget that the First World also had a comparable growth, and that it is Europe, not Africa, which is already extremely densely populated. If all cultures were treated equally, those which already sinned against demographic self-constraint would have a tremendous advantage. Second, the limit number of world population depends on our needs. We can be much more, if we consume less; and there is certainly something deeply moral in the decision to live a modest life but to have a large family. I can't help communicating an impression I often had in Third World countries: that poor families with many children frequently seem to know a happiness alien to wealthy one-child-families of the First World. Nevertheless, I am convinced that without a rationalization of our demographic behavior, justice and peace cannot be achieved; the effect of any social redistribution of chances, e.g. of a land reform in Third World countries, would be annihilated in a few generations, if the demographic growth would continue without checks. In this context the emancipation of women in Third World countries is of the utmost importance. Not less

[48] Besides possible animal rights the actual food situation on the planet is a strong moral argument for vegetarianism.

[49] Th.R. Malthus' famous Essay on the Principle of Population (together with a Summary View of the Principle of Population accessible as Penguin classic: Harmondsworth 1970) is not only important as the first detailed analysis of the demographic problem. It is also remarkable because of its criticism of naive Enlightenment ideas of progress.

relevant is greater social juctice; for children are the only riches of the poor. There is here, however, a clear vicious circle; for the rationalization of the demographic behavior depends on the introduction of social justice, and this is hardly possible without checks to the demographic growth.

All the arguments against the alleged justice of the actual world economic order unfortenately do not yet show us what ought to be done. One can agree that too much money and too many commodities flow from the Third Worls into the First World and too little in the opposite direction, but this does not yet solve the central problem: to whom should the money be given? That a lot of the development aid made the rich of the Third World countries only richer and more corrupt is unfortunately undeniable; and it is certainly not moral to give money only in order to calm one's bad conscience.

With regard to the question to whom the help should be directed I see two morally relevant criteria: First, the persons who are most needy should get it. Second, the persons who are likely multiplicators of help are plausible candidates; for the last aim of help must be to render help superfluous; it must not foster inertia. The two groups usually do not coincide; helpless children in slums, responsible government officials form the two extremes. In the middle I would see cooperatives on the local level. In the case of corrupt governments intergovernmental help must not be continued, and The First World should not shrink back from condemning what ought to be condemned--which, of course, is far easier, if it has not promoted corruption for a long time. It seems to me that paternalism is the lesser evil than indifference; the country that helps has the right to link its help to conditions, if and only if these conditions are in the self-interest of the developing country. Not only is there no right to corruption; also the right to err ends where the welfare of millions depends on my not erring.

With the regard to the inner political structures of the countries of the Third World it seems in my eyes justified if the First World promotes stable and efficient democracies. It must, however, not be forgotten that democracy, in order to work, presupposes a mentality based on respect for law and order; where this is not the case it easily becomes unfunctional. Although there are apriori arguments for the superiority of democracy, this does not imply that for every culture on every level of its development democracy is the best political system. A good state

guarantees also safety and fundamental economic rights; and it is unfortunately not a priori excluded that these rights for a certain time are better taken care of by non-democratic governments: In China less people starve than in India, and it would be deeply immoral to regard freedom of speech as the only relevant criterion when we judge governments of Third World countries. Europe for centuries was ruled by monarchs, and according to Tocqueville's famous thesis only enlightened absolutism could destroy feudalism end thus prepare democracy.[50] An autocratic system that overcomes certain social injusticies may be better than a democracy in which the government is clearly corrupt and both elites and masses lack the public virtues necessary for a democracy. It is true, however, that in the actual world, especially after the crisis of communism, democracies are more and more regarded as the only legitimate political systems. An opportunity resulting from the end of the Cold War is that an international concensus of the most powerful countries on the moral evaluation of the Third World governments could be achieved, since the evaluation hopefully will no longer be biased by strategic fears with regard to the East-West-equilibrium. Even internationally sanctioned interventions in order to get rid of the most disgusting governments of the world are in my eyes legitimate, if they are motivated by the interests of the majority of the Third World country.

To speak shortly about international politics, it is indeed obvious that we need a new world order. A plurality of sovereign centers (which in order to become really sovereign must necessarily strive to get mass extinction weapons) is not compatible with a lasting peace, and both the interdependence of world economy and the ecological challenge asks more and more for decisions on the global level. Whoever has understood the link between wars and famines must hope that Third World countries are prevented from waging wars against each other. Even a pax Americana-Sovietica is better than international anarchy. The first condition of such a peace is of course stopping the export of weapons into Third World countries; only afterwords is a moral right to intervention gained by the First World. Imperialism is an ugly word, but indifference towards the global problems of the world is even worse; and if certain problems cannot be solved on the national level, the foundation

50 A. de Tocqueville, The Old Regime and the French Revolution, Garden City 1955.

of international structures that are able to address them is a right and even a duty for all responsible states. The end of the cold war--especially if the Soviet Union does not fall apart--gives indeed the chance to a new international order from which the whole world could profit. But how will this order be structured? Will it replace the confrontation between capitalist and socialist countries by a confrontation between haves and have-nots? Will the iron curtain between East and West be replaced by a golden curtain between North and South? Or will the new world order address the real problems of the modern world and try to overcome mass poverty in the Third World and the threat in our common environment? As long as we don't know this, the judgment about the justice or the present war must hang in the balance--this war, the first war between First and Third World without any flavor of the great conflict between capitalism and socialism that dominated the past decades.

But of course the main problem in the relation between First and Third World is neither the economic nor the political one--it is cultural. Does the First World have the right to plan a new world order, even if it considers the interests of the Third World much more than it did in the past? Is it really legitimate to wish for a world society built according to Occidental values? I think the right answer to this question must avoid two extremes. The one extreme is that of cultural relativism. As progressive as it may sound, the last result of it is the denial that there can be binding moral norms in intercultural relations; and this is not much better than power positivism. Also the idea that we should respect every culture as it is--even if its value system includes the most blatant violation of human rights--is not only impracticable; it is also theoretically inconsistent. For it presupposes self-determination as the highest value, and this is one of the most Occidental values. Cultural relativism as ideology might well be the last consequence of the cultural imperialism of the West.

On the other side, it is clear that we have to look with great suspicion towards our own culture. It is the Occidental culture that has brought mankind to the verge of ecological disaster; and it is our way of life which is not universalizable and therefore immoral. One understands a lot, when one sees, e.g., that Third World curruption, one of the most repellent features of these cultures and one of the deepest causes for mass poverty, results from the desperate wish of the Third World elites

to imitate us. The First World has the right to be disgusted by corruption, but only if it recognizes--like in a distorting mirror--the caricature of itself. If the West does not change its value system, if it does not build up an economy which is both more just on the social level and compatible with the preservation of the environment, it forfeits the right to teach other cultures what to do. The universalist ideas of morality are a substantial progress of which we rightly may be proud; the increasing autonomy and acceleration of technology will be self-destructive if it is not controlled by moral principles. This applies to us and, even more, it applies to cultures which do not yet have the mentality to use technology.

The expansion of Western culture ought to be concerned primarily with the extention of universalist morality; instead, technology is dominant, generating absurd needs beyond any human measure. But even on the strictly moral level let us try to understand different moralities, before we condemn them. Of course the infanticide practised by many archaic cultures was not the right way to solve the demographic problem; but the rationale behind it was the insight that birth and death rates must be in a certain proportion if the ecosystem is to survive. This insight, like many insights contained in other cultures' myths, must not be lost. I am far from believing that myth and science have the same claim to truth, but I am convinced that myth has a holistic approach to reality, which has some advantages compared with the sectorial, analytic way of thinking peculiar to science. Myth does not yet distinguish between causal and eidetic order, but an age that is interested only in causal analyses can be reminded by myth that values must also be addressed. Myth recognizes that humans are a part of the cosmos--an insight almost forgotten by modern subjectivism. Mass poverty must be overcome--but let us recognize with admiration the virtues to which it has educated many of the people in the Third World. The encounter with their vitality and solidarity often gives us the strength to endure the narcissism of many inhabitants of the First World.

If cultural diversity does not conflict with the idea of right or with the common interest of humans to survive together on this planet, it should be recognized as a value and protected as well as, and even more than, biodiversity. Cultures are reservoirs of forms of expressions as well as of symbolic representations, and since there is not one way of representing and expressing truth, every attempt to do so deserves to be preserved. The pride in one's own culture can become dangerous if

it prevents the members of this culture from recognizing the values of other cultures, and I am not blind to the dangers of the politically most powerful anti-Western program, Islamic fundamentalism. On the other hand: If the destructive consumerist ideology of the West should not be imitated, going back to one's own roots may be one of the most succesful ways of overcoming such dependence. Elites that fight for the legitimate interests of their country are better than those who want only to share the luxury of the West. We should never forget that Islamic culture in the Middle Ages achieved a level of universalism and enlightenment superior to that of contemporary Christianity; al-Farabi had no peer in the West in his time. Let us study his work[51] and remind Muslims of the level of universalism they had in their past instead of indulging in banal cliches on Islamic culture. Islamic culture declined also, because it refused to ignore the achievements of the West; let us avoid the same fate.

The main category in intercultural relations is, of course, identity. Personal and cultural identity clearly mean something different than the tautological identity A=A, which is never a problem, while the search for identity often is. I cannot discuss the problem in the depth it deserves; but I want to end by naming three necessary moments of any rational quest for identity. First of all, a link with universal ideas is necessary; any identity which denies this link is doomed to become pathological and parasitic. There are, however, different ways of realizing the universal; and one's own capacity is usually determined by one's past, be it individual or collective. Whoever ignores his history will fail to find a reasonable identity; one's own history is therefore the second moment in an identity search. But the individual can find his or her peculiar identity only by confronting it with other identities; and the deepest meaning of love is obviously to find a stable and moral identity. Now this intersubjective aspect does not apply only to interpersonal relations; it is valid also for intercultural relations. The confrontation with another culture may be traumatic; but it can also lead to a development in which a culture is fulfilled. Let me finish with a story that nicely illustrates my point. In the tales of the Chassidim, collected by Martin Buber, we find the story of the poor rabbi Eisik, son of Jekel, who was living in Cracow. He was several times pursued by a dream which incited him to go to Prague; beneath the principal bridge he would find a treasure. Finally the

51 I have in mind especially: Al-Farabi on the Perfect State: ... a revised text with introduction, translation, and commentary by R. Walzer, Oxford 1985.

rabbi leaves Cracow; after arriving in Prague, he observes for many days the soldiers who are watching the bridge. Eventually, the captain of the soldiers addresses him, and Eisik tells him about his dream. But the captain scorns him; he himself, he answers, is vexed by a similar dream, to go to Cracow and to look for a treasure in the corner behind the stove of a poor rabbi named Eisik, son of Jekel. But he would never take such a dream seriously. You are right, answers the rabbi, returns to his house and finds there the treasure promised in the dream.[52]

I do like the asymmetric moment in the story, but I am convinced that it teaches us something with which I want to conclude: The First World will not overcome its identity crisis, if it does not begin to look for and respect the identity of the Third World.

52 I found the story in H. Zimmer, Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, ed. by J. Campbell, New York 1963, 219ff. Zimmer quotes M. Buber, Die Chassidischen Bücher, Hellerau 1928, 532f.