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RELIGION AND CIVIL SOCIETY: IS THE UNIVERSALISATION OF RELIGIOUS OR SECULAR VALUES AND NORMS POSSIBLE IN THE PROCESS OF GLOBAL MODERNIZATION?

Dear Friends:

I would like to invite you to a short discourse about the problem of religious as well as secular notions of unconditional meaning and universal moral values and norms in relation to more or less possible, probable and desirable global alternative futures, as it appears in the perspective of the by now globalized Frankfurt School.' In our discourse, we want to explore and explain what the highly secularized critical theory of Society has to say about universal moral values and norms rooted in unconditional meaning and being present or not in subjectivity and intersubjectivity, civil society, political state, history and culture: particularly about the possibility of the project of a world ethos incarnated in all of them and directed toward alternative Future III – the right society as a solidary association or union of free human beings.

Discourse

We understand discourse as argumentative dialogue taking place in an ideal speech situation and in a powerfree zone. We determine discourse as future - oriented remembrance of human suffering, particularly the suffering of the innocent victims of the merciless modernization of civil society, with the practical intent to diminish it. Precisely public discourse is the medium in which values and norms, which originally belong to particular systems of human condition and action systems, more specifically cultures, can nevertheless possibly be universalized on the basis of the better arguments. In our discourse, we shall differentiate sharply, if moral values and norms appear as the object of research, as subjective value-basis of the researcher, or as integral part of the theoretical systematization process, and move at the same time on all three levels. In any case, we are concerned with sociologically-factual, or at least intentionally and tendentially religious or secular universal values as the love of the neighbor, the negation of the talion, solidarity, personal and collective freedom, equality, social justice, property, life, and truth, and the related norms and positive legal laws.

Recognition

Of course, all such religious or secular moral values are historical: they have found their recognition in a particular social and historical discourse-situation. There is not only a long historical, mainly religious tradition of and discourse on personal and social morality, but also a secular enlightenment tradition of the critique of morality, which reaches from Hobbes through Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche to Sigmund Freud and Max Horkheimer: of the unmasking, the disillusionment, and the disenchantment of alleged higher values of a sacred or a profane, which demand continually great sacrifices from people. Neither the religious tradition of morality, nor the secular enlightenment tradition of the critique of morality was ever without inner contradictions. There is not only a modern dialectic of the sacred and the profane, but also a dialectic of the secular enlightenment and a dialectic of religion. Not only religious and secular values can challenge each other, but also secular values can turn against themselves - rationalization into irrationality, integration into disintegration, and religious norms can turn against themselves - religious truth into ideology as false consciousness, as the masking of racial, national, and class interests, shortly as untruth, and religious love into hateful persecutions of gentiles, pagans, heretics, apostates, witches and into most fanatic religious wars.

Moral Value

In spite of the fact that - as Nietzsche has discovered - whatever has a history can not be defined, we may nevertheless determine historical, not physical, but moral value provisionally in terms of a working definition as the measure of how strongly something is desired for its moral beauty, usefulness, or rarity, especially expressed in terms of the effort one is willing to expend in acquiring and retaining possession of or preserving it. A moral value may be defined as a principle, or a quality, that arouses such desire. We differentiate between morality and ethics. We call moral the structure of action, which guides convictions, values, goals, normative

judgments and feelings being dominant in a certain location and at a certain time. Correspondingly, there are secular scientific, i.e. psychological, sociological, or historical theories of morality, which ask for the genesis and function of religious or secular moralities. Contrary to morality, ethics is synonymous with reflection on morality, i.e. with moral philosophy. Ethics gives reasons or justifies moral positions and thereby connects them with everyday moral attitudes and judgments, which it analyzes conceptually and develops further. The difference between moral theory and ethics corresponds to the observer- and participant-perspective. We consider moral values or norms to be universal, when they transcend sociologically-factually or tendentially or intentionally the fundamental dichotomies in the totality of modern civil society: between the religious and the secular people, between the genders, among the generations, among the races, among the nations, between the individual and the collective, among the social classes, etc.. We consider moral values or norms to be universal when in the by now globalized antagonistic totality of capitalist society they have found or can possibly find recognition by religious and secular people, by both genders, by three or four generations living together at the same time, by all races, by all nations, by the individual as well as by the collective, by different social classes, etc..

Evolutionist Conception of Value

The secularized critical theory of society has of course its own value- and norm –presuppositions like freedom, solidarity or justice. Different critical theorists, like Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, Friedrich Pollock, Leo Lb'wenthal, Alfred Sohn-Rethel, etc.have developed different profane value and norm positions. Concerning the different conceptions of morality and ethics and thus of values and norms inside and outside of the critical theory of society, recourse is made to different evolutionary stages. Such evolutionist theory of morality also allows in principle, to dissolve the sometimes confusing, apparent paradox of a morally intended critique of morality. Thus, the seeming immorality of psychoanalysis is not merely the expression of the critique of the disastrous or malign forces of the critique of the disastrous or malign forces of morality, but at the same time also the vehicle of an other, a new morality. Freud rejected some elements of the moral code of his time insofar as he made them corresponsable for neurotic structures, and thus aimed at the same time implicitly at a post-conventional morality of the individual testing and examining of universal claims of reason. What has been said here about the seeming immorality of psychoanalysis may also be mentioned in a similar way concerning the seeming immorality of historical materialism. The Marxian playwright Bertolt Brecht knew very well and confessed in his poem " To the Later Born":

Also the hate against the humiliation
Distorts the features.
Also the anger about the injustice
Makes the voice hoarse.
Oh, we
Who wanted to prepare the ground for friendliness
could ourselves not be friendly.
You, however, when things have come to the point,
That man is a helper for man,
Remember us
With leniency.

Both, psychoanalysis and historical materialism, may still lead to an other, a new personal and social morality. Both theories have been determinately negated into the critical theory of society : i.e. they have not only been critically negated, but also - at least tendentially - been preserved, elevated, and thus are still to be fulfilled in alternative global Future III - a free and just society, if it is not to be prevented through global alternative Future I - a totally administered, computerized, automated, robotized signal society, or through global alternative

Future II - an entirely militarized society continually engaged in conventional wars and civil wars and ultimately aiming at NEC wars and the consequent environmental catastrophes.

Different Claims of Morality

Finally, the evolutionist conception of morality also permits to focus better on the most important dimension of moral conflicts: namely that between the different claims of morality. In the framework of the evolutionist conception of morality not only conflicts between the super-ego and the moral values and norms it contains on one hand and the natural drives of the Id, including the will to life with its libidinous and aggressive components, and the ego and the reality principle on the other, become manifest, but also those among the values and norms themselves, which organize themselves on different evolutionary levels. To be sure, there are no guiding moral representations, which can not also be functionalized in their totality, with the help of different defense mechanisms for a pathological deformed life - design or plan. Dignity, justice, freedom, peace, democracy and other moral principles and values have a psycho-social history or evolution, through which they are also connected with their negation. These values can then even be united, combined and reconciled with mass murder, when the victims are excluded from the masses of those human beings for whom the moral notions are seen to be relevant. There is not even any protection against the abuse of the negative dialectic of the critical theory of society into a Satanic dialectic as for restorative, regressive, or even counterrevolutionary of society for reactionary and regressive purposes. There is at work sometimes in civil society already what Adorno called a Satanic dialectic, which comes close to double speech - war is peace, freedom is slavery, ignorance is strength, terrorism is heroism - which is supposed to come about only in global alternative Future I - the totally administered society. However, the second and the third generation of critical theorists have at least developed conceptual tools, in order to justify in detail the dialectic of conventional and post-conventional morality, their unity and their difference.

Civil Society

In our discourse we are mainly concerned with values and norms which operate or do not operate in modern civil or bourgeois society. We understand under civil society that social unit which has been developing already in the city states of Antiquity between the family on one hand, and the political state - organization on the other. From its very start bourgeois society, which evolved from the family, began to undermine and finally destroy both family and city state. Homer's Odysseus, i.e. Nobody, can be seen as the prototype of the dominant member of civil society, the bourgeois, particularly concerning the cunning ways in which he valued and treated nature, the gods, other nations, women, children, marriage, family, workers, pain and suffering, and concerning his insincere attitudes toward them and concerning the hypocritical motivations of his actions. These values, attitudes and motivations belong to the very genesis of the traditional and modern bourgeois as the dominant member of traditional and modern civil society. The bourgeois is emancipated from the guidance of more specific biological instincts as well as from the ethical norms of the traditional family or the traditional state. He separated production from the family and made it the center of bourgeoisie society and left to the former merely consumption and care. For civil society moral values were always less important than economic values: fair return for one's investment; to get good value for one's money; purchasing power; the value of the pound or the dollar or the Euro; the monetary equivalent of something; property to the value of \$10.000; use and exchange value; surplus labor and surplus value, etc.. All this makes it understandable why after the experiences of the past decade, particularly with exploitative and predatory Mafia-capitalism, people in Eastern Europe would rather like to have a civilized society than a civil society. Georges Sorros of course believes that there is another form of capitalism: one characterized by social thought and controlled by the liberal state. Sorros supports the spreading of such enlightened capitalism most generously through Eastern Europe. Those who ask for a civilized society are resisting global alternative Future I - the entirely administered society, which may be undesirable but is nevertheless very possible and probable, as well as global alternative Future II - the in terms of the military-industrial complex totally

militarized society ready always ready to nuke its potential enemies no matter what the consequences, which is absolutely undesirable but nevertheless once more possible and probable, and they are longing and hoping for global alternative Future III - the society in which personal autonomy and universal, i.e. anamnestic, present and proleptic solidarity would be reconciled, which is very desirable but which at this moment in the history of the monopoly- and oligopoly-capitalist world-"civilization" is unfortunately not very possible or probable. The deep insight into nature's secrets, which has been achieved in the bourgeois epoch of history if unrestrained by considerations of humanity may still threaten the very existence of mankind. In any case, civil society can be known by its antagonisms -class-, gender-generation-,race-, religious- etc. struggles - and its member, the bourgeois, by their internalization.

The Bourgeois

From the very start, the bourgeois had either no other at all, or merely one he could instrumentalize and commodify for his purposes: even in the form of business-friendships. He was more determined by instrumental or functional than by mimetic or communicative rationality. Thus, through his science and technology the bourgeois demythologized and consequentially dominated and exploited nature and thus indeed shaped the face of the earth for better or for worse more than any other human type or social character before. Slaveholders, feudal lords, etc. were children in comparison to the bourgeois. As the "middle class" man of civil society demythologized the world progressively, he has also reified it, and he has thereby delivered it to amnesia. Thus, Henry Ford, the author of the fascist, anti-Semitic book The International Jew and friend of Hitler could state:

History is bunk!

Amnesia, of course, is eufunctional for civil society. Otherwise, some day the workers could remember and ask and demand back the surplus value of their labor, which they had produced, but which they had not appropriated: as recently the workers from the concentration camps have done, and as the former slaves in North America may do soon. The historical memory of the slaves, serfs or "free" wage laborers is dangerous for the masters and their systems. It is continually most painful for parents, who have done an excellent educational job with their children in family and lifeworld, still determined by mimetic and communicative rationality and steered over moral values and norms, to see them and even their grandchildren morally deformed, as soon as they enter civil society, particularly its economic subsystem, characterized by functional rationality and steered over the medium of money, and its political subsystem, determined also by instrumental rationality, but steered over the medium of power and force. More generally, civil society is immoral in the sense, that it can not reconcile the particular and the universal, the individual and the collective, the arbitrary autonomy and the universal solidarity. Nobody can deny the great accomplishments of modern Western bourgeoisie in terms of the improvement of all instruments of production, the immensely facilitated means of communication, the high levels of art, philosophy and science. But as great as have been the bourgeois' economic and cultural accomplishments, so shocking has been his potential for radical evil: for stealing, killing and lying. Can the good be separated from the evil ?

Destruction of Foundations

More and more through Western history civil society reproduced a type of human being, a social character, which had an always harder time to become an adequate marriage partner or family member, or citizen of the state, or an honest member of any world religion. Not Judaism, Christianity, or Islam, or any Far Eastern religion, but the traditional and particularly the modern bourgeois and civil society destroyed the old family systems and city states and empires of Antiquity, including the Roman Empire, and continue to endanger the modern ones as well. Daily we can observe, how modern civil society destroys in one merciless modernization push after the other its own foundations not only in nature inside and outside of human beings, but also in the family and in the state and in religion. When the bourgeois breaks through in the marriage partners, that means divorce and the end of the family. When the bourgeois asserts himself in the citizen holding a high political office, that means corruption. When the bourgeois

breaks through in the religious person, even religion turns into a business. Daily modern states struggle with their bourgeois societies and try to impose on them social thought and moral values and norms in the form of positive laws, in order thus to protect the consumer from the producer, and the worker from the owner, and the smaller corporation from the bigger one, and the family member and the citizen from the bourgeois, and thus to prevent civil society from committing suicide and from tearing down with itself its own natural, social and cultural foundations as well. At present churches and believers and even priests and Archbishops and Cardinals are pulled down into the the avalanche of secularization and of the atomistic corrosion and decomposition of all human relationships and into the disintegration of every moral bond still existing in late capitalist society.

Prophets and Philosophers

Therefore, Jewish, Christian and Islamic prophets as well as most philosophers from Plato to Hegel and Marx and Freud criticized civil society because of the absence of right moral values and norms, universal or particular. Already the Jewish and Christian prophets condemned early city states like Sodom, Babylon, Rome, etc. the more so the more in them a civil society and its polytheism and its social immorality had developed. Already Plato, who wanted to rescue the Greek city state from the destructive tendencies of its intrinsic civil society, counseled, advised and recommended, that if one wanted to have a good son one should make him the citizen of a good state, not a member of civil society dominated by sophistry. While Hegel saw the necessity and productivity of civil society, he nevertheless predicted that it would concretely supersede itself through its own class-contradictions, and the consequent colonialism, and imperialism, and always more abstract and generalized wars into alternative Future III - the rational and free constitutional state, rather than into alternative Future I - a totally mechanized and automated society, or into alternative Future II - a totally militarized society engaging in always more and more universalized warfare. Carl Popper has made a whole list of philosophers, who were "enemies" of - what he called euphemistically - the "open society," and opposed to them the few philosophers who were friends of civil society: particularly Hobbes, the spiritual father of Carl Schmidt, Hitler's jurist and political theologian. Hobbes had anticipated affirmatively the concentration camps for so called strangers or foreigners. Both thinkers, Hobbes and Schmidt, one of the initiators of present neoconservatism and deconstructionism, concentrated on the Leviathan from the end of the Book of Job, and used the monster as an image for civil society which Hegel had called the state of necessity and analytical understanding in distinction from the real state of freedom and dialectical reason. The critical theorist Franz Neumann used the other monster from the end of the Book of Job. Behemoth, in order to characterize civil society in its fascist form. For prophets and philosophers, civil society was not the right, but rather the wrong society. Civil society as the wrong society was not only the absolute contrast to what Jewish, Christian and Islamic prophets hoped for as the ultimate theocracy, but also to that what philosophers from Plato through Thomas More to Hegel and Marx anticipated as the great Utopia: alternative Future III - the good state, the rational state, the realm of the freedom not only of the One, or the Few, but of All. Prophets and philosophers agree concerning the negation of the negativity of civil society toward the affirmation of man, and even of God.

Paradigm Change

While for Hegel the rational state, legitimated by religion, still included in itself family and civil society, one century later for the structural-functionalists Talcott Parsons and Nicholas Luhmann family, state and religion were all placed as specific functional pattern-maintenance -, goal-attainment - and integrative - subsystems into antagonistic civil society, and had to serve its survival. This theoretical paradigm change reflects in itself a real historical development. Any discourse about universal values and norms and their relationships to the global alternative Futures I, II and III needs to take this theoretical and practical - historical development into consideration. Soros, the founder of the Open Society Institute, does so, when he blames rightly for the failure of the re-introduction of civil society into Eastern Europe since 1989 the lack of

social thought and governmental control. President Putin does so, when he states, that Russia does not want a civil society but rather a civilized society. Well, there is indeed a great difference: the civilized society would be in compliance with universal moral values and norms, the civil society is not. If the bourgeoisie would conform to its own universal values, norms and positive laws nationally and internationally, the world would already be a better place.

The Tiny Ball in the Universe

In the perspective of Horkheimer, the initiator of the critical theory of society, and his colleagues in the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, since the decisive discoveries of the Renaissance concerning the universe, the earth is no longer seen as the center, or the foundation of the cosmos, and man as its peak, but rather as what his great teacher, Arthur Schopenhauer, called a tiny ball with a coating of mold - plant, animal and human life - on top of it, rolling around in the infinite space. The Schopenhaurian Hitler treated the coating of mold on the tiny ball of the earth precisely as such according to the aristocratic principle of nature, the supremacy of the predator over the prey: and he, the vegetarian, often dealt with animals better than with humans. Modern philosophical-literary thinkers have tried to give to the reactions of the submicroscopical beings, which are teeming, crawling and swarming on the minute ball, the cosmologically void, invalid, trivial and insignificant activities of the human beings, a moral meaning, which would transcend the mere limited purpose - conditioned human existence and its survival. Since morality - including all moral universal values and norms - can only with great difficulties, if at all, be grounded and legitimated without reference to generally binding, ultimately divine commandments, in the 17th and 18th centuries the philosophical task was to a large extent identical with the coping and overcoming of the contradiction between religion and science. Particularly on the European continent, in France and Germany, philosophers from Descartes to Kant and their idealistic successors took refuge to the thesis, that the notion of the almighty God was immanent to human reason, or that the certainty of his existence followed with necessity from constant concepts and sentences which belonged to it. Since also the science was referred to maxims of reason, namely the logic, such rationalistic theories seemed to be sufficient to satisfy the psychologically and socially compelling and cogent need for divine moral imperatives. The period of bourgeois enlightenment was at least partially still connected with the conscious or unconscious assumption, that the binding nature and validity of moral duties and obligations was based on the idea of the perfect Being, however in no way on the traditional, supposedly already obsolete, old-fashioned, out of date teachings and narratives and stories and legends and myths, what the German enlightener Ebrahim Lessing had called the flood of arbitrary sentences of the positive religions. In modernity universal values and norms can be discovered only in and through the dichotomy between the religious and the secular, between faith and reason, between religion and science.

Micrology

The critical theorists belong to the great secular tradition of the bourgeois, Marxian and Freudian enlightenment movements. Thus, the critical theory remains at least partially connected with the conscious or unconscious assumption, that the binding nature and validity of moral duties and obligations - including the possibility of universal values and norms, of a universal ethos - is based on the idea of the totally Other than the world as nature and history, in which not only the enlightenment idea of a perfect Being, but also the God-hypostasies of the supposedly obsolete teachings, narratives, stories and myths of the positive world-religions were concretely superseded, i.e. not only critically negated, but also preserved, elevated and fulfilled. The

direction, the meaning of the critical theorist Adorno's whole thinking was micrological, and only through micrology could he reach out for the totally Other. Adorno's thinking was characterized by his showing consideration for the small, and for the little and for the individual. Adorno's consideration for the particular and the singular exacted an extreme differentiation in his formulations. It contradicted the very ethos of Adorno's thinking, to express any general formulations, including those about universal values and norms and their grounding and legitimation. The differentiation was necessary and unavoidable for Adorno, because the consideration for the small and the particular, which is of course reality, was so great and intense with him. Adorno's micrology anticipated Foucault's deconstructionism, and the whole movement of post-modernism, in so far as it stressed the particular against the universal. Foucault once stated, that he could have saved himself a lot of work, if he had read Adorno earlier. However, for Adorno it was precisely his micrology, which led him and Horkheimer to his notion of the totally Other as source of unconditional meaning and of moral validity claims and of possible theodicy solutions.

The Totally Other

Adorno's micrology became particularly obvious, when he was concerned with the foundation of the binding nature and validity of universal values and norms in the notion of the totally Other: the theological dimension. Concerning the existence of God, Adorno would answer in conformity with the great enlightenment - thoughts of the past, that he could not simply say, that there was a God and that he was just and good. This was so, because Adorno and Horkheimer had already in their common work the Dialectic of Enlightenment explained and expounded, that the words just, or good, or even God could not at all be formulated positively. They could be formulated only negatively in terms of an Other, which could be signified only through this word other and through nothing else. It is the longing for this totally Other which so far has prevented the critical theorists from putting the very notion of the society on the index as the positivists among the sociologists have done, or the notion of the soul as the scientific psychologists have done. The critical theory of society does not resign as critical sociology, or as critical psychology. The longing for the entirely Other also has prevented so far the critical theory from falling victim to sociology, or psychology, or any other form of positivism. The longing for the entirely Other hindered the critical theorists from yielding to the bourgeois resignation: to that refusal to make any significant statement on the crucial questions and to simply setting up house in the finite world and explore in it every direction.

Atheism

The longing for the entirely Other also prevented the critical theorists from subscribing to a radical abstract atheism of some philosophers of the bourgeois enlightenment, such as Helvetius, or La Mettrie, or Holbach, who really did give negative answers to the God-question, and in whose thought reason was sufficiently confident to make negative statements about the Absolute. Like Kant the critical theorists are rather guided by the conviction, that reason is denied the right to stray into the realm of the Absolute: to move into the intelligible worlds. This explains, why the critical theorists can stand with both feet firmly planted on the ground of reality and that they really know what it is that they can positively and definitely know and what not. It is the hope for the totally Other which keeps the critical theorists from falling for the theodicy or anthropodicy of bourgeois life, which is conscious of its own practical activity while despairing of the fulfillment of its own universal values and norms, and its own Utopia. Finally, the longing for the totally Other has enabled the critical theorists of society to participate realistically in the global discourse on universal values and norms and their possible negation.

Heaven, Eternity, Beauty

Adorno and then also Horkheimer always talked of the longing for the entirely Other, without using traditional words like Heaven, or Eternity, or Beauty. That was precisely the marvelous, splendid and brilliant element in Adorno's question-position, that as he always asked for the world, he really meant in the last analysis the totally Other than nature, and society, and history. At the same time, Adorno was convinced that the totally Other could not be

comprehended by describing it directly, but only by representing the world as it is: in view of the fact that it is not the only reality at which the thoughts of the critical theorists aim. Thus critical theorists shared a negative theology not in the sense that there was no God, but rather in the sense, that he could not be represented: in strictest and most radical obedience to the second and third commandment of the Mosaic Decalogue. This negative theology, this longing for the entirely Other, constituted the ethos of the thinking at least of the critical theorists of the first generation: particularly their thinking about universal values like love, solidarity, justice, or freedom. Even when this negative theology was replaced by Jürgen Habermas and the second generation of critical theorists, through the discourse ethics and its basic principle of the unlimited communication community, it still continued to function nevertheless at least as motivating power for a communicative practice realizing universal values and norms.

The Illuminated and the Illuminating

In any case, like Goethe the critical theorists are determined to see what is illuminated in the world, but not the light, the totally Other, which does the illuminating. For the critical theorists - as for Hegel, or for Gustav Mahler - there is nevertheless the totally Other, the Non-Immanent that nevertheless arises out of immanence: the Non-Identical, the absolutely New, the ultimate Utopia. Of course, already the early Jews and Christians had prayed to the God who would make the whole creation new, and who would let disappear the first heaven and the first earth, and who would create a new heaven and a new earth.

For the old Jews and Christians all the moral commandments pointed in this eschatological-apocalyptic direction. They saw the existing world in terms of their eschatological reservation. For the materialistic critical theory, the realized historical materialism would also be its own liquidation: the abolition of materialistic interests. Only then the spirit would come forth which now in civil society can only be anticipated in the forms of a non-bourgeois art, or a non-bourgeois religion, or a non-bourgeois philosophy, no matter how weak they may be.

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