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‘Responsible Interim’: Revising Hermeneutics and Ethics in the Era of Globalization and Religious Plurality. Philosophical and Sociological Reflections on the Modern State of Religion

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Abstract: Coming from a more *comparative point of view* as far as *Theology of Religions and Interreligious Studies* are concerned – though to a certain extent as well as a pluralist in the sense of hope for universal understanding and well-being – I want to ask how *Interreligious and Intercultural Hermeneutics* are a necessary tool when we try to set up *minimal standards for a Global Ethics* in the reality of nowadays multicultural societies. I introduce for Ethics as well as for Hermeneutics the concept of *‘Responsible Interim’* – the latter reflecting the fact that human beings do have universals only under the *‘eschatological reserve’* (in Christian terminology), as *‘Suchness in Emptiness’* (in Buddhist terminology). I will proceed from universal truth questions and more general questions of philosophy of religion towards questions of cultural i.e. religious contexts shaping ethical and religious view(s) and convictions. Can smallest common denominators be found? How does *legal rule* help to establish and keep them? How does society, how do individuals change by starting from a spiritual, creative and holistic and maybe even *transpersonal point of view* – a view of *co-creation* and *incarnatio continua* in religious, i.e. in Christian terminology again?
Keywords: Comparative theology, theology of religions, interreligious studies, interreligious and intercultural hermeneutics, holistic hermeneutics, minimal standards for a global ethics, ‘responsible interim’, ‘eschatological reserve’, ‘suchness in emptiness’, legal rule, transpersonal point of view, co-creation, Incarnatio Continua, deep pluralism, beauty.

1. Introduction and Preliminary Remarks

A global world is a plural world. Not the least migration has brought plurality to each and every country – plurality of cultures and religions. No wonder that it is 30 years already that Alan Race published his well-known classic ‘Christians and Religious Pluralism’ [31], a book eagerly perceived and discussed in the World Council of Churches and the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, Switzerland, where I spent a special internship at the beginning of the eighties. My parish past and future was of mainly bourgeois downtown background with English worships for tourists and foreign visitors: we just *had* to become ecumenical. It also had at its Eastern outsets the second

largest prostitution area and a growing number of migrants, i.e. asylum workers: therefore we *had* to be aware of socio political and intercultural questions. We were more and more faced with secularism and declining numbers of church and hence parish members. We were surrounded by citizens from non-Christian background and *had* to discuss the question of interreligious encounter. We of course had been engaged in Jewish-Christian dialogue since quite long (the huge and impressive Frankfurt synagogue, painted so marvellously by Max Beckmann, had been at Börneplatz, which then was part of my parochial parish compound too), but this of cause was an agenda set by German history and the Holocaust and had to be differentiated also in terms of church history and the Jewish roots of Christianity itself.

When I look back I never had the idea that interreligious dialogue and interfaith engagement or even a necessary *Theology of Religions* could be done and achieved without taking into consideration connected sociological, political, economic and juridical questions, or the question of how societies and religious bodies are shaped by culture, art and ritual.[1] When I look back, in my professional career philosophy and theology always had to make sense for pastoral considerations as well, since it is not only reason pleading for a common truth or *Ethics* of humankind but also our heart which has to accept them, our spirituality in which it has to play a role. Without personal convictions, without self-understanding also in terms of faith and confession, without taking into consideration that milieu and heritage, education and class shape us as individuals there will never be what I would like to call a 'grown up and trustworthy intellectual conviction and theory of truth and behaviour'. And here lies the reason why the introduction to an article which seeks to help building a platform for interreligious and intercultural encounter starts with rather personal remarks too. If the outcome should be a trustworthy and disputable suggestion for revised *Hermeneutics* and Ethics in a plural world, philosophy of religion has to proof its suggestions on the level of religious studies, Ethics and personal faith convictions.

2. In Order to Be Holistic Hermeneutic Has to Be Pluralist

Hermeneutics is not only understanding words (and maybe with them the Word of God), understanding scriptures and sayings but also very individual or collectively grown expressions of a culture, of a religion in art and music, of ritual. Gadamer can be seen as father of a universal Hermeneutics in the footsteps of Heidegger: all understanding (of a text, of a piece of art of the partner in dialogue) is bound to language. Therefore whenever we try interpretation we have to be aware of our pre-judices, i.e. underlying subjectivity I may add.[2] Discourse and dialogue is always needed. In a hermeneutic circle singularities and universals interpret each other. For Gadamer however understanding as it is described is much more than a method; it is universal [9]. Understanding, i.e. Hermeneutics is seen as the basis of human existence. There must be a correlation then of truth, sense, perception and understanding, between understanding and explanation, between dialogue partners, between a reader and a text, a piece of art and so on.

I would call this 'holistic understanding', a hermeneutic deeply influenced by phenomenology therefore necessarily pluralistic. But also a hermeneutic which takes space over against time very seriously. Merleau-Ponty for example, due to his study of Husserl and Heidegger, suggests a 'third dialectic' in dealing with the fundamental connection between 'Esse' ('Dasein') and 'World': the basic constitution of the subject is not its intentional conscience neither its 'Esse', but its corporeality [25].

A more '*holistic Hermeneutics*' has been suggested again and recently by scholars of Comparative and Post Liberal Theology. Marianne Moyaert [27, p. 289] points out, that meaning does not exist apart from its material embodiment. She quotes George Lindbeck [22, p. 187] in that religions "even more than the culture and languages they resemble, are like places of residence, which one cannot leave without losing part of oneself".[3] And as Paul Griffiths writes, "it seems to those who belong to it, to be comprehensive. It seems to them to take account of and be relevant to everything" [12, p. 9]. But religion, be it as our ultimate concern(s) ("das, was uns unbedingt angeht", as Paul Tillich put it [41] or as one of many autopoietic subsystems of society (and culture)

[23] from a secular sociological point of view, cannot and should not (wholly) occupy what in recent cultural anthropology, coming from geographical sciences, is called 'third space'[4]; the space of civil society. In fact this 'third space' cannot but be as plural as our societies are. We need space for our ultimate concerns - that is true. And since they always drive us towards action, there is no Hermeneutics without and Ethics accompanying. We should however not forget that whatever truth we know of, whatever Ethics we plea for is hermeneutically in process and never absolute. In Christian terminology we may also call this *'under the eschatological reserve'*. As Christians talk of the 'Already now and not yet' of salvation, they also are aware that final truth is only to be expected at the end of times.

One of the advantages of Enlightenment Philosophy and Protestantism for Ethics therefore is the teaching of the Two Kingdoms and its counterpart in constitution law as separation of religion and state. In a multicultural society, in a global world we will have to live with minimal common standards of agreement in order to have as much as possible democracy and justice. Again: the 'third space' will always be a space for a plural civil society. There can be only unity as long as diversity is taken serious.

3. A Hermeneutical and Ethical Theory of 'Responsible Interim' – a Revised Comparative Theology in Terms of 'Pluralism Under the Eschatological Reserve'

As 'Comparative Theology', to my point of view, tends to be a variation of older (mainly Catholic) Inclusivist Models and 'Pluralist Theology' is in danger to end up in a mere Humanist Philosophy (sometimes a *'hidden inclusivism'*), what is often called 'Intercultural Theology'[5] not seldom ends up de-masking as a modern and late modern form of mission theology. Where it used to seek inculturation of the Christian teachings and doctrines, it now opens up dialogue with those various cultural contexts of Christianity. And sometimes with those religions which have been shaping it.
Some, for example Franz Gmainer Pranzl and with him the 'Zentrum Theologie Interkulturell und Theologie der Religionen' at the University of Salzburg (Faculty of Catholic Theology), prefer to see 'intercultural' as an adverb: since the historical and hermeneutic ground is plural in itself, interculturality is not an aspect of theology but describes the method and Hermeneutics it has to follow. Interculturality nowadays plays a more and more important role in philosophy and cultural anthropology as well[6] A well-known representative of Intercultural Philosophy, from a more Indian-Hindu background is Ram A. Mall, from a Persian-Muslim background let me mention Hamid. R. Yousefi [24], [49].

Reinhold Bernhardt, a well-known German Systematic Theologian and 'critical Pluralist' described in a lecture [2] during the annual conference of DGMW (German Society for Mission Studies) in September 2013 in Hofgeismar, Germany, 'Intercultural Theology' in its bridge building function between Systematic Theology and Religious Studies: in providing a larger 'material base' (as far as culture is concerned) it leads a way out of the prevailing mannerism and provincialism of the former. Furthermore it helps to escape Western monoculturalism by taking up the context paradigm in, for example, cultural semiotics and reconstruction.

I do see the advantages of a revised comparative as well as pluralist point of view as far as Theology of Religions and Interreligious Studies are concerned. And, as stated above, all my pastoral work, ecumenical engagement, all conferences, workshops and think tanks I had the pleasure to prepare, organize and conduct, finally my research, have proved that there is no Theology of Religion(s) without the questions of how religion and culture are connected. And they *are* deeply intertwined. So again: why not 'Intercultural Theology' as an important aspect of 'Theology of Religions' and it's 'Typology' as well? Maybe 'Intercultural Theology' – at least in Germany and as stated already above – still has too much a connotation of being a 'modern way of Mission Theology' that is aware of the meaning and importance of culture, not the least inculturation. And sometimes it tries to avoid questions of interreligious encounter by taking non-Christian religions just as 'part of foreign culture/s' to be understood for Christian theologians and missionaries. But even where it opens up an earnest dialogue with non-Christian religions (and

world views), it stays part of or at least is deeply connected with the Typology of Theology of Religions. It is sharing its exclusivist or inclusivist, and sometimes pluralist, also critical pluralist standpoints. In the latter case pluralism in some cases would be called 'pluralism under the 'eschatological reserve'. Other Pluralists have come to what is called 'dual belonging', describing a sort of 'religious bi-linguality'. In Paul Knitters case however it is to be seen that there stays a certain inclusivism: if I am not mistaken Knitter sees Buddhism as a deepening factor of his Christianity and not equitable in the deepest sense [17]. Even representatives of dual belonging, one famous German representative being Perry Schmidt Leukel und Reinholdt Bernhardt, the latter teaching at Basel University [35] are in danger of arguing from a humanist-philosophical meta-position.

The very term 'intercultural' can be misleading if it is not taken in terms of a (more phenomenological) comparison of religions but tends to construct a very sophisticated religious or cultural syncretism.

In terms of *Hermeneutics and Ethics*, when asking the truth question (be it philosophical, religious or ethical) I am obliged to reflect the 'observer's standpoint' being that of a confessing Christian. Arguments from creation theology allow me to argue for salvation of all beings (living and non-living – but this would need another article to explain more deeply), and be it under the 'eschatological reserve'. From my understanding of theology of the cross on the other hand I cannot but differentiate between my personal Christian confession and the probability of more than one 'truth' because of the confessional truth claims of followers of other religions and world views. This cannot but lead to a dialectical, i.e. critical analytical philosophical approach and a Hermeneutics and Ethics to be developed in '*responsible interim*' as I call it – and will come back to later.

And if theology means to defend faith before reason, this does not mean, to my point of view, to neglect any critical potential of truth questions or to renounce valuation. But any valuation and any truth claim is done in '*responsible interim*', under '*eschatological reserve*' to put it into Christian terminology and without any exclusivism (an analogy from natural science would be the principle of falsification so to speak – again a topic to be discussed in another article). Whether we call that 'deep religious pluralism' as Griffin (coming from Comparative Religion) does from a more process philosophical background [11] or follow those who are in favour of what often is called 'mutual inclusivism' still has to be discussed and depends not the least on answering the question whether process thought still is a metaphysics – though 'in becoming'.

In what developed from the 90ies onwards as 'Comparative Theology' comparative meant an inter textual, pre dogmatic and pre systematic approach. All conclusions are seen as of preliminary character, grand narratives are rejected. Far more the serious study of other religions is seen as an intellectual and ethical MUST. Local comparisons of really existing faiths and their expressions are urgently needed.

Francis Xaver Clooney [3] can be seen as an early and important representative of this so called 'alternative' to pluralist approaches. Comparative Theology for him stresses experience and confession over against Metaphysics and centrist or essentialist approaches.

Comparative Theology however, despite its post-modern gestures, often ends up more traditional then Pluralist Theology in stressing, not so much the singularity of personal confession, but the uniqueness of each religion, i.e. faith system. And of course, when we stress what is unique in each religion there is no way but also stressing their sometimes (confessional) absolutist claims.[7] Yes, it is possible and most helpful to share in liturgies of other faith communities and get to know to ones best ability their Ethics, doctrines and philosophies. But when it comes to research let us stick to describe them from a more epistemological, i.e. phenomenological point of view. Even if one would claim to try and 'share' faith claims other than one's own from within (for example because of dual belonging, which out of various reasons for me theologically is perfectly justifiable but then again and though epistemologically and spirituality intriguing, not any step further on a way towards a universal truth) this could never be a scientific argument for or against whatsoever. Moreover it would lead those strongly criticizing the hegemonic attitude of traditional pluralism into a double bind situation in claiming deep pluralism and at the same time defending the

uniqueness of their own religion – and be that out of church political reasons. Those on the other defending the truth of different religions by pointing out to the 'truth' of dual belonging set up a new hegemony by 'knowing' several final ultimates – and be that by faith.

Of course we know today, especially as a result of modern natural science, – and have to take this seriously as theologians if we still want theology to be a scientific discipline - that there is no neutral observer's position. And this is the case also for philosophy (of religion). Therefore whatever theology of religion(s), whatever Hermeneutics or methodology we follow we are well advised to reflect upon the subjective, confessional, preliminary factor.[8]

Those representatives of Religious Studies trying to do justice to the observer's standpoint by developing what they call 'Intercultural Religious Studies'. Different traditions of Religious Studies and their individual questions and solutions are seen as equal contributions to the ongoing discourse. The influence of personal faith and religion is taken seriously over against an understanding of Religious Studies as purely scientific and phenomenological (as for example in the DVRW, the German Association for the Science of Religion).

Religious Studies claiming scientific neutrality over against Christian Theologies of Religion sometimes rely upon Lévi-Strauss [21] who compares the relation between linguistics and language with the one between ethnology and culture. The rules and structures of culture like those of language to his point of view are only to be understood from without. But his 'structural anthropology' still claims that a system and its contextual structure as a whole is underlying reality.
In their debate about nativism and constructivism Chomsky claims over against Piaget, that for the understanding of language there exists genetic bases in human brain [29]. But if we follow Piaget in his argument that language shapes and makes our reality or perception of it however and take this serious we reach what can be called linguistic relativity. This can be called 'post structuralism' in so far as it also denies the (linguistic) methods of structuralism and questions traditional standards of rationality in general.

However I would argue that Pluralism as well as Comparative Theology in their still metaphysical, i.e. idealist claims tend to post Enlightenment thought structures, whereas post-structuralists such as Derrida for example are closer to Critical Idealism again – especially in its *deontological* aspects (and deontological Ethics does by no way mean that concepts of material *Ethics* are lacking). Whether Post Structuralism ends up in language games and relativism or whether it takes serious the relativity of truth and reality (be that over against a spiritual ground or not) and in doing so helps to avoid hegemonic truth claims and moral systems (Foucault understands even language as technology of power. Discourse for him in a way means the understanding of reality in a certain era [6.]) is a question yet to be discussed in far more detail.

4. The Concept of 'Responsible Interim' in Buddhist-Christian Encounter: Truth and Justice in Becoming

In the following I want to ask how my 'hermeneutical and ethical theory of 'responsible interim'', how is revised Comparative Theology and a Pluralism 'under the eschatological reserve' can and should not only lead to a shared standpoint of 'a truth in becoming' but also be helpful when we try to set up '*minimal standards for a Global Ethics*'.

Taking Buddhist-Christian encounter as an example, I ask, how those questions can be better answered from its results and suggestions. Can smallest (hermeneutical and ethical) common denominators be found (at all)?

Western culture often and rightly is accused of a narrative of grasping, clinging, holding and hoarding and so strongly stressing permanence over against impermanence. But life and with life human beings face uncontrollable, unpredictable and impermanent realities and situations and therefore reality ('truth') is not always and should not always be perceived as linear over against the cyclic and circular aspects.

In doing so we must know that we live in a time of more or less permanent „liminality': this term from ethnology and anthropology was introduced by Victor Turner[9] when following up Arnold

van Genneps concept of ‘rites de passages’, but since a while it serves very well in describing political and cultural change) [42, p. 51]. It can be applied to societies going through crisis and/or change. Karl Jaspers for example with his concept of the ‘axial age’ as an in-between period of two structured world views and two rounds of empire building described this age as one of creativity and at the same time insecurity.[10]

A more or less permanent phase of ‘liminality’ indeed might lead to (political and spiritual) insecurity. Facing chaos human beings might become aggressive and fundamentalist because of fear and a lack of self-awareness. On the other hand it might also be a real chance for something new, be that a new order, new legal rules, new forms of economy or also new world views (sometimes in the past even new religions).

Truth, also and maybe especially religious truth claims, and with it Ethics, especially in its concreter material aspects, are in process. In discourse we should try to find minimal standards and agreements to be shared; neither metaphysical or essentialist solutions nor universal or absolutist claims. Kant’s Categorical Imperative might be very helpful here again as it shares part with constructivist and deconstructivist or post-structuralist (and let me add here comparative) world views at least in its *deontological* arguments. The latter also meaning that consensus cannot be reached by any ‘Moral Imperative’ (as Hans Küng so strongly and to my point of view also wrongly suggests in his World Ethos project [18]), since moral and all material Ethics are contextual and their universal claims are still dependent on a certain culturally influenced metaphysics, essentialism, and therefore always to a certain extent absolutist and hegemonic. Even a consensus reached by discourse and agreement of all possible partners has to be seen in ‘responsible interim’. Political correctness as one of the outcomes of modernism is in danger of a fundamentalism of its own so to speak.

‘Responsible Interim’ in Hermeneutics and Ethics describes arguing and acting towards a common truth and a common good – in knowing and respecting, that final truth is not known by any human person, group or society but lies in God. We will know and experience it only at the end of space and time, i.e. beyond space and time. Whatever we claim as philosophical, theological, ethical and moral truth cannot but being said under the eschatological reserve. What follows is neither absolutism nor quietism but a way of knowing, arguing, loving and acting to the best of our knowledge (intellectual and emotional) for the time being – until...we know better.

In a ‘liminal’ world society we need to live with these paradoxes of different religious truth claims and also ethical concepts – not a few of them deeply grounded in religious or at least civil religious world views – of unity in diversity and truth in process, i.e. becoming. In order to get closer to it we need permanent reflection and discourse, we need to confront the Other, the other person, the other group, the other system so to speak – be it political, economic, cultural or religious – we need to get to know, better to experience and also to endure the o/Other as well as possible by getting as close to it as possible. And in this ongoing and dangerous but necessary and hopefully nevertheless enriching process of transformation and deeper self-awareness, we long for a true, good and beautiful outcome.[11]

5. Transpersonal Co-creation: Outcomes for Anthropology and Ecology

First of all let me make it quite clear that when I speak of ‘transpersonality’[12] here, it is meant to point out the interdependence of all sentient beings, of all that what is even. There is no need to see any spiritual or religious roots for such transpersonal existence, but if we want to name a concept analogous to its meaning, I would suggest the (Zen-)Buddhist concept of ‘dependent co-origination’ (skr.: ‘Pratītyasamutpāda’). This, and especially for Westerners, can be all the more helpful since it has as its philosophical, spiritual or religious counterpart the concept of ‘An-Atman’, of ‘Non-Self’. To be aware of, to be sensitive to the worlds and societies transitionalities and interdependences in Buddhist thought we do not need any idealist transcendent principle (which all too often tends to new fundamentalisms – and be it that of modernism – and ideologies [7]. Since human beings cannot but conceptualize ‘unity’ from their own standing point. Even what they call revelation, still

stays truth as they perceive it, stays 'truth under the eschatological reserve'. This truth is in process, in becoming, as we already saw; we never 'have' it. When 'final truth' is proclaimed and this comes together with a plea for a new and better self-understanding, the new (S)self becomes only a mere substitute for the old ego.

Western culture, even when stressing the danger and narrowness of an egocentric and anthropocentric world view, tends to a non-reflected and in this sense negative solipsism. A too narrow interpretation of (Jungian) psychoanalysis pleas for overcoming the Ego's prison but still does so in terms of 'higher morality' which cannot be and is nothing else but the therapist's morality and philosophy. The metaphor of Oneness (all in its diversity and even contradictions is one, good and bad are overcome on a higher level etc.) then becomes a shallow metaphor for 'my universality and my values'. The necessary (poetical) paradoxes and (twofold) dialectics are lacking. And so what is called 'mysticism' gets rather close again to a double bind situation for those who are not 'followers' of the self-made wise or saint. This is what happens when paradoxes are not only captured in a non-reflected form of substance ontology but also 'overcome' on a very subjective (pseudo)metaphysical level.

In quite a few forms of Eastern religiosity to the contrary, epistemological questions, questions of how and questions of exercise are most important. 'How does one lead a good life' then is not so much a moral question but one of meditation and exercise. The way is what one should care about. 'Esse' (in the meaning of 'substance') is not the focus, neither a metaphysical concept of 'Self'. There is no real self, there is if at all an 'enlightened Self' (Sanskrit: 'Atman'). And this is 'No-Self' ('An-atman'). Amazingly then 'Ego' comes up again as a topic in its *'Suchness'* (and worldliness). In order to find a good way one has to be enlightened and then (!) very realistic and pragmatic.

The Buddhist teachings of 'Pratītyasamutpāda', of Non-Self and *Emptiness* (Sanskrit: 'Śūnyatā') as final reality allow us to take whatever is as it is and therefore 'right' without leading to any new absolute or categorical moral or ideology.[13] In a rather realistic, humoristic and nevertheless sincere attitude we might then come to do what is necessary for the world's survival. As free (S)selves we decide to act for peace, justice and integrity of creation. This helps us on our path to Enlightenment, but does not bring it forth. We give up part of our freedom for the sake of the 'beauty of togetherness' which might be called 'co creation' to borrow a term from modern management theory even. But this is all the time a decision to be taken from anew, to be revised ('semper reformanda' to borough a term from Christianity). And a similar thing is true for the Philosophy of Enlightenment: there is no absolutist metaphysical truth claim (besides the Categorical Imperative as a means and method of living, acting and believing in 'responsible interim' – always reflecting anew what has been found out so far and if necessary revising it).
Let us call it a 'realistic' decision because we know that one 'law' of reality is that of dependent co-origination: 'Pratītyasamutpāda'. It would be unwise and unhealthy to go against it. No heteronymous moral, no 'Moral Imperative' is needed in order to do the right things. The human capability of wisdom, understanding and will is estimated very highly – and trusted in the end. And of course this is an intellectual and ethical and to a certain extent also aesthetic decision grounded in the conviction, that we all possess the Buddha-nature from the very beginning (at least in some, especially Zen-, Buddhist traditions).

6. Love: Beauty as Eschatological Truth

Will this help shaping future politics, governance, leadership – not the least economics? And in what direction will we have to move together (for peace, justice, integrity of creation)?

This we do not know for sure. But as long as we do not have better and more convincing alternatives let us try and proceed with what we have got here so far. In the New Testament, in Paul's letter to the Corinthians in chapter 13:13, we read: 'But now faith, hope, love, abide these three: but the greatest of these is love.'

Hope is important indeed as optimism is and faith. But without love it will not lead us

anywhere. Love opens eyes for the 'Other' and its beauty. In terms of an all too narrow, rigid or even fundamentalist morality love even might be called 'a-moral in the truest and best sense', since it is a free (willing) and beautiful reaction to the wisdom of our interdependence, of God's love for his whole creation.[14], as a late modern variation of the ideal of 'kalon kagathon' so to speak. And here what I define as beauty comes in: like love takes what is there and says yes to it for beauty everything that is makes 'sense'; even the dualisms of good and bad are overcome since everything is what it is in love (by grace in Christian terminology). Everything is real in its 'As-it-is-ness' or 'Suchness' (Sanskrit: 'Tathatā') to use Buddhist language once more and in taking at this point both, 'Emptiness' and 'Suchness' in their dialectical relation. Believers may think here of what is often called 'sublime', the tremendum and fascinosum.[15] There lies something holy at the ground of all that what is which cannot be captured by the dualist differentiation between good and bad, now and then and here and there. Love and beauty in other words are the reminders of the kingdom of heaven, of Nirvana yet to come and already there in what we might call 'eternal moments'.

7. Individual Faith in Pluralist Societies – Let Us Be Visionaries, Let Us Stay Pragmatic

Religions as pure as they may be in their origins, may have a dark and possessive part, patriarchal exploitation and violence may be even in the inner part of monotheist religions [1] leading finally to a clash of civilisations. But can this and is this to be said of faith(s) as well?

For *Karl Barth* there was an important difference, not to be overcome, between religion and faith. For him, religions had to be seen as part of culture and faith being the existential call and answer between human beings and God, a vertical revelation of the Christ as only warrant of God's grace and grace alone.

We are meanwhile living in a different political and theological situation and to see religion as inseparable part of culture is a necessary prerequisite of (intercultural and interreligious) Hermeneutics, but there is still something extremely relevant in this aspect of Dialectic Theology: faith is something between human beings and God, a relation beyond culture and politics and therefore directly leading us to Ethics and to act appropriately. But – and here overcoming Barth towards a more twofold dialectics, faith and confession are no longer to be taken as final ultimates (in a metaphysical, essentialist manner).

Hermeneutics and also Ethics in this direction are more relational than pluralist or inclusivist, are transpersonal. Dualisms, also between subject and object are criticised and partly overcome.[16] For us nowadays this could mean that faith is nothing that contradicts pluralist societies. And if faith is an existential (in the sense of Martin Heidegger's 'Existential'), religion can never be absolute, religions can and should never compete or even fight each other, but together strive for truth and peace. The famous Japanese philosopher of religion, Christian theologian and Buddhist Katsumi Takizawa interpreted Barth in this direction, seeing even Barth's 'solus Christus' still and to a certain extent as materialized faith, as religion so to speak [8], [48].

8. Faith Facing Multireligiosity. 'Incarnatio continua'

Here is, were the saying, the wisdom of 'Saṃsāra is (Japanese: 'soku') is not Nirvāṇa' becomes important and very meaningful for a late modern world and its lasting 'liminality'. The '*Suchness*' of all what is there, is, in a special and not at all ontological neither dualist nor idealist way, 'identical' with 'Emptiness'.

Therefore we are allowed to let go, to let flow[17], to let be. Not the least to decide in and to understand and explain in 'responsible interim'.

Finally if we try to understand the Christian doctrine of incarnation by the help of this Buddhist wisdom we cannot but avoid thinking about 'Incarnatio continua', an ongoing manifestation of the Holy and the Sublime, of the Divine, of God in history and in cosmos in the sense of 'the Divine is ('soku') is not the Profane'. The life of Jesus (the Christ) then would be

the/one representation – a unique but not essentialist universal; maybe an eschatologically universal representation - of the 'ultimate Reality' – 'God is ('soku') isnot Void'? Incarnatio continua also meaning our longing to materialize divine truth, to embody what might be called 'holy' or 'sublime'. And if so, couldn't we think of the potential of representing the Divine, all of us, sentient and non-sentient beings even? No contradiction would there be from now on between theism and non-theism, neither between a mainly historical concept and a more spatial concept of revelation. This is the freedom in switching from absoluteness to uniqueness, from substance ontology and metaphysics to epistemology (and phenomenology) and *Hermeneutics and Ethics in Responsible Interim*. And, by the way, isn't substance ontology a philosophical concept added to Christian faith once it left its Jewish surroundings?

Reality is a process and so is truth and right doing. Where this process will lead us is more unexpected then we can even imagine – and yet: there is an unchangeable element in this process as well: let us call it 'Emptiness' and 'Suchness', let us call it 'God', let us call it 'Love' and 'Beauty', beyond time and space, beyond good and bad, beyond is and is not. Let us call it hope or faith, longing or will, insight or enlightenment. Let us not call it at all. Let us not kill mysticism by doctrinal fundamentalism. Let us rely on a philosophy in becoming. Let us live with it and try it out. Let us sense it. *Insinuate.*

9. Conclusion: Hope and the 'Beauty of Diversity': Freedom and Responsibility in 'Responsible Interim'

If truth is in becoming reality is a process all the more so. And we are 'co-creators' in it and of it. 'Creativity' understood here as an ever ongoing divine activity we share with all other beings. In a global and plural world considered as Gods creation or through the lenses of 'Pratītyasamutpāda' there is no development but the development of all nations, states, communities and individuals. Development is not any longer to be seen in terms of a transfer of help, knowledge and education from North to South, from East to West or in whatsoever direction.

In this world then there are neither subjects nor objects, neither donors nor receivers, we are all talented, wanted, 'mutually dependent co-creators' of what should be and has to be, inhabitants of what is as it is. 'Otherness' is a challenge and gift for 'co-creation' on its path towards the 'True, Good and Beautiful'. We will need to learn how to accept nature as equal partner in those 'regulation processes'. Not because it is a commandment to do so, but because it is wise.

It follows that in ethics and for minimal moral standards there are no universals if not universal declarations agreed upon by all and implanted into international legal rules. What we can achieve and must achieve therefore is, step by step, as many smallest common denominators regulated by legal rules, allowing as many facets of the existing plurality as possible. With the help of such legal rules we might keep our national, regional, continental etc. uniqueness, but these then will be parts of a greater whole as each individual is in a group or society.
We should however never forget that we are in transition, part of a process, maybe of an even unlimited „liminality'.

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Notes

1. And I would add, that all intellectual and scientific discourse is nowadays deeply influenced by Western culutre, thought history and methods.
2. For Habermas however, a self-reflective methodology can overcome pre-judices. And so he criticised Gadamer and his Hermeneutics. First in: Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften, Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, 1967.
   A debate started to which also Ricoeur contributed in trying to mediate between those two positions. Ricoeur suggested that we cannot carry out our emancipatory ideals and interests without incarnating them within cultural acquisitions. An overly abstract dualism between understanding and explanation is not adequate: Paul Ricoeur, "Ethics and Culture: Gadamer and Habermas in Dialogue, *Philosophy Today*, Vol. 17, Issue 2, Summer 1973.
   Also: Robert Piercey, Ricoeur's Account of Tradition and the Gadamer: Habermas Debate, Springer: Berlin, 2004
3. Post liberal theology, mainly narrative in its method and critical against Systematic Theology as a closed system, at the end of last century started explaining Christian faith as „story', with its own culture, grammar and praxis to be found in the Bible and to be understood only within Christian 'logic'. That partly goes back to Wittgenstein's concept of 'language games'. Lindbeck for example speaks of the 'incommensurability of religions' and so denies Ricoeur's 'Hermeneutics of interreligious dialogue'. Modernity is accused of its foundationalism and hegemonial structures, its belief in universal rationality. This article however will differentiate more clearly between a concept of enlightenment in the sense of Kantian critical idealism and modernity and its fundamentalisms and argue for a democratic and liberal rationality (in Hermeneutics and Ethics) without absolutist claims. In doing so, it will differentiate between a critic of subjectivism or individualism and a total denial of a subject. But even the latter might be understood in terms of a 'deeper Self' by the help of non Western philosophy (and mysticism) and seen in analogy with the freedom of individuals as one of the great achievements of Protestantism and Enlightenment philosophy to my point of view.
   (In German theology the Swiss theologian Dietrich Ritschl was one of the first to take up 'story' as a concept: Dietrich Ritschl, *Story als Rohmaterial der Theologie*. Kaiser: München, 1976).
4. 'Spatial turn' is a concept coming from modern, i.e. postmodern geographies to social theory and cultural anthropology. The 'third space' here opens up new room for civil society, 'in between' politics and economics. For a

general introduction see Soja, E.W. and Döring, J., Thielmann, T. et al. as listed in the bibliography.

5. For an introduction see books of Hock, K., Küster, V. and Wrogemann, H. as listed under bibliography.
6. In Germany a leading institution is the university of Hildesheim, Prof. Dr. Rolf Elberfeld and the Society for Intercultural Studies in Cologne.
7. D'Costa for example (who more and more stresses the necessity of a Trinitarian approach to questions of pluralism and uniqueness as well as the ecclesiological background of these questions) in following Alisdair MacIntyre and John Milbank is very concerned that there is no neutral Archimedean reference point for 'judging'. In fact, he can go so far to claim exclusivism as the most open attitude in taking o(O)therness serious: see bibliography
8. I owe this insight to 'Radical Constructivism' which traces its arguments back to relevant positions in Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. One of his founders is Paul Watzlawick: see bibliography.
   Other introductions into thoughts and methods of Radical Constructivism such as by Glasersfeld, E., von, and Schmidt, S. J.: see under bibliography.
9. Turner (see bibliography) differentiates three phases: separation, transition and reincorporation. The phase of transition is liminal, is in between ('betwixt and between') what human beings were and what they will be. This phase is ambiguous, ambivalent and in a certain way amoral let me add.
10. see bibliography. Although Jaspers conclusions because of his, what I would like to call 'metaphysical existentialism', and because of his philosophy of history to a certain extent cannot avoid a more Eurocentric and hegemonic world view, his analysis is extremely helpful in order to understand what we explain here as 'liminality'.
11. The famous Jewish philosopher of religion Emmanuel Levinas, influenced by Husserl's phenomenology and Heidegger's thinking, has elaborated on the term „subject': it „becomes' subject only in being „subjected' to the imperative postulate of the Other (another individual). All other ethical considerations are secondary when it comes to wage what ethically is to be said concerning the other person/s. Maybe we could call this a 'Jewish response' to existentialism in the footsteps of metaphysics (and critical idealism). The egocentric and anthropocentric elements of existentialist thought are seriously questioned by this proto-ethics. Theology is possible only within ethics. God is 'falling' into thinking in the 'face' of the Other. (see bibliography).
12. The term comes from transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy. An informative introduction would be: Wilber, K. (see bibliography).
13. Merton for example understands salvation not in a material sense but – close to Buddhism – as the 'status of non-space'. For him liminal space is sacred space. (see under bibliography).
14. Kant in his 'Critique of Judgement' teaches us, that, other than still and to a certain extent is the case for morality, i.e. ethics, aesthetics is nothing but subjective. But this does not mean that it is immoral (as Kierkegaard as well as Nietzsche in various ways showed, differentiating a-morality from immorality on a higher level).
    And since ontological truth is generally non-metaphysical, i.e. Kant's critical idealism has a certain deontological aspect, especially in his ethics, aesthetics cannot be part of metaphysics in its deepest sense.
    In "Erscheinungsdinge..." Figal, in analysis of Kant's Philosophy, develops a phenomenological aesthetic. Figal is trying to distance himself from attempts to explain art in the framework of metaphysical systems (as for example in Hegel, Heidegger and also Gadamer). He calls the latter „philosophy of art' and differentiates it from what he then calls „philosophical aesthetics'. Husserl is quoted in that it is necessary to go back to „things themselves' instead of following „wrong theories'. This for Figal becomes concrete in aesthetics as appropriation to work of arts as objects which are eminently phenomenal. They are called "Erscheinungsdinge" („objects of appearance'). What makes them art is their „decentralised/peripheral order'. This order is not structured conceptually. There is a „free play' in the experience of art, but it is not a play of subjective capability but as phenomenal impact of art works themselves.
15. see Otto, R. under bibliography.
16. The complexity of reality is seen in more spatial terms as dependent co-origination – to borrow this Buddhist term again and so represents an alternative to Newtonian linearity in defining reality.
17. Flow taken here as a (psychological) state and feeling of total concentration – a state of neither mental underload nor overload. See under bibliography: Schmaus, Th. (2012).