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In any case, theology, religious studies, and social science draw their consequences out of the new situation of the last decade by coming up with detailed empirical and historical studies concerning the interdependencies of religion and politics world-wide. Thereby, two main approaches of scientific discovery can be distinquished: the first ones take mostly place within social science, especially in regional studies. They discuss the

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To start with the former: What is interesting in Castoriadis´ Political Philosophy as it had is mainly conceptualized in his book „The Imaginary Insitution of Society“ from 1975[4] and besides other aspects, is his emphasis on the importance of the dimension of meaning for any adequate understanding of societies in general and politics in special. Societies do

as *these here* things, posits them as being *what* they are – the *what* being posited by signification, which is indissociably principle of existence, principle of thought, principle of value, and principle of action."[5] Thus, societies do not present static orders. Moreover, they participate in processes of permanent transformation of their institutional patterns which sometimes leads even to radical revoultions. As a consequence, following Castoriadis means to respect more carefully the fact that societies reconstruct and recreate themselves permanently by creative re-interpretations their members do by means of a reservoir of infinite surplus of meaning, called magma. The magma thus forms the sphere of the Imaginary that will not be absorbed by the spheres of the Real, the Rational or even

this magma be. "Image" here obviously does not mean copy or reflection, but work [*oeuvre*] amd operation of the radical imaginary, organizing and constituting imaginary schema."[7]

Now, what is then special for traditional societies in history is the fact that their last and radical forms of the Imaginary which underlie the whole world of significance and the gestalts of their representation within a social order, often were symbolized by the "God"- referents: "What is the origin, the cause, the foundation of the institution (that is to say, of society)? What is its *wherefore*, its raison d´être? To this question, religion has, since all time, provided a response in affirming that the institution of society proceeds from the same "origin" as everthing als, that is possesses, therefore, the same solidity and the same foundation as the entire world and the things contained therein, and a finality that is articulated in conjunction with their own finality."[8] – "Cornerstone of the institution of society, vehicle for the ultimate significations and guarantor of all the others, religion must sanctify, in one manner or another, both its own origin and the origin of the institution of society whose core it forms."[9]

Though Castoriadis as a thinker who was deeply influenced by Marxism does not really believe that religious social imaginaries (with the „God"-referent) can function as possible options any longer, he remains critical towards secular alternatives as well, especially towards Marxist substitutes. Therefore, Castoriadis has no doubt even modern societies cannot overcome their need of a „radical Imaginary": "Every society up to know has attempted to give an answer to a few fundamental questions: Who are we as a

[7] Castoriadis,

members of a society expierence it as more than an accident or a convenience; they experience it as of their human essence. And, inversely, the symbols express that man is fully man by virtue of his participation in a whole which transcends his particular existence“[13]. Thereby, his interest is guided by his conviction that only through deep

the policial as the basic form of human self-interpretation through discovering an order in reality differed. Like Castoriadis, Voegelin shares the importance of the human capacity to imagine construing a symbolic world-view that helps people to get orientation in their life and for their existence. But for Voegelin already this imaginary competence of man does not result out of a pure/mere projection (or even illusion). Moreover the partial benefits (and their can be no absolute one´s as long as history exists) of human imaginary are grounded in reality because it is reality in itself that is – to some extent – symbolic, or more precisely shows an imaginary dimension. "Imagination, as a structure in the process of a reality that moves toward its truth, belongs both to human consciousness in its bodily location and to the reality that comprehends bodily located man as a partner in the community of being. There is no truth symbolized without man´s imaginative power to find the symbols that will express his reponse to the appeal of reality"[15]

Again, the similiarities between Voegelin and Castoriadis should not disguise us that their conceptions are based on completely different methodologies and theoretical impacts. Though both thinkers understand human history as the crucial medium in which human beings and socities asks for (ultimate) meaning and represent them by institutional

Axial Age is simply the name for the period in human history that obviously has influenced the following centuries most extensively by challenging the old symbiotic order of divine (transcendent) and mundane (immanent) reality, especially when it comes to questions of political power and leadership.

However skeptically Voegelin remained towards the Axial-Age-Theory in general and towards Jasper´s version in special, he nevertheless accepted that during this time between 800 and 200 BCE in Old Israel and Greece, in China and India (and perhaps as well in Persia) a radical and improtant breakthrough has happend by the emergence of new forms of symbolism using first time in human history universal categories (like humanity, humankind etc.) and by imagining new models of a universal, moral order inspired by transcendental or transcendent visions/images/imaginations of the „Good“, that almost always were visualized by “God” or “gods“. Voegelin speaks of „multiple and parallel leaps in being“[16] (“*Seinssprung*”). The meaning of human existence, the meaning of political power and of human action, was from then on conceptualized through religious symbolisms that focus on real tensions that lie in the heart of the relation between God and King, God and man, the divine and the mundane reality.[17] By interpreting social order radically through the perspective of a divine and universal (all-encompassing) counter-reality the former sanctified traditional order got into question and was often transformed. Therein, one very basic reason can be recognized why all so-called world-religions tend to act offensivley in political affairs, as the subtitle of my talk

Religions. The limitations of my argumentation are quite obvious: I only have treated to political theorist, Voegelin and Castoriadis, who are not very prominent in the current debate on the problem of the „Theological-Political“, to mention at least one other thinker would be necessary to discuss, namely Leo Strauss[18]. Of course, there are some good reasons for my selective approach, not only because of our strict time schedule. One of them results from the fact that contemporary Political Philosophy often take for granted the only way out of political problems with religions would be to stress on the “true” secular nature of politics. In consequence, one often easily underestimates or even completly ignores the symbolic and imaginary dimensions of politics. This is why I have concentrated my argumenation so much on the concepts of Voegelin and Castoriadis. Compared with this my own imbalance much more lies in exluding the question of discursive power of politics that shapes both: language and action, *legein* and *teukein*. Thus, a critical genealogy of symbolic pattern of religious and political vocabularies could help to disclose/uncover/reveal the hidden and implicit mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion within the institutions of social imaginaries and world-views through which every society is constitued in their everyday ritual practices as well as in their organisations and institutions of economy, bureaucracy, arts etc. Especially for Axial-traditions with their emphasis on moral universalism this point – the question of inclusion and exclusion – calls for higher attention and care. For any further work on this topic in my view central insights were already given by the writings of Michel Foucault.[19] (By

[18] Cf. H. Meier, Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem, Cambridge Univ. Press: New York 2006.

[19] Cf. M. Foucualt, The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse of Language, Random House: New York, 1972, as well as: Power. The Essential Works of Michel Foucault Vol. 3, New Press: New York 2001.

that the late Foucault has focused his considerations very much on a concept of self-

(or of the two swords) than to act according to it because in reality, and this does not only apply to Islamic countries, the transitions are fluently.

With it another point is interrelating. The world of politics and the world of religion are both worlds of search for personal and social identity-formation. Above all the Axial-religions and Axial-world-views represent social imaginaries that target both, an individual good life in a common good society. Thereby, the different religious symbolisms entangle with other symbolisms, especially the political one´s. Thus, it is a task for any Political Ethics of World Religions sensistive to different cultural contexts to focus on the various interdependencies between ways and practices of political and social identity-formation and the influence religious symbolism play within theses processes. In order to do this we should pay again more attention on pathologies the different patterns of the religio-political have formed through history. Otherwise we would simply ignore the almost to everbody obvious experience that religions are "leading sometimes to great moral advances and sometime to deep moral failures."[21]

This does not mean to neglect the furthermore important questions, p.e. how far creative reinterpretation of religious symbolisms can help to encourage a democratic ethos out of their own traditions. There is a need for hermeneutics in theological ethics by doing this work of a comparative approach to religious semantics. But as long as concepts of Political Ethics, even in theology, still promote the illusion that we can sharply separate the questions of the "ultimate" from the of the "penultimate" (to use a distinction from Bonhoeffer), and as long as they suggest there might be the perspective of a global consense of a common understanding of the religious/secular or holy/profy-dichotomy

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which is so central for the sphere of religion, our discussion may be endless but more or less fruitless when it comes to their output/results.

On contrary my argument for a Political Ethics of World Religions that is sensiste to both, cultual contexts and human history, refers to a hermeneutic of the foreign and follows an option of – what Michael Walzer once called – an „iterative universalism.“ [22]

For Christianity, to come at least in the very end to my own profession as a Systematic Theologian, one crucial task would be to ask what is really meant in the Apostle´s Creed when „power“ is only twice predicated of God, namely of God as the Creator and of God as the last Judge, both in combination with the symbol of the Father. And what consequences lie in that concept of divine power when it comes to human empowerment in being responsible towards Creation; and finally, why is it then that in the most serious situations of life the ideal of Christian existences calls for an attitude of radical detachment and self-sacrifice (cf. Phil 2: 5-11). The challenges for Christian Ethics that is neither naive nor simplistic, but keeps its eyes open to real politics – in my view – are enormous and – sorry for that – not even approximatively considered yet.

[22] Cf. Michael Walzer, Two kinds of Universalism