
CHAPTER 13

TOWARDS A CRITICAL POLITICAL ETHICS: COMPASSION, SOLIDARITY, AND LIBERATION TOWARDS JUSTICE

1. *The Tension between Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic Social Ethics*

In line with the Vatican II Council, academic Catholic Social Ethics conceives its discipline as *part of the modern culture*, as *one public voice among others*, and as a response to it, committed to speak out against society's injustices and standing in solidarity with those individuals and groups who are often silenced and rendered invisible and thereby misrecognized in their struggles and claims for justice. I certainly agree with John Paul II's or Francis' diagnosis regarding the contemporary structural injustices of the global political and economic order: there can be no doubt that the international institutions are less designed to ensure dignity, human rights, and global justice than to ensure a neocolonial global economy, either with the means of corporate capitalism or, as is the case in China, state-run autocratic capitalism. The result is that the multiple efforts of the United Nations are insufficient to fight the violation of the rights of the "bottom billion"¹, the rights of minorities in most societies, and women in all societies. However, while the former and current popes are quick to point at the structural ills of global politics, they seem to have long been blind to the Church's own institutions and structures. The Catholic clergy is not only failing to see its own sins; scholarly speaking, it also ignores the scholarship in political theory, ethics, or, for that matter, gender studies. Current philosophical *ethical theories* are as committed to justice as Catholic ethics is; in fact, academic Catholic ethics relies heavily on philosophical works, the human and social sciences, and sciences in general. They offer the discursive and epistemological frameworks within which ethical claims are made or moral judgments are elaborated. More likely than not, these partners in the scholarship of Christian theology and Social Ethics are *not* grounded in the natural law theory that the Church considers the only normative framework theologians ought to follow, but theologians who depart from the interpretation of morality are often labelled as "dissenting voices", whose works are of no further relevance for the Church's teachings. The renewal of Catholic social ethics that is in line with a political critical ethics as I envision it entails two major tasks: *first*, it must critique a theology that considers Christianity as the only true religion and the only way to salvation and is largely indifferent to its entangle-

1 This term was coined by Paul Collier, former Chair of the World Bank. Cf. P. COLLIER, *The Bottom Billion. Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*, Oxford 2007. For an analysis cf. my comparative analysis: H. HAKER, *Gerechtigkeit und Globale Armut – Neuere Ansätze zur Ökonomie und Ethik*, in: D. MIETH (ed.), *Gerechtigkeit*, Stuttgart 2009.

ment with political powers who in the name of civilizing non-European cultures and nations operated with the concept of domination of the earth. *Second*, it concerns the status of those who have been misrecognized, shamed, and stigmatized both in societies and the Catholic Church, supported by a particular Christian theology. The social question of today, first and foremost, concerns all those who can barely survive the hardships of present social, cultural, economic, and political life, and critical political ethics must respond to this challenge.

Because Catholic ethics is founded on a metaphysical natural law theology, in the next section, I want to shortly recall the historical entanglement of natural law theory with colonialism since early modernity. This reminder, in my view, is important because a quasi-colonial arrogance is echoed in today's economic and political neo-colonialism that is practiced in the name of global capitalism. The second task is, of course, multifaceted, and the chapters in this volume have addressed some of the questions that I have studied more concretely over the last decade. In this chapter, I want to examine three concepts, mercy, justice, and solidarity, that are invoked in Pope Francis' effort to renew Catholic Social Teaching. Nevertheless, beyond the papal encyclicals, I consider them central for a critical political ethics, too, albeit with some crucial corrections. Certainly, both the historical contextualization that guides my critique of the natural law tradition, and the conceptual analysis of political ethics, are only outlined here; both need to be further scrutinized in more thorough analyses – but my purpose in this chapter is to present a roadmap that is meant to clarify how critical political ethics differs both from the framework used in Catholic Social Teaching and from many works in Catholic Social Ethics. My aim is to envision new ways of power, of acting together personally, socially, and politically, in order to provide, secure, and sustain conditions of life for everyone that allow for a life in freedom and well-being.

1.1 DECOLONIZING CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

Over the long course of Western medieval history, Christian theology was, for the most part, defined by the ecclesial political theology of the Roman Catholic Church. The Latin word 'dominum', meaning property in Roman Law, was taken up by Christians as their mission to subdue the earth, as stated in Genesis 1,28: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." In early modernity, it was spelled out as the political and economic *colonization* of the earth, and as Christian *evangelization*. One case has become especially prominent: Francesco de Vitoria's role in the early colonization of the Americas. Teaching as a Dominican in Valladolid and Salamanca in Spain, de Vitoria navigated between advising the King of Spain, Charles V, in his determina-

tion to colonize the “Americas”, supported by Pope Innocent IV, and his own reinterpretation of theology in accordance with scholastic theology. Such a theological reinterpretation was necessary because, as Antonio García y García writes, “this School [the School of Salamanca] was concerned to resolve the great juridical theological problems of the sixteenth century, while medieval scholasticism reasoned in a more speculative way and had less contact with real life.”² In the 1530s, a political-theological battle arose because of the questioned legitimacy of colonization. According to the Natural Law doctrine that dominated Roman Catholic theology since the medieval scholastic theology, all humans, made in the image of God (*imago Dei*), participate in the divine. Through reason and revelation, they can decipher the traces of God (*vestigium Dei*) in nature and history. Reports of the cruelty with which the conquistadores treated the native indigenous peoples in the Americas spread in Spain and Portugal in the early 16th century, justified with the argument that the “barbarians” are “natural slaves” with no right to property and in need of being ruled by the European emperors and baptized by Christians. De Vitoria rebutted this position in a treaty that would become famous for the development of international law:³ The Spanish emperor, de Vitoria argued, has neither a “divine” nor a “natural” right to rule the “barbarians”. Quite to the contrary, the “barbarians” have a “natural right” to self-governance and a “natural right” to self-defense. With these rights come obligations, however: to grant the strangers hospitality and access to the their land with which they wish to trade. Regarding the Christian missionaries, the American Indians have the obligation to listen and encounter them peacefully. The Christians, on the other side, have the right to do missionary work, to protect the converts, and even to install a Christian Prince if a good number has converted to Christianity. In sum, de Vitoria contended that the American Indians have the same natural right to ownership of their land, governance, their culture and religion as the European migrants who came to their shores. This part of de Vitoria’s argumentation is often cited today as a precursor of international law. Yet, Vitoria *also* assumes that when the Native Americans would

[...] obstruct the Spaniards in their free propagation of the Gospel, the Spaniards, after first reasoning with them to remove any cause of provocation, *may preach and work for the conversion of that people even against their will*, and may if necessary take up arms and declare war on them, insofar as this provides the safety and opportunity needed to preach the Gospel.⁴

2 A. GARCÍA Y GARCÍA, *The Spanish School of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: A Precursor of the Theory of Human Rights*, in: *Ratio Juris* 10/1 (1997), 25–35, 26.

3 F. DE VITORIA, *Political Writings*, Cambridge, UK 1991. Cf. especially *ibid.*: “On the American Indians”, 1539, 233–292.

4 *Ibid.*, § 12, p. 285. (Emphasis in the text).

The Spanish Christians, this means, could easily use this judgment and argue that the Native Americans did not fulfil their part of the obligation and needed therefore to be converted to the Christian religion against their will and to be governed by the European conquerors.

By the 17th century, the reformulation of the scholastic natural law tradition resulted in radical shifts of political theory. Natural rights, democracy and the separation of state and church were now emphasized *while*, at the same time, the colonization continued. By the 18th century, the concept of tolerance was debated in philosophical discourses, foreshadowing the 20th century reasoning about multiculturalism and interreligious dialogues. Intertwined with these debates, however, was the conviction that the European race, its civilization, culture, and the Christian religion were the crowning point of human development.

In the history of the United States of America, the early colonies were convinced of their status as the “new chosen people”, spelled out as Christian white supremacy.⁵ The political theory of liberalism, the guiding framework of US political theory, did not follow the principle of universal rights and equality of all people with respect to the slave trade.⁶ Furthermore, slaves who were captured in African countries may have been Christians already, either due to the long history of the Christian mission going back to the time of the Roman Empire that had strong footholds in Northern and Eastern parts of Africa, or to the European colonization of Africa since early modernity. However, this Christian heritage was not recognized by the Christian churches. In the USA, African slaves were *not* welcomed into the white Christian communities but segregated into their own churches. The black Christian churches and their history in the USA are mostly ignored in Christian theology and have only become the object of thorough studies in recent years.⁷ The acknowledgment that (mostly white) Christians not only participated but also contributed *ideologically* to the slaughtering, enslavement, and degradation of other peoples, other ethnicities, or other religions must therefore not merely be a historical footnote. Quite to the contrary, it must be the starting point of any Christian theology, and certainly of critical political ethics that I want to promote.

5 D. T. BERRY, *Blood and Faith: Christianity in American White Nationalism*, Syracuse/New York 2017; E. P. KAUFMANN, *The Rise and Fall of Anglo-America*, Cambridge, MA 2004; L. LANGMAN/G. N. LUNDSKOW, *God, Guns, Gold and Glory: American Character and its Discontents*, Leiden 2017; K. BROWN DOUGLAS, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*, Maryknoll, NY 2015.

6 Cf. for a study of the transformation of the moral views on slavery K. A. APPIAH, *The Honor Code. How Moral Revolutions Happen*, New York/London 2010.

7 G. J. DORRIEN, *The New Abolition: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Black Social Gospel*, New Haven 2015.

In the 19th century, secularism, often coined as the culture of modernity, became a great concern for the Catholic Church. With the early texts of what was later called Catholic Social Teaching, however, a new ethics emerged that complemented personal moral theology with a social or structural and political-institutional ethics. Since it was rooted in the scholastic political theology of the past, it was based on an ecclesial understanding of a hierarchical, patriarchal, and autocratic Church that contrasted with the new visions of liberal democracies that emerged together with the economic structure of global capitalism. The political imagery of the hierarchical society (and Church) was upheld until the Vatican II Council in the 1960s. Only then, the reformers began to replace the antimodernist neoscholastic theology with an understanding of the Church that is open to internal reforms, other religions, and the world.

At the beginning of the 21st century, theologians who are shaped by the theology of Vatican II engage in the analyses of social, economic, and political issues as well as in social and political projects. The official representatives, i. e. the Vatican or the local Bishops Conferences of the Catholic Church, play an important role in public reasoning and political deliberations, though the Church still lacks the internal ecclesial structures that ensures the participation of the laity. Just like their “reformist” and “progressive” counterparts, numerous conservative or traditionalist Christian groups engage in their own agenda: today, they become visible in political campaigns and lawsuits regarding (Christian) religious freedom, which these groups see threatened by the secular state and culture in the USA and Europe.⁸ The campaigns are mostly centered on abortion and reproductive rights of women, same sex marriage, and questions of sexual and gender identity. Unsurprisingly, the nationalist movements that emerged over the last years heavily count on their Christian members – often invoking a narrative of Christianity that echoes the history of Western white supremacy.

1.2 THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND ITS ROLE IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Since the Vatican II Council, the Catholic Church has, albeit hesitantly, learned not to fear human rights, and is by now even considered to be one of its outspoken defenders, notwithstanding that it still rejects women’s rights as human rights. Although, it is certainly fair to say that Catholic and Christian theologians over the last decades have contributed in many ways to the interpretation of human rights. Freedom, equality, and solidarity are core values of liberal democracies, and they define human rights as equal rights to freedom and well-being of all, which need to be respected, protected, and fulfilled.⁹ Yet, because of the de

8 Cf. chapter 2 in this volume.

9 I follow Michelle Becca in pointing to the triad of “respect, protection, and fulfilment” that

facto asymmetries of power, social positions, and access to social goods, struggles for recognition, as well as struggles for rights, are an inherent part of civil and political activism, and recognition theory has emerged as an approach that attends to differences as much as to equality. Today, however, many societies seem to be caught in identity struggles that are often regarded as a backlash against cultural globalization. The effect is a further weakening of an already weak framework of universal human rights, pushing equality and the rights of individuals more and more to the margins of policies, laws, and social practices. How does the Catholic Church respond to these challenges? In the following, I will give three examples in order to show how different representatives of the Church interpret the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching.

At present, in the USA as well as in Europe, rightwing populist movements emphasize the Christian heritage of their national cultures as the guiding vision for their political programs. Most of them thrive with the support of parts of the Christian churches. The nationalist parties have a clear enemy: multiculturalism that they associate with the secular state, immigration-friendly policies, and liberal cultural politics, often tied to the so-called “gender ideology”. They promote a nation-state based on ethnicity that is white, a homogeneous community and citizenry, intertwined with the Christian religion. How then does the Catholic Church respond to the growing white Christian nationalism?

My first example of a response comes from Poland. In a speech given in January 2018, the Polish Metropolitan Archbishop and President of the Polish Bishops Conference, Stanislaw Gadecki, explained the difference between nationalism, cosmopolitanism, and patriotism.¹⁰ On the one hand, he warns against the ideologies of *nationalism*, in particular those forms of nationalism that reject religion as ultimate authority, referencing especially Hitler’s National Socialism. On the other hand, Gadecki warns against the ideologies of “internationalism” and “*cosmopolitanism*”, because they aim to undo any “homogenous communities”, and postulates the “mixing of people from different civilizations”¹¹. The Catholic *patriotism* that Gadecki embraces recognizes the ultimate divine authority that transcends the political realm of “law and order”, reconciling the love of country

orients the implementation of human rights. Cf. M. BECKA, *Verantwortung übernehmen. Christliche Sozialethik und Migration*, in: *Stimmen der Zeit* 143 (2018), 343–352; M. BECKA/J. ULRICH, *Blinde Praxis, taube Theorie? Sozialethische Reflexion über das Menschenrecht auf Gesundheit*, in: B. EMUNDS (ed.), *Christliche Sozialethik – Orientierung welcher Praxis?*, Stuttgart 2018, 299–322.

¹⁰ METROPOLITAN ARCHBISHOP STANISLAW GADECKI, *Nationalism and Patriotism*, Polish Bishops Conference January 17, 2018. <https://episkopat.pl/archbishop-gadecki-nationalism-and-patriotism-document/>.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

and the love of God. In reality, The PiS (“Law and Order”) Party-government regularly invokes the “love of the homeland” together with the Catholic heritage, and it even strives to secure the Christian heritage in a (new) Preamble of the Constitution.¹² Archbishop Gadecki clearly seeks a “third way” between extremist nationalism and cosmopolitanism; therefore, he promotes a cultural patriotism that fosters the love of the “Fatherland” or, as John Paul II had it, the “Motherland”. Gadecki quotes from the Polish Catholic Bishops’ Conference 2012 statement that calls for a “pedagogy of patriotism”, securing the ultimate authority of the divine while fostering the political authority of the “homeland”¹³. Apparently, the Bishops’ Conference saw the need to orient the debates on the rising populism at the time – and seemed to be content to lend it a Catholic voice.

My second example comes from the USA. In January 2017, Bishop Robert McElroy reflected upon the “powerful nationalism” that “surges our country”¹⁴. McElroy urged Catholics to reject a populist nationalism that “has often been exclusionary and nativist, carrying with it claims that ‘the people’ are really only some of the people who live within the United States”. He, too, demands that Catholics embrace a patriotism that is in line with Christian theology. Unlike Gadecki who referenced the scholastic tradition of natural and divine law, McElroy turns to the core values and principles of Catholic Social Teaching. For McElroy, patriotism and universal human rights are not exclusive. *American patriotism* that Catholics should embrace, he holds, “is connected on a fundamental level with our obligations to the whole of humanity”, which he identifies in three key issue areas: global economy, global environment, and the “responsibility of all peoples for the refugees in the world”. In other words, while Gadecki points to the *cultural* and *national* roots of the Polish historical past that Catholics should be educated in, McElroy points to the *aspiration* that is entailed in the American political vision: the universal common good, justice, freedom, and solidarity. Furthermore, interpreting American patriotism as an inclusive universalism of the common good that takes responsibility for the global economy, environment, and refugees, McElroy clearly departs from the American national or cultural patriotism that President Donald Trump and his supporters defend.

12 President Andrzej Duda wanted to hold a referendum at the end of 2018, stopped, however, by the Senate in July 2018. Cf. ASSOCIATED PRESS, *Poland’s Senators Reject President’s Constitution Vote Plan*, in: New York Times, July 25, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2018/07/25/world/europe/ap-eu-poland-politics.html>.

13 The document is quoted in METROPOLITAN ARCHBISHOP STANISLAW GADECKI, *Nationalism and Patriotism*, 5.

14 R. MCELROY, *What is the Catholic Response to the Rise of Nationalism?*, in: America Magazine, January 24, 2017, <https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2017/01/24/what-catholic-response-rise-nationalism>.

Promoting patriotism as long as it is oriented by “divine law” differs from a patriotism that promotes human rights, the common good, and global justice. American and European bishops, these examples imply, attempt to moderate nationalism by *reinterpreting* its narrative in theological terms. Gadecki especially warns that people need roots to form an identity, rightly pointing to the importance of a person’s identity, which is indeed entangled with one’s family history and the bonds one needs in order to thrive – yet ignoring that it is *also* a part of personal development that a person takes a self-reflective, critical position towards her cultural values and norms. Over against Gadecki’s scholastic – or rather: neo-scholastic – vision of the role of religion, McElroy emphasizes the global mission of the American political-ethical aspiration.

The Polish Bishops have been silent for a very long time, hesitant and timid in their criticism, for example, of the Polish political reforms and the refugee policies. Likewise, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops has tirelessly emphasized its longstanding priority of the “ethics of life”, and as part of this, it has welcomed the anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQ policies of the Trump Administration, which it demands all Catholics ought to follow. Certainly, immigration has long been an issue for the Catholic Church, but it took Pope Francis’s shift in emphasis of Catholic Social Teaching to raise hopes that the American bishops would recalibrate their moral agenda. Following Francis’s admonitions, for some of the bishops, the Trump Administration *and* Republican immigration policies are indeed a major concern. Yet, in a column from June 2018, on the occasion of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops’ meeting, Michael Sean Winter, applauding USCCB President Daniel DiNardo’s “condemnation” of the so-called “family separation” at the US-Mexican border that unfolded dramatically during the Bishops’ meeting,¹⁵ asks why the bishops did not interrupt their meeting or take more drastic steps to use their power? The American bishops have long been more vocal in their support of the campaigns (and lawsuits) for the expansion of religious freedom than in their defense of the migrants and asylees at the border. Furthermore, the bishops are so occupied with the ongoing effects of the sexual abuse crisis that they have lost much of their credibility to be a moral voice in the public sphere.

15 M. S. WINTER, *On Immigration and 'Faithful Citizenship', US Bishops Avoid the Challenge*, in: National Catholic Reporter, June 15, 2018. <https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/distinctly-catholic/immigration-and-faithful-citizenship-us-bishops-avoid-challenge>.

My third example comes from the Vatican. It requires some contextualization, because it concerns a conflict that arose within the European Union already in 2010, with multiple ramifications up to today. On September 14th of that year, Vivian Reding, then Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, commented on a policy in France that permitted the deportation of hundreds of Roma people from French territory. Roma have migrated in large numbers to Western Europe over the last decades, mostly because they faced discrimination in Eastern Europe where they had lived before. In 2010, 15,000 Roma lived in France, some of them in authorized camps, others in illegal camps. These illegal camps were destroyed in the summer of 2010, and the people were forced to leave the country. Thousands of Roma found a new place to live in Italy. The French deportation policy, under then President Sarkozy, provoked fierce criticism by human rights groups and representatives of the Roma community at the time. While this is not so surprising, the official press release of the Vice President of the EU Commission, Miss Reding, did come as a surprise – at least to some:

Over the past weeks, the European Commission has been following very closely the developments in France regarding the Roma. I personally have been appalled by a situation which gave the impression that people are being removed from a Member State of the European Union just because they belong to a certain ethnic minority. This is a situation I had thought Europe would not have to witness again after the Second World War. [...]

Let me be very clear: Discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin or race has no place in Europe. It is incompatible with the values on which the European Union is founded. National authorities who discriminate ethnic groups in the application of EU law are also violating the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which all Member States, including France, have signed up to. I therefore find it deeply disturbing that a Member State calls so gravely into question, by the actions of its administration, the common values and the law of our European Union. [...]

No Member State can expect special treatment, especially not when fundamental values and European laws are at stake. This applies today to France. This applies equally to all other Member States, big or small, which would be in a similar situation. You can count on me for that.¹⁶

For the European Union, this was a bold statement, addressing and admonishing one of the strongest member states. It stressed the function of the European Commission to act as guardian of the European Union's own treaties, including the *Lisbon Treaty* and the *European Charter of Human Rights*, to name but two, or more concretely, the *Directive on Free Movement within the EU*. In the case of the Roma, eth-

16 V. REDING, Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, *Statement on the Latest Developments on the Roma Situation*, Sept. 14, 2010. <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/10/428> (last visited: Oct. 22, 2010)

nic discrimination and violation of the *Free Movement Directive* is binding in all member states. Yet, the situation of Roma, Sinti, and travelling people in general¹⁷ has only worsened since 2010. When Viviane Reding said “this is a situation I had thought Europe would not have to witness again after the Second World War”, she reminds the Europeans of the history of violence against Roma and Sinti: besides Jews, Roma, Sinti, and other travelling people were especially targeted, detained, and murdered in the concentration camps of the Nazis. Worse, as became known only more recently, women from all of these groups were subjected to forced sterilization programs, often complemented by widespread practices of family separations up to the 1990s.¹⁸ This is the context of Pope Francis’s address to the “Gypsies”, a denigrating term nevertheless used in the official Vatican translation.¹⁹

I want to attend to Pope Francis’s speech to the “Participants in the Pilgrimage of the Gypsies” from 2015 a little more closely, because it reflects his theology in a nutshell. Francis begins his speech by remembering the last meeting, which Paul VI held in 1965. Today, approximately six million Roma live in Europe. They are the largest group and therefore often the particular target of hate crimes and racist comments in Europe. Praising the rising number of “vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life” among the traveling people, the Pope reminds all his listeners of the role they play in the reconciliation between the Roma and the Italian culture. Addressing the group directly, Francis acknowledges the “difficulties”, “problems”, and “anxieties” especially the Roma face in Rome; he points to the “precarious conditions in which many of you live, due to negligence

17 I follow the common language use in Europe. For a summary of the situation up to 2016 cf. COUNCIL OF EUROPE: CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES, *The Situation of Roma and Travellers in the Context of Rising Extremism, Xenophobia and the Refugee Crisis in Europe*, October 20, 2016, <https://rm.coe.int/1680718bfd>.

18 ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE, *Summary Report of the OSCE/ODIHR Conference on Forced and Coercive Sterilization of Roma Women: Justice and Reparations for Victims in the Czech Republic*, December 13, 2016, https://www.osce.org/odihr/sterilization_report. Cf. also: <https://voxeurop.eu/en/2018/discrimination-against-roma-people-5122136>. The *Guardian* quotes some striking examples: “As late as the 1970s, Switzerland was taking children from their parents, arguing that they couldn’t educate them to be good citizens. A recent study in Britain found a huge rise in Romany and Traveller families having their children taken away, a trend blamed on institutional prejudice. This decade alone they have been segregated in schools in Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia and databases or other surveys such as the one proposed in Italy are not unprecedented in other parts of Europe.” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/20/italys-treatment-of-roma-people-reflects-a-centuries-old-prejudice>.

19 Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Meeting with the Participants in the Pilgrimage of Gypsies*, in: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, October 26, 2015, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151026_popolo-gitano.html.

and unemployment and the lack of the necessary means of subsistence". He emphasizes that these conditions, "according to the moral and social order", violate human rights, especially "to a dignified life, to dignified work, to education and to health care", which are the basis for a peaceful coexistence, for dialogue, and integration. He then gives examples of clear violations of human rights that also violate the laws of the European Union: children dying from cold, being exploited, or trafficked. Then the Pope turns to the broader audience: "The time has come to put an end to age-old prejudices, preconceptions and mutual mistrust that are often at the base of discrimination, racism and xenophobia." At the same time, he also addresses the responsibilities that the Roma, Sinti, and traveling people have themselves: to stand together in solidarity and build community bonds, be good Christians, "avoiding everything that is not worthy of this name: falsehood, fraud, cheating, quarrels". Roma should not give the public any cause to speak ill of them, the Pope warns them, spelling out particular obligations, such as "respecting the laws, fulfilling your duties and integrating yourselves". Roma children do not only have a right to education: "It is important that the impetus to better education come from the family, come from the parents, come from the grandparents; it is the task of adults to ensure that the young ones attend school."

Pope Francis's address is a good example of the current Catholic social ethics that he endorses and practices. It is centered on the pastoral service to those who are marginalized, stigmatized, or discriminated against in society, and Francis frequently speaks truth to the political powers – using the framework of human rights and dignity that all democracies endorse to hold the reality of human rights violations against the mere rhetoric that "all is well". Theologically, Francis has promoted the concept of mercy to underpin his pastoral ethics. So, too, in this speech:

It is the spirit of mercy that calls us to fight in order to guarantee all these values. Therefore, let us allow the Gospel of mercy to shake our consciences and let us open our hearts and our hands to the neediest and most marginalized, beginning with the ones closest to us.

Commit yourselves to build more human peripheries, strong bonds of fraternity and sharing; you have this responsibility, it is also your task.²⁰

When the Italian government dissolved a Roma camp outside of Rome in July 2018,²¹ they did not fear immediate redress from the European Commission: over the last years, the violation of human rights against traveling people, migrants,

²⁰ The Italian text reads: "ad impegnarvi a costruire periferie più umane, legami di fraternità e condivisione; avete questa responsabilità, è anche compito vostro."

²¹ Cf. A. GIUFFRIDA, *Italian Police Clear Roma Camp Despite EU Ruling Requesting Delay*, in: *The Guardian* July 26, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/26/italian-police-clear-roma-camp-despite-eu-ruling-requesting-delay>.

refugees, and asylum-seeking individuals and families have become so normalized in the European Union that any critique is silenced, and when it is reported, the struggle for justice and solidarity quickly disappears from front pages of the news.

The eviction of the Roma camp in Rome is but one of many examples of the moral crisis we face today. However, I want to use it as a lens through which I revisit the concepts of compassion, justice, and solidarity. Pope Francis may be right to remind the traveling people of their agency, and to remind the parents among them of the their children's right to education. Putting the burden on them to avoid "falsehood, fraud, cheating, quarrels", however, only repeats prejudices that the Roma may well hear every day. It ignores their *position* in the public space, which others deny them to occupy. Politicians use the prejudices to issue rules that do not deal with the underlying injustice that Roma face everywhere in Europe. Francis's understanding of mercy is laudable – but in the context of his speech, he does not clearly distinguish when he addresses the traveling people and when he admonishes the Italian people to allow "the Gospel of mercy [...] to shake our consciences and let us open our hearts and our hands to the neediest and most marginalized, beginning with the ones closest to us"²².

Francis's speech reveals the lacunae in Catholic Social Teaching that concerns the concept of justice, while both Bishop Gadecki and McElroy merely refer to their countries' political frameworks into which they integrate what they interpret to be the interpretation of Catholic Social Teaching.²³ However, the gaps are not accidental: it is telling, for instance, that the *Compendium of Catholic Social Teaching* does not entail a chapter on justice, arguing that it runs through all other principles that are analyzed more thoroughly, such as dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity, the common good, and the option for the poor and vulnerable – without ever clarifying how they relate to each other.²⁴ Catholic Social ethicists have long argued, in line with any social and political ethics, that the concept of justice is the core of social ethics and must therefore be sharpened. In part, my effort to spell out a critical political ethics attempts just this, determining the status of justice in relation to the concept of compassion and solidarity. The question that I want to raise going forward is how not only Catholic Social Teaching but academic Catholic social ethics, too, changes *conceptually* when developed as a critical political

22 POPE FRANCIS, *Meeting with the Participants in the Pilgrimage of Gypsies*.

23 I only stress this point to demonstrate that there is as much plurality among the bishops as among the theologians.

24 Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html.

ethics that stands in the tradition of Metz's New Political Theology. I will begin with the turn to the concept of mercy, because it has become the centerpiece of Francis's turn to pastoral theology.

2. Mercy vs. Compassion²⁵

Mercy (which is a translation of *Barmherzigkeit* or *misericordia*, rarely used outside of the theological language), is a foundational concept for Pope Francis's renewal of Catholic Social Teaching, which theoretically relies on the work of Cardinal Walter Kasper.²⁶ In his book on *Mercy*, published in 2012, Kasper remarks with some surprise that Systematic Theology has rarely taken up the concept of mercy – a gap that he seeks to fill – and rather included it as merely one element of love.²⁷ Spelled out as empathy, compassion, or pity, mercy is, however, a correlative term to justice rather than to love. The biblical tradition marks mercy as a central attribute of God. Kasper explains that mercy is in fact God's way of justice and holiness (or sacredness), tying it to God's sense for those who are suffering. Mercy marks, at the same time, the way how *caritas* or the works of love are to be practiced: superseding and completing justice as forgiveness of sin. Whereas social justice is based on symmetry and reciprocity, mercy is a one-sided, unconditioned gift that is granted beyond any merit. In light of mercy, Kasper concludes, the concept of love is as much defined as the concept of justice: *caritas* or Christian love must reflect this unconditional and unconditioned character of the gift; this does not only mean that the practices of love entail the assistance and support of the poor but also the love of enemies. In view of guilt, the concept of mercy is especially important, directing the judgments towards forgiveness of misdeeds.

From an ethical perspective, one can only welcome the attention that the concept of mercy has received in Pope Francis's papacy. Francis draws explicitly on Kasper's study in his tireless variations on the topic, emphasizing especially the non-reciprocal character of mercy. The way Kasper develops the concept, however, raises several questions concerning the relation between Systematic Theology and Ethics. Kasper situates his own deliberations in the context of Canon Law. In the legal sphere, especially concerning transgressions of the law, the objective is to do justice to a perpetrator of a crime. Mercy becomes an act of humaneness in view of the sanctioning force of law; theologically, it is therefore connected to acts of forgiveness that are ultimately mirroring God's grace. For Kasper, this

25 This section takes up and expands on thoughts I have developed in: H. HAKER, *Compassion for Justice*, in: *Concilium* 4 (2017), 54–64.

26 POPE FRANCIS, *The Church of Mercy. A Vision for the Church*, Chicago 2014.

27 W. KASPER, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, New York/Mahwah, NJ 2014.

means that *mercy supersedes justice*. Applied to the context of re-admission of divorced and re-married couples, which dominated the reception of Kasper's book, one must read this understanding of mercy to mean that individuals who have committed sins and/or are guilty of trespassing the (Canon) law that entails the legal norms of the Church ought to be met with gratuitous mercy that allows for a new beginning. Mercy enables to practice the gratuitous gift of love as the compassion with those who are excluded from the community of believers in acts of forgiveness. In other words: Kasper's theology of mercy does not touch the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the ecclesial legal norms of marriage but calls for the exception in the name of mercy.

Kasper, of course, is aware of the fact that his former colleague Johann Baptist Metz had turned to the concept of *misericordia* some fifteen years before Kasper's study. Metz, too, had argued that it should become the foundational concept of Christian theology, and like Kasper, he emphasizes its strong connection to justice.²⁸ Mercy and compassion both mean the suffering with another. Its Hebrew root is *rahamim*, which connects the pain of suffering as embodied pain in the womb with God's justice.²⁹ Theologically, it determines how we understand ourselves, related to God, to others, and the world. In the biblical tradition, human beings are addressed as moral agents; they are not only capable of wrongdoing, they are also depicted as responsible, attentive, caring, and capable to respond to the suffering of others. The God of the Bible is not apathetic; YHWH is touched by the unjust suffering of the oppressed people and groups within a society. *Misericordia*, mercy, or compassion, all translations of *rahamim*, is not just a term among others; it is indeed a central attribute of the divine, and therefore a central attribute for the human being as capable of moral agency. And yet: the semantic distinction between mercy and compassion is more striking than Kasper thought when he held that both terms are interchangeable. For Metz, for whom the concept of compassion became a defining term of his political theology since the 1990s, compassion theology is closely related to his understanding of anamnestic

28 J. B. METZ, *Compassion. Zu einem Weltprogramm des Christentums im Zeitalter des Pluralismus der Religionen und Kulturen*, in: L. KULD/A. WEISBROD/J. B. METZ (ed.), *Compassion. Weltprogramm des Christentums. Soziale Verantwortung lernen*, Freiburg i. Br. 2000, 9–20; J. B. METZ, *Das Christentum im Pluralismus der Religionen und Kulturen*, in: *Luzerner Universitätsreden 14* (2001), 3–14.

29 Vgl. dazu S. DYBOWSKI, *Barmherzigkeit im Neuen Testament – Ein Grundmotiv caritativen Handelns*, Freiburg i. Br. 1992; M. ZEHETBAUER, *Die Polarität von Gerechtigkeit und Barmherzigkeit. Ihre Wurzeln im Alten Testament, im Frühjudentum sowie in der Botschaft Jesu*, Regensburg 1999; R. SCORALICK, *Das Drama der Barmherzigkeit Gottes: Studien zur biblischen Gottesrede und ihrer Wirkungsgeschichte in Judentum und Christentum*, Stuttgart 2000; B. JANOWSKI, *Der barmherzige Richter. Zur Einheit von Gerechtigkeit und Barmherzigkeit im Gottesbild des Alten Orients und des Alten Testaments*, in: R. SCORALICK (ed.), *Das Drama der Barmherzigkeit Gottes*, 33–91.

reason. Compassion is the ethical response to the apathy and amnesia, a response that is sensitive to the suffering others, neighbors and strangers alike. The affective and moral recognition of suffering others and the solidarity with them is, in Metz's reading, the lynchpin of Christian theology that ought to take a stance in light of the injustices faced within any society, and certainly within our current global political order. Critical political ethics follows this assessment. Although, as an ethical theory, it will attend more closely than either Kasper, Francis, or Metz do to the ethical scholarship that informs the concept of compassion.

2.1 MARTHA NUSSBAUM'S CONCEPT OF POLITICAL LOVE AND COMPASSION

Neither Metz nor Kasper discuss the philosophical discourse on moral emotions.³⁰ Here, I will only point to the exemplary work of one author, Martha Nussbaum, who has contributed some tremendous works on moral emotions, including compassion. In her book on political emotions, Nussbaum takes her interest in moral emotions to the political realm.³¹ I turn to Nussbaum's book, because in it, Nussbaum deals with the necessary attachment to one's country as a motivation to engage in just practices, just like the Catholic bishops argued in the examples given above, however relating what she calls *political love* far more clearly to a theory of justice. Her inquiry offers valuable insights into the ways how a political ethics may embrace moral emotions within political theory. As I will show, however, despite her valuable insights, *critical* political ethics cannot follow Nussbaum's political-ethical approach.

Nussbaum explores love and compassion as complementary capabilities to the normative claims of political liberalism. Compassion, Nussbaum explains, is a "painful emotion directed at the serious suffering of another creature or creatures"³². It is closely related to moral judgments, constantly juxtaposing the emotional response to an individual experience (or the depiction thereof in literature or art) with the general, impartial viewpoint of the moral principle. Although moral emotions, to which compassion belongs, have a cognitive dimension, in being affective they are tied to the concrete rather than to the abstract. The spontaneous and reflective attitude of compassion entails an active sense of *attentiveness* towards someone else whose moral integrity is threatened by physical, psychic, or moral harm. Compassion is expressed as *emotional response, followed by the care for the well-being of the other*. As Nussbaum rightly states, no perception, no cog-

30 I have offered a short overview in my response to Metz's turn to compassion as an alternative to Hans Küng's global ethic project: H. HAKER, *Compassion as a Global Programme for Christianity*, in: *Concilium* 4 (2001), 55–70.

31 M. C. NUSSBAUM, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice*, Cambridge MA 2013.

32 *Ibid.* 142.

inition, no memory and no action is possible without an accompanying emotion; moral emotions express the evaluative dimension and inform the cognition – as vice versa, the cognitive dimension affects the moral emotion insofar as compassion builds a bridge between self and other, and the freedom and well-being (or lack of it) of both. Although, it also mediates between a person's desire or volition and the moral imperative or normative obligation. However spontaneous compassion may seem to be, it is therefore the most important source for the question why one ought to act morally at all. As a moral emotion, compassion is not action but the *way into action* – it cannot and must not replace either action or thorough practical reflection on the appropriate, that is the *responsible* course of action.

Nussbaum refers to the psychological development of the child, which entails a phase of the child's assumed omnipotence, often referred to as the stage of narcissism that is frustrated when the caretakers are perceived as independent and different. Love of another person is an emotional response, encompassing the trust that one's dependency and vulnerability is not exploited but met by the love from the caretakers. It prevents the child to maintain or fall back into narcissism as an attempt to hold power over others, and it creates a bond that is morally relevant.³³ The opposite of love is not so much hate, Nussbaum holds, but rather disgust and shame. Fear, envy, and shame, she holds, are all enemies of love, and they become even more relevant as opposite emotions of compassion; they are emotions that prevent us from connecting with one another. Nussbaum discerns four major elements that distinguish compassion with the other from the more general concept of love, all centered on the concept of suffering: for compassion to happen, one must regard the other's suffering as serious and important, one will consider the suffering person not responsible for their suffering, one thinks the suffering might also happen to oneself, and finally, the other and the self are connected in a general striving for well-being. Compared to the theological understanding of compassion, Nussbaum's elaborations seem to contradict what Kasper had stressed: the *unconditional* gift of love is the core of the theological tradition. Indeed, I believe that Nussbaum's description of the self-other relation is insufficient, because Nussbaum's analysis entails moral judgments of the other person whose suffering, it seems, must first be qualified as innocent and severe, in order to be met with compassion. Phenomenologically, this may be correct, but it requires a critique from a moral perspective that Nussbaum does not offer.

33 Cf. the works of Jessica Benjamin for a psychoanalytical interpretation of this dynamic: J. BENJAMIN, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination*, New York 1988; J. BENJAMIN, *Beyond Doer and Done to: Recognition Theory, Intersubjectivity and the Third*, New York 2017.

From a liberal perspective, justice is centered on the equal respect and dignity of all human beings, translated into the rights of all citizens in a state (the nation-state is Nussbaum's reference point in *Political Emotions*). Justice provides the political-ethical framework in which individuals are to thrive and cooperate with each other. However, justice *alone* is incapable, Nussbaum holds, of motivating citizens to take the moral point of view, i. e. equal respect. It is not able to foster the *habitus* of respect for the dignity of others. Love provides the affective element that is necessary for social and political justice, hence her argument for the necessity of *political love*. Political love – love of one's constitution, one's polity, or one's country – creates a bond among the members of a polity that prevents or counters the moral emotions of disgust, and prevents or counters practices that shame and stigmatize others. Since religions cannot provide this bond in secular, liberal societies, Nussbaum replaces it by a *poetic spirit* that will help to foster social connections.³⁴ “Love, then, matters for justice – especially when justice is incomplete and an aspiration (as in all real nations), but even in an achieved society of human beings, were such to exist.”³⁵ Love is necessarily particularistic, and yet, people can be brought together around a common set of values. Ultimately, this means, compassion is part of a virtue ethics that combines love with the norm of justice. Yet, taking her insights from psychology to the social realm, Nussbaum shows how an apathetic culture of indifference may emerge from collective identity struggles. Others who are depicted as ‘outsiders’ or different, alien, or deviant from the perspective of ‘insiders’ may become a threat to a collective identity, and hence they become the object of fear, envy, and shame.

Nussbaum's analysis is important because it shows how indifference towards injustice may spread when compassion and solidarity with vulnerable groups is not fostered and habituated. I am, however, more critical about her solution. There is no guarantee that the *patriotism* that Nussbaum promotes within the framework of a liberal democracy is not used in the opposite way, namely: as a means to stir emotions that increase rather than mitigate the othering of particular persons or groups, all in the name of political love. The nationalism that has emerged in many countries over the last years makes me skeptical that a psychological explanation alone is sufficient to explain how love can explain political cohesion. I believe that Nussbaum's description is ethically dissatisfying for two reasons: *first*, the self-other relation that compassion rests upon entails value judgments about the nature of suffering, which I find unconvincing; it presupposes that the feelings and experiences of suffering are communicable and trans-

34 In this, Nussbaum implicitly follows Friedrich Schiller's Education of Man, which she echoes more generally in her poetic ethics. F. SCHILLER, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, London 2016.

35 M. C. NUSSBAUM, *Political Emotions*, 380.

latable, something that phenomenology states is exactly difficult in the case of suffering. *Second*, the relationship between love and justice is depicted in the context of political liberalism; whether the love of the norms of a given polity are *worthy* to be loved, however, is not only a political but also a moral question. Ultimately, this brings us back to the ethical question about the legitimacy of legal norms and the justification of moral norms.³⁶ Critical political ethics offers a different argument that takes political theology's central insight as its starting point, namely that the only authority that cannot be questioned further is the suffering of individuals and groups. This does not mean that suffering cannot or must not be further scrutinized – after all, those who today claim that they are the “forgotten people” of globalization often speak from a social position of privilege, longing for a return to a social order that guaranteed their privileges in comparison to other, especially non-white groups whom they consider to be over-compensated by government programs.³⁷ Critical political ethics will not judge these *emotions* people have. However, acknowledging them is the entry into a conversation, not the endpoint of moral inquiries.

2.2 COMPARING MERCY, COMPASSION, AND POLITICAL LOVE

Concluding this section, I want to sum up: Kasper, Metz, and Nussbaum all agree that compassion must be related to the political sphere of justice. Nussbaum promotes the ethical-emotional commitment to a political order that is based mostly on the liberal ideals of freedom and equality, and political liberalism as democracy. She draws on the Rawlsian understanding of justice but complements it with an emotion that creates and sustains the bond between individual desires and the norm. Kasper relates mercy mostly to the concept of legal justice both within the ecclesia as within the state, emphasizing that love supersedes justice, whereas for Nussbaum, the relevance of compassion is to motivate individuals to aspire for a just society, i. e. the commitment to respect one another. Metz's approach, in contrast, is not centered on guilt but on suffering, especially the suffering from structural injustices that may be reflected in social, moral, *and* legal norms. It positions political theology at the side of the suffering individuals and groups, without prior judgment. Political theology is inherently connected to the concept of com-

³⁶ Cf. chapter 10 in this volume.

³⁷ In an exemplary study of white, rural America, Arlie Hochschild has interviewed people in Louisiana who clearly have suffered from the neglect of their economic, political, and environmental rights over the last decades. Most of them became stark supporters of the Tea Party Movement. The book was written before the 2016 election but was taken as an important source for the rise of Donald Trump. A. R. HOCHSCHILD, *Strangers in their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*, New York 2016.

passion because through it, the core of the Christian faith is addressed, which is the remembrance of God's compassion with those who are excluded, stigmatized, or shamed.

If stigmatization of a group rests upon the othering of others because they are seen as a threat to one's own identity, it raises serious questions about the underlying othering as part of the current white nationalism that divides the polity into "us" and "them". Likewise, it raises questions about the norms of the Catholic Church: if upholding its moral and internal political order of governance is more important than following the example of God's greatest gift, namely the *unconditional* adoption (Annahme) of every human being by God, understanding of the centrality of the concept of compassion with those who suffer – and suffer from injustices – in Catholic social ethics becomes the litmus test for the Church's willingness to adhere to its own principle of human dignity and human rights.

3. Responsibility for Justice

3.1 TWO MORAL POINTS OF VIEW

As is the case in the concepts of mercy and compassion, Catholic social ethics is in conversation with moral and political philosophy in order to discern the theories of justice that inform ethics. For me, this is a crucial endeavor, because critical political ethics departs from the natural law theology that is grounded in a metaphysical ontological order. If that is dismissed, how can ethics argue for justice as a basic virtue of society, as Rawls famously said? Can Catholic social ethics make this decisive turn to the dignity and human right of the individual, that Rawls states as a premise of his theory:

Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. A theory however elegant and economical must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust. Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override. For this reason justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others. It does not allow that the sacrifices imposed on a few are outweighed by the larger sum of advantages enjoyed by many. Therefore in a just society the liberties of equal citizenship are taken as settled; the rights secured by justice are not subject to political bargaining or to the calculus of social interests.³⁸

Critical political ethics is postmetaphysical, but as I will now show, this does not necessarily follow Habermas' ethics.³⁹ Instead, I want to take up a thought that Paul Ricœur explored in one of his last works, offering an alternative to Nuss-

38 J. RAWLS, *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge, MA 1999 (orig. 1970).

39 Cf. J. HABERMAS, *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*, Cambridge, MA 1992; J. HABERMAS, *Postmetaphysical Thinking II*, Hoboken NJ 2017. For a critique cf. H. NAGL-DOCEKAL, *Innere Freiheit: Grenzen der nachmetaphysischen Moralkonzeptionen*, Berlin 2014.

baum's concept of justice that owes much to John Rawls' theory of justice, and to the legal concept of justice that Kasper presupposes. Ricœur's reference point is Thomas Nagel who tries to balance an agent's *personal*, i. e. necessarily self-centered point of view with an *interpersonal* view that positions the self as one person among others in the social space. Nagel argues that a moral point of view is possible without taking a "view from nowhere":

Each of us begins with a set of concerns, desires, and interests of his own, and each of us can recognize that the same is true of others. We can remove ourselves in thought from our particular position in the world and think simply of all those people, without singling out as I the one we happen to be.⁴⁰

The capacity to distance oneself from one's own desires and point of view is the premise of the capacity to recognize the other as another self. Ricœur calls it the anthropological premise that enables agents to make moral judgments – but we can note in passing that Kant was more precise when he called it the premise of *moral agency* and autonomy, i. e. the reflective capacity to self-legislate over against heteronomy, the mere pursuit of one's desires and/or obedience of (social) norms. It is a capability that Kant associates with self-consciousness and reason.⁴¹ Ricœur who has taken up Kant's concept of autonomy in his moral theory,⁴² would most likely agree – but his focus here is the back-and-forth movement between the personal point of view and the inter-personal view. Nagel favors it to concepts of justice that would require the perspective of an impartial observer, as presupposed, for example in Adam Smith's theory, taken up in utilitarian theories to which Nagel responds. The debate on justice thereby often shifts between the contractual roots of Rawls' theory of justice, a utilitarian theory, or the mere generalization of personal interests. Ricœur takes an interesting position in this debate. He argues that the *interpersonal* judgment process is not categorically different from the self-reflective judgments of agents who also prioritize their own conflicting desires or interests – without invoking an impartial observer perspective. He is indebted to Charles Taylor in this respect who called these weak and strong evaluations, based on different goods that agents pursue in light of their identity ideal.⁴³ The ordering of desires or interests in Taylor's concept follows the idea of an idealized self-identity; the interests are of course not independent of a person's social context, culture, religion or the historical situation in which they take place – however, it is important that they are related to the ideal of one's own self-identity

40 TH. NAGEL, *Equality and Partiality*, 10, here quoted in: P. RICŒUR, *Reflections on the Just*, Chicago 2007, 67.

41 I. KANT, *An Answer to the Question: 'What Is Enlightenment?'*, London 2013.

42 P. RICŒUR, *Oneself as Another*, Chicago 1992.

43 Cf. CH. TAYLOR, *Sources of the Self. The Making of Modern Identity*, Cambridge, MA 1989.

that in Taylor's approach coincides with moral identity.⁴⁴ Taylor regards moral identity centered on the "good", and he has long argued that among persons and groups, multiple identity concepts exist that differ in the values that are important for each group. This is especially important in multicultural societies, where respect for equality must be complemented with the respect of difference.⁴⁵ For Taylor, this is what the concept of recognition stands for: it means to acknowledge the value that a particular good has for another person. Ricœur, however, argues that this is not sufficient, because moral agency requires the integration of the point of view of *justice*, not (merely) the recognition of values or goods. Ricœur applies a two-pillar ethics that rests on a teleological ethics of the good life *as well as* on a deontological ethics of respect and justice (and prudential reasoning in practical conflicts). Moral agency involves the constant movement between one's (and others') strivings – and one's obligations towards others (and oneself).⁴⁶ It is constituted, I extrapolate from his approach, in the interchange between an agent's self-centered point of view – in which the goods a person pursues are weighed in view of the importance they have for one's self-understanding, notwithstanding that these are always embedded in particular context and mediated by social norms and values – and the interpersonal point of view in which one's own actions must be seen in concert with others. The interpersonal standpoint *decenters* one's own position. From here, the focus shifts from values to rights and obligations.

What Nagel states is indeed important, but it is not sufficient to explain this shift; rather, we must add that the moral capability to view oneself "without *singling out* as I the one we happen to be"⁴⁷, enables us to connect our desire to live well with the claim to be just. Only the latter entails the acknowledgment of equal rights to "live well". Hence, we can look at ourselves from the point of view of being the center of our actions, aiming for a good life, and we can look at ourselves as "decentered" (though not as observers). The interchanging views towards ourselves in these two perspectives resemble a phenomenon of perception that we know from Gestalt psychology: there, we can see an image in two ways, switching from the one to the other once we are able to see both images. Changing from the one to the other, we can see the inherent presuppositions of each of the perspective.⁴⁸ For Ricœur, judgment is therefore not merely the endpoint of an as-

44 Cf. H. HAKER, *Moralische Identität. Literarische Lebensgeschichten als Medium ethischer Reflexion. Mit einer Interpretation der „Jahrestage“ von Uwe Johnson*, Tübingen 1999, especially Part II, 57–151.

45 CH. TAYLOR, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition: An Essay*, Princeton, N.J. 1992.

46 P. RICŒUR, *Oneself as Another*.

47 Cf. quote above, my emphasis.

48 Cf. the interesting discussion of Wittgenstein's reflections on this phenomenon in: L. M. G.

assessment, similar to the sentence of a judge, but a *process* that strives to see oneself and others in a given situation from different perspectives. It may involve conflicts between one's own different desires and interests, as Taylor pointed out in his discussion of weak and strong evaluations, and it may involve conflicts between different actors. Not surprisingly, Ricœur calls them conflicts of interpretation – they entail different interpretations of facts, different interpretations of values and norms, and different interpretations of the priorities and ranking of rights or responsibility that are involved in a given situation.⁴⁹

3.2 SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR JUSTICE

My approach follows Ricœur, however with one important modification: attending to the suffering of others does not determine directly how responsibilities are distributed in order to transform the suffering. Political ethics is *critical* not because it privileges some experiences over others but because it critiques ethical approaches that do not account for the differences in the accountability for suffering, the capability to change it, and the shared responsibilities. Iris Marion Young's understanding of "responsibility for justice" is crucial to discern this difference between approaches that are *indifferent* and those that are *attentive* towards the different positions – and thus different powers – regarding responsibility.⁵⁰ Young is interested in a concept of responsibility that takes into account that in the complex practices of modern societies, in many cases social injustices have so many causes that they cannot be traced back to the intentional actions of individual agents. This complicates the interpretation of obligations. Young therefore shifts the emphasis from liability models to what she calls a social connection model. It allows for prospective collective actions to undo injustices nobody may have directly caused and therefore for which nobody can be held accountable. In the model of social connection, however, Young comes close to Ricœur's understanding of the "homme capable", the capable human who does not only aim for a

ZERILLI, *The Turn to Affect and the Problem of Judgment*, in: *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation* 46/2 (2015), 261–286.

49 The thought model of Gestalt psychology may also be interesting in the discussion of multiculturalism or even interreligious dialogue: rather than searching from the "view from nowhere", it would take seriously the partiality of each of the perspectives, which entail convictions and truth claims, commitments and particular practices, while demanding to engage in perceiving oneself as one among many of such partial perspectives in the interreligious dialogue. For example, it would help to explore the relationship between Judaism and Christianity as one in which both religions make truth claims that are to be recognized; conflicts of interpretation would then concern concrete matters, and not "the" truth of either of the religions, which has contributed to the harms resulting from the epistemology of supremacy.

50 I. M. YOUNG, *Responsibility for Justice*, Oxford 2011.

good life for oneself but, as Ricœur often repeats as a formula, who aims “at a good life with and for others, in just institutions”⁵¹. Young puts her insight this way: “A shared responsibility is a responsibility I *personally* bear, but I do not bear it alone. I bear it in the awareness that others bear it with me.”⁵² Since Young distinguishes between different *social positions*, the proportional contribution to unjust structures puts a greater burden on those who contribute more than others:

Those who contribute by their actions to structural processes with some unjust outcomes share responsibility for the injustice. This responsibility is not primarily backward-looking, as the attribution of guilt or fault is, but rather primarily forward-looking.⁵³

In comparison, victims of injustice are in a different position. In the example of the traveling people in Rome, the Roma are the only ones who can give an account of what they experience as stigmatization and discrimination. Whereas Francis tells the Roma people to take responsibility by integrating and abiding the laws, Young points to the role of victims of injustice in sharing their understanding of their situation:

Their social positions, moreover, offer victims of injustice a unique understanding of the nature of the problems and the likely effects of policies and actions proposed by others situated in more powerful and privileged positions.⁵⁴

Envisioning “responsibility for justice” in line with a politics of friendship, Young’s social connection model is based upon the willingness to work together to improve the state of well-being of oneself and others. It is, however, central to improve structural injustice.

The judgment of injustice means that at least some of the normal and accepted background conditions of action are not morally acceptable. Most of us contribute to a greater or lesser degree to the production and reproduction of structural injustice precisely because we follow the accepted and expected rules and conventions of the communities and institutions in which we act.⁵⁵

Social prejudices prevail when it is *presupposed* that individuals or groups are themselves responsible for the situations they struggle with. Instead, as we can learn from the example of the Roma, the process of moral judgment must take the context into account: moral agents do indeed actualize their capacity to act morally when they engage in interpretations and deliberations about what is the case (the “facts”) in a given situation. Tying justice to a social connection model of responsibility to improve the structures of injustice, Young paves the way to

51 P. RICŒUR, *Oneself as Another*.

52 I. M. YOUNG, *Responsibility for Justice*, 109 f. (emphasis in the text).

53 I. M. YOUNG, *Responsibility for Justice*, 96.

54 *Ibid.* 107.

55 *Ibid.*

think of responsibility for justice as a social-ethical project that takes seriously the different contributions people can make, depending on their social positions and insights. Needless to say that when actions can be traced back to particular persons, accountability and liability remain in place.

3.3 JUSTICE AND MORAL JUDGMENTS

In his deliberation on justice, Ricœur may well have had Habermas' discourse ethics in mind when he envisioned social and public deliberations that would clarify and prudentially resolve such conflicts of interpretation. With Arendt and Young, he would have agreed that accounts of one's experiences, i. e. through narratives, political storytelling,⁵⁶ and conversations among those involved in a conflict go far beyond the narrow focus on argumentation that Habermas emphasizes. Yet, this does not mean that Habermas' "discourse rules" are not important for the resolution of conflicts: especially the "universalization rule" ensures that all interests are served by accepting only those decisions as being morally *right*, i. e. just, which are accepted (or acceptable) by all. In our example, the travelling people who were immediately affected by the dismantling of their homes, would most likely not have given their consent to be evicted or deported. Nevertheless, it seems rather unlikely that all people are even willing to engage in a fair public discourse when a social conflict emerges, and it is unlikely that the discourse rules are applied in such a way that a) everyone has the equal right to articulate their interests, and b) those who have been disenfranchised or are disadvantaged, for example, because of their lack of the language or lack of cultural competency, will be treated in a way that resonates with Rawls's second principle of justice that accounts for underlying background injustices. This "application" problem has long been discussed as undermining the moral claims of discourse ethics. Nussbaum's analysis of shame, stigmatization, and dehumanization is important to understand what "blocks" the adherence to equal respect; the turn to moral emotions is indeed important as a pathway to counter the indifference and apathy that prevents compassion and inclusion. Ricœur's insistence on justice as a *moral* stance presupposes the willingness to "decenter" one's own position in the social space and see oneself as one among many. In the proverbial sense, it means to put oneself in multiple others' shoes. Nevertheless, ethical judgments must point out the fact that some people suffer not only because others are not willing to go beyond their own self-interests. As Young explains, they may not be doing anything that would in itself be (morally or legally) wrong, but the effect may still be that systemic hurdles are built up for those who cannot escape these structures.

56 M. JACKSON, *The Politics of Storytelling: Violence, Transgression, and Intersubjectivity*, Copenhagen 2002.

Those of us who do not belong to the travelling people, for example, may not be familiar with the structural hurdles that they face in order to be able to pursue a way of life that liberal democracies guarantee them as long as it does not harm others. However, enabling structures must mean more than negative freedom; they must entail positive freedoms that enable the social life of multiple groups. For instance, this has long been the argument of religious communities: they require the appropriate space and structures to exercise their freedom; negative freedom alone does not suffice. One does not have to endorse or approve of the Roma's way of life, just as one does not have to approve the way of life religious communities pursue – but one *must* respect them as groups that require both negative and positive rights. This does not mean that conflicts can be avoided – these are unavoidable and in itself no threat to any society or polity. From this position, the treatment of the Roma – or any other minority – is indeed an issue of human rights. Moreover, looking at the long history of stigmatization, we must identify the structural roots and forms of denigration that impact certain members of the polity, in order to determine what shared responsibility means in this case. While Ricœur enables us to see how the shifting of perspective is not only necessary but also possible, Young offers us a better understanding in a proportionate responsibility that rests upon the background position, the accountability, and the capability to engage in shared responsibility. In the conflict of interpretations, we may then return to Ricœur's notion of practical judgment, because it leaves room for the acknowledgment of moral tragedies and impasses that can only be resolved with prudence.

4. Justice and Solidarity

4.1 SOLIDARITY AS STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION

Over the last decades, the concept of recognition has emerged as an important counterpoint to the theory of justice. Since it is based in the interaction between self and other, it was seen as a perfect candidate to value others in their differences, but also to respect them in their shared humanity. For my own approach, I will now respond to Nussbaum's proposal to promote "political love" by way of aesthetics and/or a "poetic spirit". I will argue that critical political ethics departs from any notion of patriotism and instead emphasizes the need of solidarity. In this, I also depart from a notion of a "constitutional patriotism", for which Habermas has argued. Instead, solidarity is sufficient to create the social bond that is needed to transform a mere polity into the space of shared responsibility for justice. Reinterpreting Hegel's theory of recognition and Marx's concept of collective action, Axel Honneth describes solidarity as the civic-social dimension of the struggle for recognition. I want to interpret it as the important step that shifts from *recognition of identity to recognition of justice* – but to show this, the relationship

between justice and solidarity needs to be maintained – something that Honneth, in my view, has failed to do.

Authors such as Axel Honneth, Charles Taylor, Judith Butler, or Martha Nussbaum all agree that recognition is a condition for a person's self-esteem, *because* human beings are dependent on others to develop their identities. As Axel Honneth has shown, however, recognition can be further differentiated: it is the moral dimension of intersubjectivity, spelled out as interpersonal, social, and legal recognition. Without recognition, a person's psycho-physical integrity may be at risk and in fact damaged, her social belonging de-stabilized or fractured, and her political rights infringed. The effects can be analyzed in multiple contexts, from physical and psychological violence to practices of social exclusion and/or to the denial of specific rights. A person who is faced with direct personal violence over a period of time is at great risk to be damaged in his/her personal identity;⁵⁷ a member of a group that is stigmatized as *other* because of a particular characteristic (religion, culture, sex, ethnicity, etc.) and is therefore excluded from or marginalized in multiple social practices that foster social cohesion, is more likely to consider himself/herself as an outsider.⁵⁸ And, as Hannah Arendt famously said: without the right to have rights, i. e. political rights, the condition for any civil participation in a polity cannot be practiced – therefore, the right to have rights is a precondition of justice.⁵⁹ Recognition theory is therefore not simply a way of acknowledging the diverse *identities* of individuals or the acknowledgment of the goods social groups may pursue. In fact, recognition cannot be separated from an ethics of respect.⁶⁰

Solidarity points to shared interests among a group, often those who are fighting for their rights, and directed towards political action. It is more likely to be found *among* those who struggle for their rights in a given society or polity. Hon-

57 H. LINDEMANN, *Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair*, Ithaca 2001.

58 A very impressive study of the effects of such a non-belonging is presented, as so often, in a fictional work: Richard Power's novel *The Time of Our Singing* traces the struggle of a racially 'hybrid' family in 20th century America, where society demands the unambiguity of the races for the place of social belonging – even though the racial 'belonging' itself creates manifold injustices, the children of a so-called mixed-race couple seem to be faced with the injustice of race plus the social misrecognition of their particular identities.

59 H. ARENDT, *Es gibt nur ein einziges Menschenrecht*, in: *Die Wandlung* 4, Fall (1949), 754–770. Cf. chapter 1 in this volume.

60 A. HONNETH, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Cambridge, UK/Oxford/Cambridge, MA 1995; A. HONNETH, *Freedom's Right. The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*, New York 2014. This last book takes the Hegelian concept as the starting point for a theory of freedom that is not just a variant of a political-liberal theory but rather an alternative concept, based on the theory of recognition.

neth calls for a realistic view that owes much to the Marxian identification of the subjects of revolution: it is the disenfranchised themselves rather than all members of society who will fight for justice. Unlike Young, Honneth does not explicate the responsibility for justice of those who are privileged in their society (and globally), and he therefore does not elaborate on the distribution of responsibilities. More adequately conceptualized, however, solidarity is a dual concept that can be seen, first, as the *solidarity among a given group*, i. e. the solidarity among those who experience injustice and therefore not only struggle for the acknowledgment of their interests and goods as part of their ideal identity, as Taylor understood it,⁶¹ but as a struggle for the acknowledgment of the *injustice* of their condition (or the *harm* that has been inflicted upon them) as a first step to change. Second, solidarity means the *solidarity with others*, which is based on compassion as the suffering with the suffering. When seen in view of solidarity, compassion is neither merely a personal, private, moral emotion, nor can it be seen as mercy, i. e. the love that supersedes justice. Because solidarity is based upon the experience of suffering from injustice and (often) demonstrated in political action, compassion, too, motivates to political and social action – in the form of solidarity with the suffering.

The agents of political solidarity are civil and social movements. Actively expressing the outrage over the injustices, they critique any act, practice, structure, or order of injustice, and they discern the unethical policies that do not enable the negative and positive rights that are legally guaranteed and morally warranted. Solidarity means speaking *with* others as well as *for* others publicly when their voice is not heard. The “rights of others” (Benhabib) are necessarily the responsibilities of all those who are in the position to respond to them. Solidarity mediates between one’s personal striving and the obligation to respond to suffering others in the projections of shared responsibility.

Conclusion

With Nussbaum, I consider compassion as a moral emotion that comes with its own normative claim that must be further scrutinized in ethical reflection. With Ricœur, I consider moral agency a capability that defines human beings who are able to step back from their self-centered position and perspective and change, literally and metaphorically, their point of view. With Honneth, I want to keep recognition theory in play, because it explains how the solidarity of those who are connected in their experiences of suffering, and the solidarity of those who suffer with their suffering, emerges again and again, in historical struggles and social or political movements. Solidarity is an affective and justice-oriented prac-

61 CH. TAYLOR, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*.

tice: it stems from the experiences of suffering and the compassion with those who have been or who are still being harmed, and it is enacted in social-political actions. With Young, I want to insist, however, on a stricter interpretation of Ricœur's, Nussbaum's, and Honneth's insights: morality is a *demand* to share the responsibility for the personal, social and political injustices, according to one's social position of privilege or disenfranchisement. With critical theory as well as political theology, I want to insist that the *negative universalism*, i. e. the necessity to transform the injustices and the suffering that hold individuals and groups in their grip into justice, takes priority over utopian visions of the perfect life or projections of "enhancing life". In a formula, I would hold that *compassion is the response to suffering that motivates moral agents to connect among and with those groups who struggle for the recognition of injustice. The recognition of injustice requires the engagement for transformation in the shared responsibility for justice.*

Compassion is an important affective resource. It is not merely a spontaneous response – it can be habituated through narratives that bring those who have been rendered invisible or who have simply been overlooked to the forefront of the public discourse. That, after all, was one effect of the reports by Bartolome de las Casas about the cruelty and violence with which the indigenous people were treated in the colonies. Compassion is linked to the political activism of solidarity. However, compassion and solidarity are both linked to the transformation of injustices, aimed at creating the conditions so that everyone is able to "aim for the good life with and for others in just institutions".

Yet, this constellation of compassion, solidarity, and justice may still sound far too idealistic. I would hold that it is here that theology may offer a cautionary tale: the gospels' concept of hope is rooted in the bitter experience of smashed expectations, exclusion, violence, and oppression. Christianity's hope is a counter-memory, a memory of the past's future and the expectation of the future to come. The biblical tradition reminds us that compassion is not the last word but indeed the first word that God speaks in view of suffering. Theology may – and perhaps must – express in its own language the grief, the lament, and the question about suffering and injustice. However, theology's language is itself an address, aimed to uphold the bond that God has created with humans. God's truth, after all, is not neutral to suffering; it entails the passion for human freedom and well-being. Re-affirming this truth, those of us who invoke the name of God in the face of those who suffer are endowed with the task to remember that God's story is indeed a story of liberation towards justice: even amidst the landscapes of screams, amidst the pain of the harmed, the despair of the displaced, and the cruelty of the past, transformation is possible. If all of us, in our different capacities and with our different insights, respond in order to transform injustice into justice, another world may indeed be possible.

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