Globethics Repository




# Reconsidering Western core values of education and politics in a global context

This page was generated automatically upon download from the Globethics Repository. More information on Globethics see https://www.globethics.net. Data and content policy of Globethics Repository see https://repository.globethics.net/pages/policy.

| | |
|---|---|
| Item Type | Conference paper/presentation |
| Authors | Goehler, Lars |
| Publisher | Globethics.net |
| Rights | All rights reserved |
| Download date | 2026-11-19 23:30:54 |
| Link to Item | http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/4263341 |

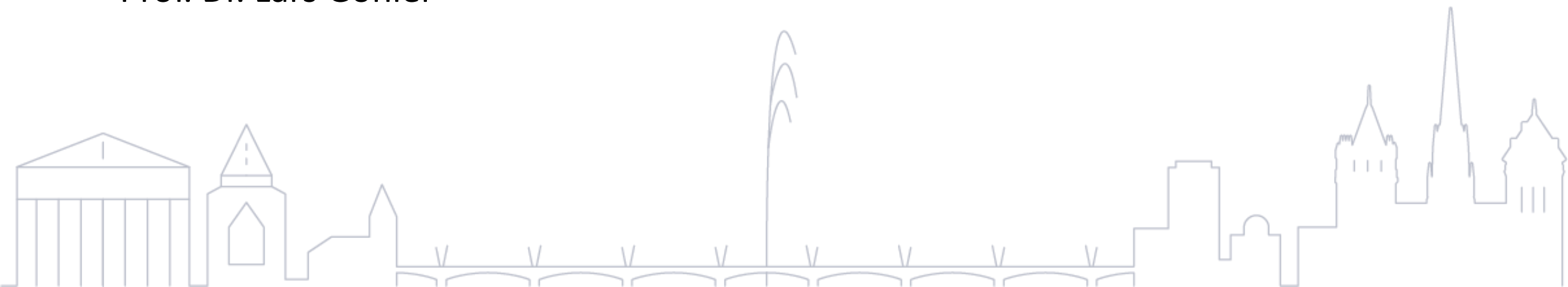
Globethics.net

#BNBT2022
Ethics and Values at the Heart of Quality Education

# Reconsidering Western Core Values of Education and Politics in a global Context

Concepts as **truth**, **individuality**, and **freedom** are far from being sufficiently understood in Non-Western and even Western cultures and deserve to be discussed in their global dimension.

Prof. Dr. Lars Göhler

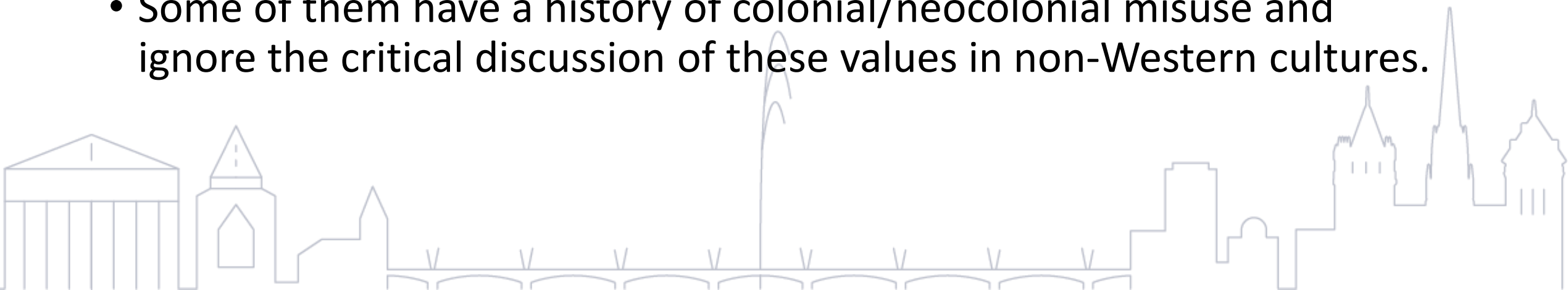


# Western Core Values

- **Truth** – striving for truth is often considered one of the main values of responsible reason
- **Individuality** – free individuality and individual rights play an important role in self-understanding of many Western systems of thought
- **Freedom** – freedom of choice, freedom of will is stressed e.g. in the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights"

# Reflecting these Values

- It is not the aim of this presentation to deny the importance of those and other values coined mostly by Western theories.
- But these values should be reflected upon and understood in the light of other systems of thinking.
- Some of them have a history of colonial/neocolonial misuse and ignore the critical discussion of these values in non-Western cultures.



# Truth

- The expression of „it is true that…“ is usually used to give an argument more weight.
- In philosophy it is by no means clear, what is meant by truth. The concept is criticized, for example, by Friedrich Nietzsche and others in the West.
- In other cultures (India, China) truth is a subordinate concept to those of validity and rules of behaviour.
- Within these differences it may make sense to regard truth more and more as a preliminary result of dialogue of equal parties (like Jürgen Habermas proposes)

# Individuality

- Individuality and freedom are concepts that are closely connected in many forms Western thought.
- In other cultures individuality does not play a central role. In China and India an individual is subordinate to a larger system (Cosmos, Family, Caste). Many individual responsibilities follow from this affiliation. In Buddhism there is even no real individual.
- Even in the West there are theories that maintain that we have an too strong imagination of individuality (Thomas Metzinger: The ego tunnel…")

# Freedom

- In the *Declaration of Human Rights* **freedom** is mentioned 21 times.
- In most cases it is freedom of will, freedom of opinion, freedom of religion, freedom of speech and belief.
- Philosophers as *Hegel* or *Amartya Sen* do not regard freedom of those „outer“ conditions as sufficient but see **freedom more as a capability**. This capability can be developed by sufficient nutrition, education and opportunities to apply these capabilities.
- In Indian Vedānta freedom or liberation (*mokṣa*)is conflicting with individuality, it is the end of individuality.

# Conclusion

- For a holistic and value based education it makes sense persistently to reflect on the values and their role in several cultures and contexts and on their humanistic effects.
- This should be done not only for concepts of truth, individuality and freedom but also, say, for conscience, democracy, peace and other often repeated words.
- It is important to discuss and even develop these concepts in the light of other, non-European Ideas and monitor their effects in other societies.

Globethics.net

#BNBT2022
Ethics and Values at the Heart of Quality Education

# Thank you

Prof. Dr. Lars Göhler
University of Cologne
lgoehler@uni-koeln.de

