Content

Foreword

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This book is the product of a joint project on »Humanism in the Era of Globalization – An Intercultural Dialogue on Humanity, Culture, and Values«, which took place between 2006 and 2009. It was sponsored by the Stiftung Mercator and organized by the Kulturwissenschaft-liches Institut in Essen (Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humani-ties in Essen, Germany). Among the activities of this project were con-ferences which were meant to bring together scholars from different countries interested in discussing the issue of »humanism« from the specific perspective of intercultural encounter, comparison, and ex-change. The starting point of and common ground for this discussion was a common interest in finding transculturally valid ideas and prin-ciples of cultural orientation, so that the challenges of the growing one-world in the globalization process can be met. This process has brought along the danger of uniformization and uniformity, thus deny-ing the rich variety and difference of traditions and experiences which have proved so important and effective in making sense of the contin-gent, highly conflictual, and thus entangled ways of growing together. Therefore the transcultural perspective asks to be shaped by the recog-nition of these differences.

Humanism may be an idea capable of bringing together different traditions in, and experiences of, global modernity in order to reach agreement on a comprehensive idea of humanity as an intellectual an-swer to globalization. At the same time it may serve as the framework for articulating cultural differences on the common ground that being a human being endows man with inbuilt dignity, which demands respect and recognition. This encounter is impossible without dealing with and

working through the tensions and negative historical experiences of domination and suppression in cultural interaction. Therefore mutual criticism can become an effective means to examine humanistic traditions and their chances for further development. But this criticism should be pursued as an entrance to discussion, deeper understanding and a chance for recognition.

This intercultural encounter needs a historical framework. To find an outline for such a framework was the main intention of the conference on »Civilizations, Axial times, Humanisms«. This conference was organized in cooperation with the Centre for Comparative Studies on World Civilizations of the Chinese Academy of the Social Sciences in Beijing as its »Third International Conference of the International Forum on World Civilizations«. It took place at Iserlohn over 8–10 September 2007. This book took some important inspiration from the conference, but it is not a publication of the conference papers. Some papers are included in revised form, while others were acquired later on. Not all aspects of a historical framework for intercultural humanism could be covered. Rather, the conference was intended to shape some essential elements of the structure of such a universal historical perspective. In doing so, the authors and the editors wish to promote the outline of this future-directed intercultural humanism.We want to thank the Chinese Academy of the Social Sciences in Beijing and the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities in Essen for their engagement in planning and pursuing the conference, the Mexican Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACyT) for their support of the book project, and, of course, our authors for their contributions. Additionally, we want to thank Angelika Wulff, Aslı Aymaz, and Iain Sinclair for their work in copyediting the manuscripts and brushing up the English.

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Introduction

Towards a Humane World of Many Worlds

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We are living today in a world that is shared by all human beings.
»One world, one humanity« is no longer an empty, abstract slogan; it
has become a reality. However, we are also still living in a world in
which the opportunities to participate in this single world are very un-
evenly distributed. This is true in many ways: politically, economi-
cally, socially and culturally. But it is also true for the ways in which
human beings are trying to make sense of this common world.

Sense generation is important for all human beings. It is one of the
conditions for living a full and humanly dignified life. Or to put it dif-
ferently: lack of sense is dehumanizing. Sense generation is a core as-
pect of the construction of the world. Human beings are not merely
living *in a* world to which they simply adapt more or less successfully.
They also have to reconfigure their worlds constantly anew[1] as some-
thing meaningful for them. Creating the world as a cosmos of sense
and meaning that human beings exist in is a primary precondition for
acting and thinking meaningfully.

The world in which we are living today is less and less limited by
local, national, regional, ethnic or cultural constraints. We are *all* liv-
ing more and more in a world that spans the whole planet. This is true
not only for wealthy jet-setters but also for migrant labourers, landless
peasants and everyone in between.[2] However, the means to make sense
of this common world of all human beings are still produced in very

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1   Dux, Günter: *Historisch-genetische Theorie der Kultur*, Weilerswist 2005.
2   Castells, Manuel: *End of Millennium*, Oxford 1998, especially chapter 2.

few places which are concentrated in the ›Global North‹ – mainly Europe and North America. It is here where the languages that bring the common world of all human beings into the picture have been invented. These languages are not separable from the historical circumstances that created them. One of the most important sets of historical processes in this context is colonialism. Wolfgang Reinhard wrote: »[Colonialism] can indeed claim to have merged the many worlds of humanity into one world, the one we live in today«.[3] Although this does not provide a full picture of factors of globalization, it does highlight the brutal injustice weaved into the very fabric of the globalized world.

An important task for the creation of a world that is ultimately going to be a world in which all human beings feel at home, *i.e.* a world in which all human beings find the means to make sense of their lives in this global setting of human affairs, would be to challenge the conventional languages. What is needed, ultimately, is a language that reflects all of our different experiences in and within global modernity.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that these languages have to be invented from scratch. In this book we would like to discuss *three* concepts that have been particularly important for the sense generation of a world in which we are living: ›civilization‹, ›modernity‹, and ›humanism‹. These concepts can be seen as gateways for the imagination of a world that encompasses all worlds without reducing their differences. All three of them represent visions of a growing together of all of humanity. However, in many of the usages that were given to these words, it was also implied that civilization, modernity and even humanism were still privileges granted to Western societies and cultures, while the ›Rest‹ of humanity was not yet ready for them. This supposed singularity of Western civilization was also the key to many discourses that legitimized the tutelage of the West over colonized or formerly colonized peoples.

But it would be a much too narrow perspective to see the West only as the perpetrator of colonialism and imperialism and the others only as victims. We should not overlook the fact that the West itself has brought forth principles for criticizing domination and has insisted time and again on the need to limit domination through the law, which

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3   Reinhard, Wolfgang: *Kleine Geschichte des Kolonialismus*, Stuttgart 2008, p. 375.

has been used to push back illegitimate suppression outside and within its territories. Human and civil rights have to be mentioned in this context. Additionally, some basic principles of understanding cultural difference have been developed in the academic disciplines of the humanities which originated in the West and are still valid – even in the turn to indigenous traditions in the scholarly work of non-Western countries. The hermeneutic nature of understanding and the practices of intercultural translation are deeply rooted in the human mind and the humanities and social sciences have ceaselessly striven to reflect this fact in their methodological forms. Despite all their shortcomings and pitfalls it cannot and should not be overlooked that they advanced an important vocabulary that helps us to understand and imagine a world comprised of all human beings.

Nevertheless, there are grounds for many intellectuals and scholars to want to erase the key words of civilization, modernity and humanism from the vocabularies of the cultural and social sciences. They think that these words convey Eurocentrism, and that they consequently foster the uneven distribution of linguistic and conceptual means to address this common world of all humans, reproducing even a colonial or post-colonial grammar of domination and exploitation. But instead of proposing alternatives, they are leaving a dangerous void which in some cases leads to suspicion against any attempt to think beyond the limits of a particular culture, nation or one's own religion. The cultivation of new forms of provincialism and ethnocentrism are the consequence. Most criticism of the West and mainly of its ethnocentric marginalization of the other civilizations reproduces ethnocentrism by negating it. Many scholars and intellectuals of the non-Western world seek an understanding of today's world which has pushed away the cultural dominance of the West. But in doing so, they dialectically remain dependent upon it.

Additionally, one cannot overlook the fact that criticism of the West very often uses criteria of humanness and autonomy which can be found in the Western tradition, or may even stem from it. Therefore it appears to be not very promising to play off Western and non-Western traditions and ways of thinking against each other. It is much more promising to look for elements in all traditions, world-views and modes of thinking which can serve as starting points of an intercultural communication about valid principles of understanding the world today and to solve the urgent problems humankind is sharing.

One of these problems is the unsolved question of how the power of cultural difference can be mediated through the transcultural commonality of dominant features of modernity which all human beings are exposed to. Is there any chance to think about and conceptualize humankind as a comprehensive dimension of the lives of all people and as a manifestation of peculiarities in all forms and procedures of identity formation today? And at the same time, can fundamental and universal values be derived from this interrelationship between difference and commonality in being a human being? These questions lead to the necessity of thinking again about what civilization is with respect to different human life forms, what humankind means with respect to the shared cultural nature of human beings, what modernization has brought about in these life forms and in the idea of a comprehensive humankind, and whether humanism can be identified as a common denominator of those principles, rules and values of intercultural communication – which, if so, could prevent the bitter continuation of ethnocentrism and ›clash of civilizations‹ and change it into cultural features of critical recognition of differences in the name of a common humanity.

In this book we would like to advance the thought that civilization, humanism and modernity still provide important orientations in our current world. They were always thought to overcome parochialism and provincialism; ›Civilization‹ may facilitate efforts to reflect on the universality of human affairs without, however, negating the importance of cultural particularities. ›Humanism‹ responds to the need to understand *all human beings* as such. And ›modernity‹ helps us to envision a world that – for the first time in human history, for better or worse – is materially capable of and destined to be a world for all human beings.

In addition to these justifications, discourses in non-Western or formerly colonized societies make us understand that ›civilization‹, ›humanism‹, and ›modernity‹ are concepts that intellectuals and academics of these societies have appropriated in a very creative manner (see for instance the chapter on humanism in China by Stefan Schmidt). In other words, ›civilization‹, ›humanism‹, and ›modernity‹ are no longer solely Western concepts. They have long been an integral part of critical discourses in the colonial and post-colonial world. Instead of inventing new and incommensurable languages, we propose an intercultural renegotiation on a semantic and conceptual level. What

meaning do ›civilization‹, ›humanism‹ and ›modernity‹ convey in Africa, Asia and Latin America? How do these concepts help to orient post-colonial cultures to install themselves in the common world of all human beings? And how do these concepts support the criticism of eurocentrism or any other kind of ethnocentrism?

An answer to these questions can only be found and steps in the direction of a new way of intercultural communication can only be taken if the present-day situation of the growing together of the world and its different traditions and fraught relationships between people are put into historical perspective. Only then can we hope to identify the dynamics of change and its factors, which we have to analyze thoroughly in order to find the solution to our topical problems of cultural orientation in the globalizing world. New ideas for a universal history are needed in order to understand our complex and all encompassing situation today.

More than 60 years ago the philosopher Karl Jaspers published a remarkable book. In *The Origin and Goal of History* (first German edition: 1949) he laid out a fascinating theory according to which some two and a half thousand years ago different civilizations in Asia and Europe independently developed very similar ways of conceiving the world and the human being. One of the most important consequences of this civilizational break was the belief in the universality of the human being. This breaking point in human history is called the ›axial age‹ (*Achsenzeit*) – the *fourth* concept that we think should be connected to that of ›civilization‹, ›humanism‹, and ›modernity‹. One of the undeniable merits of Jaspers' ›axial age‹ theory is that it rejected a reading of human history as centered in the excellence of European cultural development, and thus paved the way towards a mindset that takes into consideration the whole of humanity – and that it does so not in mere abstract terms, but through the comparison of diverse particular civilizations. However, Jaspers himself did not succeed in completing this project. His study of ›axial age‹ civilizations remains weak on Islam, South America or Africa, a weakness which is not easy to remedy and which leaves human societies outside of the axial turn in an uncomfortable position with respect to the universalist breakthrough (see Stauth's contribution on ›axial ages‹ and Islam, below). It is precisely here that modernity imposes itself upon our reflections.

One of the consequences of modernity is that humanity is increasingly united into a network of interaction. This does not mean that the

globalisation of modernity entails a positive normative universality – quite the contrary: through the unjust differentiation by which it tends to integrate all different people into a common network of human interaction and the consequences thereof, it actually imposes on us the question of the normative coordination of people in the global order. Never before has the unity of humanity been more evident in our practical, day-to-day lives. But at the same time we witness violent splits and fragmentations of humanity – brought about by the same practices – that perhaps have never been more overwhelming or obvious.

It is for this very reason that we contend that our contemporary global modernity is a second ›axial age‹. An important difference from the first one is that we now have not only the opportunity but also the obligation to prove the universality of all human beings in the face of the conspicuous violation of this universality. This is basically a task for the cultural and social sciences. But our second ›axial age‹ also poses another task. While communication between the ›axial age‹-civilizations about which Jaspers was concerned remained quite restricted, in modernity, understood as a second ›axial age‹, communication and dialogue among civilizations became imperative. Our common world has yet to be constructed. But this will only be possible if as many voices as possible participate in this effort. Such a confrontation of different perspectives and experiences may be called a »dialogue«, not in the sense that humanity is presented as a chat room or conference hall, but in so far as this notion reflects the will to allow for the interplay of the peaceful resources of different traditions, instead of a coercive free-for-all. Precisely by recognizing the fact that interaction between peoples (intercultural exchange) simply does not happen in most cases in the form of a dialogue on values, but simply in the context of day-to-day commerce, the need for dialogue can be appreciated (see the chapter by Wolff in this regard). The violent, monological alternatives to the recognition of human plurality tarnish the beginning of the twenty-first century, just as it mars most of human history.

Such a dialogue on the different perspectives on human universality requires a number of efforts. First, since humanity as a whole is at stake, the different perspectives of different peoples (of which the current book is but a limited sample) – in other words, the vision of different traditions to understand what a humanly dignified life means, as well as different experiences with and within global modernity –

should be taken into account. Second, in order to appreciate the ›axial age‹ and ›modernity‹ as an ›axial age‹, it needs to be placed in the perspective of the long development of civilizations (*i.e.* the history of all of humanity). Only thus could the horizon be drawn in which to perceive a common future which is to a great extent technically and economically already here, but politically, symbolically, and ethically still to come. Third, in adopting this universal historical perspective, two misconceptions need to be avoided. On the one hand, the temptation of idealizing a future consensus on the ideal of humanity, a homogenous civilization, or a template for modernity needs to be discarded and the pluralities of *humanisms*, *civilizations* and *modernities* have to be made to bear on each other. On the other hand, a universal historical perspective departs from equating one particular historical path (European industrial modernization or rationalization) with moral development, since this simply boils down to reiterating an ideology of paternalism by which colonial violence was justified in a bygone era. Rather, discourses and practices standing outside of a (narrow conception of) Western rationality should be allowed full participation in the necessary dialogue on humanity. At the same time, representatives of marginal or marginalized cultural, linguistic or religious expressions should be called upon to recognize their *de facto* belonging to a world in which they participate and to which they contribute ideas and visions on its future correspondingly. Cultural chauvinism and cultural autism are equally inappropriate responses to the world in which we live and the future one we will have to build.

Humanisms, civilizations and modernities are thus still important conceptual tools that remind us of the need to think humanity as a whole. But they will only be effective building blocks for a common world of all human beings if we take into account how they are understood by other cultures and civilizations. This book wishes to take a step in this direction and this ambition is reflected in the three sections of which the book is composed. In the first section, a long view of human history and civilization is adopted under the title »The shape of history«. Whereas the concern in this section is to contribute to general anthropological considerations that come to light in a universal historical and civilizational perspective, the second section focuses on epochal turns in human history. This section is entitled »The breakthrough of axial ages and modernities«. Since the notion of epochal turns already implies cultural plurality, the second section also pre-

pares considerations regarding the »Challenges and paradigms of humanity«, thematized in section three.

A short overview of the respective chapters may be helpful to get an initial grasp on the book:

Opening the section on »The shape of history«, Ernst Wolff adopts the long historical perspective on humanity in order to examine the significance of human technicity for our understanding of civilizational change and inter-cultural dialogue. Hominization is the collection of civilizing processes by which people of different cultures in different times and places are formed. This happens through the changing combination of human nature with the three interdependent anthropogenetic components – society, signs and technics. In this chapter, an outline is given of the manner in which the third of these components is constitutive of all cultural events. Human technicity consists of three interdependent elements: habitus (technical disposition), instruments (the system of technical objects) and worldliness (the understanding interaction with the technical system). The changing interrelation of these elements through a structural sequence of prefiguration, configuration and refiguration describes a hermeneutics of technicity, comparable to the hermeneutic structure of narrativity demonstrated by Paul Ricoeur. As such, technics is an aspect of all civilizing processes: not only is all culture dependent on the technical means of its existence, but all technical events, by virtue of their instrumentality, carry meaning, transmit, and humanize. Consequently, any inter-cultural dialogue – as an intervention in the processes of civilization – presupposes and depends on technical means of existence that have to be taken into account if the dialogic process is to remain self-reflective and in touch with the problem of symbolic efficiency. This means that to render the transmission of ideas efficient is also to interfere with the ideas that are conveyed.

Jörn Rüsen presents a philosophy of history which is centered around the idea of an intercultural humanism. This idea takes up the challenges of globalization, which call for new modes of cultural identity formation. Since modern Western humanism – as it has come about at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the 19th century – has been critically reviewed and misjudged, it is reinterpreted and presented as a paradigm for a humanistic concept of cultural identity. This concept is based on a temporalized idea of humanity, which

emphasizes a synthesis of transculturally valid values of humanity and the variety and differences of human life forms. Its strength lies in the fact that here universalism and pluralism are mediated and amalgamated into an idea of a universal history. This, however, is ruled by anthropological universals, which shape all human life forms and move their temporal dynamics from archaic times to the present. Here three main ensuing periods can be distinguished: In the first, the cultural quality of being a human being is limited to one's own group. The second is characterized by the idea of an ›axial age‹, which has developed the idea of humanity as universal so that all members of the human race are included. The third progresses with a new step in this universalization: when thematizing humanity, there is a movement from exclusion to inclusion with regard to cultural pluralism. Thus a normative idea of humanism, the plurality of civilizations with universal value systems, and the unity of humankind in a universal historical perspective are interwoven. This historical image of humankind is characterized by unity and can be used to solve basic problems of identity formation today.

The complexity of civilizations is reflected in the diversity of approaches and perspectives on it and in the fact that there is no consensus on the proper definition for »civilization«. Such is the point of departure of the chapter by ZHANG JIE. Taking as a working circumscription of civilization »the cultural achievement accumulated over the course of social evolution of mankind«, Jie argues for diachronic and synchronic perspectives on civilization. The historical or diachronic perspective on civilization is the dominant approach to civilizations, and examines the origin, genesis and metamorphoses of civilizations. Here one has to complement the history of the rise and demise of civilizations with the (in principle) infinitely continuing interpretation thereof. The latter is a source of nourishment for subsequent civilizations and, one could add, for other contemporary civilizations. As synchronic approaches to civilizations, Jie highlights literary criticism (which occupies itself through the texts with the world as it appears in the light of the texts and by so doing reveals the unfolding of a civilization) and the study of language (where the exploration of the linguistic mediation between people and the world reveals the linguistic support of civilization at any given stage). Having considered the merits of these divergent approaches, Jie makes a plea for the co-existence of multiple, complementary and interdependent perspectives on civili-

zation, which alone would otherwise simply succumb to their own partiality. The chapter concludes with a reminder that reflection on civilization is itself a civilization-forming activity: the confusing questions in which we are entangled by civilization studies also fertilizes our contribution to civilization.

Shifting the focus from the universal historical view of humanity to »The breakthrough of axial ages and modernities« (section two), BERNARD GIESEN's paper raises an important question: Why do we need the demarcation of historical epochs like that of an axial age or modernity? Two common answers to this question are: The idea of historical epochs follows simply »a logic of human narration«. The second common answer is: modernity likes to think in epochs because it defines itself first of all as being a new era that simply by being new has already important advantages over former historical eras. Giesen, however, challenges these explanations. He emphasizes that the way in which epochs are marked is itself subject to historical transitions. The important turning point is for Giesen the ›axial age‹, when »concepts of synthesis and transcendence« started to define epochs rather than more primitive categories like »we and others« which Giesen understands as deeply »ethnocentric«. Concepts of synthesis and transcendence opened the possibility to think beyond the limits of geographically constraints of social and cultural entities. For Giesen our contemporary modern world, precisely because of its decentralized and polyphonic character, needs languages that allow us to think and imagine the whole.

GEORG STAUTH follows two intertwined questions: 1. What is the place of Islam in ›axial age‹ theory? 2. How far can ›axial age‹ theory inform our contemporary modernity, in which the conflict between Islam and the West has become preeminent? In order to answer these questions, Stauth delves deep into Jaspers's original version of ›axial age‹ theory. He underlines the humanist conviction that motivates Jaspers's project. It is the idea of thinking of »humanity as a whole« that Jaspers enthusiastically embraces after World War Two. But Stauth also emphasizes another aspect of the intellectual revolution that occurs during the ›axial age‹ simultaneously in many unconnected civilizations: the idea that through this revolution communication became the foundational principle of the new »world culture« in the making. If this is so, the question about the significance that ›axial age‹ theory could have with respect to Islam would be in how far it explains the

potential for communication between Islam and other civilizations, particularly the West. The difficulty in answering this question has to do with the fact that Jaspers himself never discussed Islam directly. Another problem is, according to Stauth, that certain presuppositions of universal communicability do not apply in the case of Islam.

GEORG ESSEN explores the content of the axial-age breakthrough from a theological perspective in order to demarcate the role of religion in dialogue about the values of a plural, modern world. If the axial differentiation between a transcendent and a worldly order can find expression in such divergent views as the individualization of the human being with respect to the world (as in the great monotheisms) or as participating holistically in the world (as in Eastern religions), would it not be possible to rediscover the axial-cultural common ground behind this diversity, and with which the divergent religious views would be compatible? Likewise, both religion and secular philosophy could be shown to have been engendered by the axial-age breakthrough. As contemporary inheritors of these plural fruits of the axial age and, besides, of the multipolarity of the globalised world, the need for intercultural dialogue is urgent. As the centre from which the plurality of axial value systems emerged, religion has to be heard in the dialogue of cultures; but at the same time, on the basis of this plural axial origin of its own value, religion can recognize the plural manifestations of axial universality. »By turning the cultural plurality of the world into its own immanent problem«, Essen claims, »Christianity mainly contradicts fundamentalist drives to associate with anti-globalist tendencies of re-particularisation in the ›Clash of Cultures‹«.

VOLKER H. SCHMIDT's contribution discusses Eisenstadt's multiple modernities approach. He is particularly interested in the question raised by Eisenstadt, namely whether Japanese modernity represents a form of modernity essentially different from that of Western societies. Schmidt's claim is that it does not make much sense to talk about »multiple modernities« since modernization in Japan and in other parts of East Asia clearly follows the same lines that are characteristic of modernization processes in the West. Schmidt's paper maintains a critical distance from classical modernization theories. He is convinced that these theories have lost their credibility. However, he defends the convergence hypothesis of modernization theory, albeit to advocate his own »varieties of modernity« stance. When it comes to the »basic structure of societal organization«, East Asian societies have undertak-

en in recent decades a very successful effort to modernize without losing their cultural particularities. Schmidt's main point is that today modernity is global reality. It is thus still – or even more than ever before – a concept that could and, according to Schmidt, actually does orient the building of a common world of all human beings without suppressing cultural differences.

Yet such an ambition remains to be pursued, an effort that needs to be guided by insight into the »Challenges and Paradigms of Humanity«. In the first of the series of contributions in this regard, OLIVER KOZLAREK traces the concept of the ›axial age‹ back to Karl Jaspers. By doing so he shows that Jaspers' motivation for the use of this concept did not only stem from the empirical evidence of a convergence of the axial civilizations some 2500 years ago. Rather, it seems that for Jaspers much more important was the »belief« that humanity has a common »origin« and a common »goal«. In the second step of his argumentation, Kozlarek tries to show that in the current use of this concept, especially in the sociological debate about »multiple modernities« for which Shmuel N. Eisenstadt has become an important icon, this humanist conviction is being lost. Another problem that Kozlarek sees in the current use of the ›axial age‹ hypothesis is that it diverts attention from our present global modernity by losing itself more and more in discussions about the ›axial age‹ civilizations that existed 25 centuries ago. With the help of the civilization theory that the Brazilian anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro presented, Kozlarek proposes to focus attention once again on our current modernity. He understands modernity as a »second ›axial age‹« in which all humanity has to build a world in which all human beings can feel at home. However, modernity as a second ›axial age‹ is still an unfulfilled promise. It has yet to come to terms with the multiple experiences that human beings around the world have made in the processes of growing together.

GEORG W. OESTERDIEKHOFF's essay presents a theory of cultural evolution which is valid across cultural differences and emphasizes the structural change of cognitive capacities. It describes the different components of his theory (like Elias' theory of civilization and Piaget's and Kohlberg's developmental psychology) and outlines its importance for understanding universal history. That it can be usefully applied becomes evident when the ideas of humanity and moral principles come to the fore. Moral behaviour has substantially changed in practical life according to a structural change in human cognition – as

has already been thematized in developmental psychology. Oesterdiekhoff presents a shocking example of inhumanity considered ›normal‹ in the minds of premodern people: He hints at the gladiator fights in ancient Rome, the cruelty of which is not singular, but typical for human behaviour in the framework of a non-universalistic morality. By looking at this inhumanity and at the attitudes and views in modern societies, Oesterdiekhoff deduces the idea of progress – which, of course, is highly unfashionable today. But the evidence presented in favour of it should not be set aside. So modernity and humanism are given a new face, which remarkably differs from the topical criticism dominating the intellectual discourse about them.

HUBERT CANCIK's paper gives a condensed image of Western humanism from ancient times to the present. It starts with a description of what Europe (or the West) means by referring to antiquity and presents its main features as shaped by and preformed in Homer's poetry. For Cancik, European humanism has not really been shaped by the intellectual movement of the Renaissance and that of later centuries, as has often been repeated, since even the notion of humanism and its specific meaning in intellectual discourse only emerged at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century. Cancik vividly emphasizes that »occidental humanism first and fundamentally is an educational movement, rooted in classical tradition«.[4] He gives reasons for this understanding of humanism by analyzing the history of its basic terms (e.g. humanitas). He finally concludes that there is a close relationship between the anthropology of the classical literature regarding Roman Stoic philosophy, on the one hand, and the idea of basic human and civil rights of the European Enlightenment, on the other. It is only in the form of this synthesis that humanism has reached the shape of a universal ethics. Thus it is capable of presenting the peculiarity of historical origins and developments as a basic starting point for universal principles of cultural orientation today.

The representatives of »Contemporary New Confucianism« engaged with Western thought in an attempt to find a modern conceptual expression for the Confucian tradition. Tang Junyi's contribution in this regard – and the theme of STEFAN SCHMIDT's chapter – is centred upon the exploration and advocacy of the Confucian humanism as the essence of Chinese culture. If Confucian humanism is argued by Tang

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4   See p. 249.

to be superior to Western humanism, this result is delivered only at the end of a trajectory of critical dialogue with and appropriation of elements of Western philosophy. This humanism is not so much a set of beliefs as an attitude guiding human action. It consists of cultivating a seed that all people carry in them. Three considerations develop and support this point. First, New Confucianism attempts to reveal the primordial normative or moral nature of self-awareness that guides human agency, as well as the applicability of traditional Confucian values to contemporary circumstances. Fellow-humanness, dignity or humaneness is at the core of this self-awareness. Second, the sense of the self that guides action could be epistemological or moral, where the former tends to limit perspective on others to what could be known about them, and the latter consists of transcending individuality through compassion, *i.e.* by a pre-epistemological responsiveness to the other's suffering. Third, taking a page from the book of Buddhism, Tang accordingly distinguishes between the attitudes of clinging to individualism – with the consequence of viewing interpersonal contact primarily as struggle – or of not-clinging, by which the other is given priority in responsible action. Schmidt shows the way for a continued exploration, following in the steps of Tang, through a critique of the latter's unrealistic claims for the saving potential of this New Confucianism in the broader political order.

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