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Attempts to Understand Scriptural Reasoning[1]

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Abstract: The author has made some attempts to understand Scriptural Reasoning in this article, which includes the following. First, the author has asked the question about the theoretical basis for Scriptural Reasoning. Then he tries to explore SR from theory to practice. And he continues to study the integrity between theory and practice. And the social implications of Scriptural Reasoning has also studied before the author offers his final conclusion.

Key Words: SR; theoretical basis; from theory to practice; integrity between theory and practice; social implications

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A Theoretical Basis for Scriptural Reasoning?

I have had a possibility to get acquainted with Scriptural Reasoning(SR) through prof. Miikka Ruokanen only after publishing my book Constructing Ethical Patterns In Times of Globalization. Hans Küng's Global Ethic Project and Beyond (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2012). In hindsight, I feel edified that Scriptural Reasoning embodies the practical conclusion of that book quite strikingly. My concern was to challenge the mainstream modern and postmodern secular Western philosophical and political stance towards multireligious and multicultural global village, especially their illusions of anti-exclusivist impartiality. My focus was on philosophy, but my ultimate aim was to cut a rout for not only theology but also practical spirituality. This is why I am encourage to ask, whether in fact my study contributes rather to a philosophical basis of Scriptural Reasoning. Without going into the jungle of philosophical argumentation, let me start with summarizing my conclusive proposal for a postliberal global ethics in that book.

Iargue for 'balanced inclusivism'. First of all, what I mean by 'balanced' is that the ultimately exclusive nature of all religions and ideologies is not only acknowledged, but also accepted, if not as 'reasonable', then at least as an inevitable fact that cannot be politically or philosophically dismantled or transcended, even in the public societal discourse. Religious and other ideological doctrines are to be taken as thoroughly holistic political contributors that compete for power in the

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public as well as the private sphere-not for egotistical reasons,but for ethical reasons that rise out of every ideological tradition respectively. It is precisely this emphasis on exclusivism that calls for the term 'balanced' in my definition. But,of course,this is not the whole story.

Second,what I mean by 'inclusivism' is that despite the ongoing contest and conflict,there is simultaneously a need for reconciliation and peaceful co-existence. My hope is that this demand isnot only politically ethical,but also genuinely ethical. Here I can refer only to the particular exclusive religious and other ideological traditions instead of some neutral argument. It is only through these 'comprehensive doctrines' that the ethical flavor of the necessity for peaceful coexistence may perhaps be gained. Comprehensive ideological traditions,mostly non-secular,are in a position to foster serious and sustainable societal answers on a global scale because they are able to provide tools for the ethical legitimation of laws. But the minimal condition for peace in our radically pluralistic world is that these traditions endorse inclusive attitudes that do not fully "demonize" the proponents of other ideologies or the ideologies themselves. There has to be a substantial readiness for 'overlapping consensus' on behalf of the different traditions whereby there are only restricted sets of ways to convert people. The principal acceptance of the permanent pluralism of doctrines is required of the doctrines themselves in such a way that this condition will not hinder peaceful and constructive coexistence.

The nature of this coexistence should at the same time be both deeply ethical and genuinely political. The first aspect here excludes those models in which societal coexistence is based merely on political contract. It is precisely the ethically binding nature of religions and other comprehensive ideologies that renders merely neutral or tactical negotiation impossible. On the other hand,the need for politics reflects that the more precise meaning and scope of any common societal ethics is to be derived on the basis of how far and in what direction the proponents of different religions and ideologies,by their own standards,are prepared to embrace common rules. The question is about amodus vivendi that can perhaps be called 'norms of the second best' (Alan Gibbard) or a 'political compromise' (Richard Bellamy) from the view of particular ideologies.〔2〕 In balanced inclusivism the commonness of humanity is acknowledged on the basis of love;at the same time there is an acknowledgment of mutual exclusivity-not only difference or extraordinariness,but also exclusivity-in the more accurate definitions of this commonness. It is necessary that in a consistent peace dialogue both aspects-exclusivity and inclusivity-are simultaneously present.

In line with PWE I would say that global ethics is always a dialogical enterprise. My third point is that this process is not to be genuinely or realistically fostered without taking as a primordial vantage point the principle of encountering (and the recognition of) exclusive difference-and not just radical difference,as in poststructuralism. Thus,my first emphasis on exclusivism does not lead to

〔2〕 See Alan Gibbard,Wise Choices,Apt Feelings. A Theory of Normatic Judgment. (Cambridge,Massachusetts:Harvard University Press,1992),241,242 and Richard Bellamy,Liberalism and Pluralism. Towards A Politics of Compromise. (London:Routledge,1999),91-140. I will not dwell here on Gibbard's and Bellamy's alternatives,but will only say that while they are much the same as my balanced inclusivism-at least in the concepts mentioned-there are also important differences.

neglecting the dialogue, but rather to endorsing it in a way that the constructive and non-violent encountering of exclusivism is the necessary minimal condition for such a dialogue. Here we come to the question of what would be the most plausible way to articulate the idea behind PWE: the global ethos should first and foremost refer to these minimal conditions of a peace dialogue. The ethics of encountering exclusive difference amounts, among other things, to focusing on the anthropological, spiritual, and (socio-) psychological nature of love more than doctrinal ecumenism. Instead of mitigating the exclusive truth-claims of religions, for instance, ethics of exclusive difference connotes altruistic and 'kenotic' renouncement of revenge and violence, the principle of loving one's (ideological) enemies.

Ifocused mainly on Western articulations of global ethics. Nevertheless, my premises require that it is possible to extend the postliberal type of argument far beyond Western traditions and, for that matter, the Judeo-Christian tradition. But I do not consider it up to me to engage further in that extension authentically as a Western Christian. I have nevertheless seen it necessary to argue philosophically, in the Western sense, against liberalism and for postliberalism in general just because the former presents the challenge, as it were, of transcending theology by philosophy. Having said this, I have taken as my ultimate purpose to transcend philosophy. The postliberal global ethics as an encounter with exclusive difference may open up possibilities for resources of non-secular ideologies, which until now have not adequately tapped. This is because what I have called a postliberal paradigm indicates the inevitable, permanent, and, at bottom, anthropological, challenge of global ethics: the peaceful coexistence of more or less exclusive metaphysical world views.

From Theory to Practice

I would like to relateScriptural Reasoning to moral and political philosophical discussion. James P. Sterba claims that the problem of today's moral and political philosophy is that there are many well established schools of thought, which are in an irreconcilable conflict with each other at the theoretical level, but when one looks at the concrete actions they endorse (each on the basis of their own theory), the conflict is strikingly absent. No wonder, that Sterba concludes, that it is worth starting to concentrate on practice and forget the theoretical conflicts.[3]

It is not too difficult to see an analogy here, with respect to the contribution of Scriptural Reasoning to the debate concerning inter-religious theology. Since John Hick's efforts to find theological solutions to the pluralism of religions in a global world of there has been an irreconcilable debate at a theoretical level on what would be the most plausible way of seeing the different religions and their spiritual and ethical roles in the world in juxtaposition with each other. There has emerged a trichotomy exclusivism-pluralism-inclusivism, which in turn has gained new dimensions through more postmodern versions that challenge all three. The common understanding among theologians of different religions has generally been, that dialogue is necessary, but the conflicts at the theoretical

[3] James P. Sterba, The Triumph of Practice Over Theory in Ethics (New York: Oxford University Press cop. 2005.)

level concerning the prerequisites and aims of the dialogue have tended penetrate the dialogue. It is interesting to see that long before Sterba's book, there has been a theological enterprise to proceed to dialogue directly and practice-oriented, without being encumbered by this debate.

Whereas Sterba's is an analysis of ethics a more theological analysis concerning the of the rise of praxis is given in Gustavo Gutiérrez's revised version of his classic.[4] In the first part of this book Gutiérrez depicts how the theology of the catholic church has begun to underline praxis as the crucial part of theology ever since the Vatican II. Not only societal action, but also liturgical life and pastoral dimensions of theology are given a great attention.

The Integrity Between Theory and Practice

HereI am tempted to say a few words about my own recent history. After academic work I have been in different pastoral assignments. I have had an opportunity to apply my theology in practice. For instance, to take one key concept of Hans Küng's Global Ethic Project, Verantwortung, I have been allowed as well as forced, instead of speaking and writing about how to take responsibility in a theoretically coherent way, simply to take responsibility.

I have never practiced SR, but, besides Miikka and many of you here, I know people in Åbo Akademi University, who have (prof. Antti Laato, Dr. Anni Maria Laato, and Dr. Pekka Lindqvist) and it has been enlightening to discuss and read their experiences. Although I don't have experience on SR directly, I have had an opportunity to taste something of a similar kind. As a systematic theologian, it has been a new world for me to have systematically begun to read and study Jewish and Christian Bible in Hebrew and Greek.

I can't help comparing my experience with the way prof. Ford in his paper describes his experiences of SR. Indeed, in his paper I discovered perhaps the most accurate term for what the reading of those sacred texts in those sacred languages is about for me: practice. That means that I have recognized, that it is an end in itself, it is hugely important even though I would not be able to construct any certain or precise theological model on the basis of that reading. There is something in it that transcends reason and understanding, but this in the very process of simultaneously searching for meaning. It is a world into which you have a privilege to step. It is to live in that world, for just a moment or longer (like a very fruitful trip abroad, it is perhaps not worth eating too much at once, otherwise you either exhaust or you don't digest). You walk there, take a look at some details, you wonder, you "smell", you "taste", you just breathe the air of this culture. Along with the disciplined study of the language and the content of the text there is another dimension, and it is not possible to separate these two dimensions from each other. This practice is first and foremost a condition for a holistically understood personal renewal. I think that this perspective proposes a permanent challenge for the academic world, which is usually occupied with analyzing and conceptualizing without

[4] Gustavo Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation (London: SCM, 2001)

necessarily linking this with any concrete life of action. This is why I am so much interested in the ambivalent historical trajectory of SR, where it crossed over the academic boundaries already from the start.

To my mind, Scriptural Reasoning is par excellence integrating theory and practice. In SR, reading the text (words) and scrutinizing it (conceptual work and yearning for meaning) is an end in itself (action or practice). Reading for example the text of prof. Ford about the nature of SR as a practice, I find a certain humbleness in keeping the sphere of SR a relatively restricted one. There are no direct social or even religious ambitions. Rather the objective is merely to read, discuss, and experience in its own right. There is no expectation for any actions, that the partakers of SR are to take after the reading and discussing the texts, no expectation for action outside the sphere of SR, but still flowing from it. The process of SR is itelf the action expected.

Perhaps one helpful way of saying this is to use the Lutheran concept of 'regime', and to introduce a 'Scriptural Reasoning regime' with its own rules and internal goals. However, a general misunderstanding concerning the Lutheran two-regimes-doctrine is that the spiritual regime (religion) and the earthly regime (society) do not interact or overlap in any ways. Liberal illusion of bracketing religion totally out of politics is neither a realistic understanding of the Lutheran doctrine of regimes nor a realistic view of contemporary societal life philosophically. Now, the same may be said of Scriptural Reasoning: SR as a "regime," with its self-defined limits, has no direct interest in influencing society, at least in political terms, but its influence is, although natural, nevertheless indirect.

What would be the fruit of this kind of practice? I would say, first, that it is not definable wholly by the traditional Western rational, universal, secular (or even post-secular), and argumentative language. The question for me here is not about postmodernism either, or any of its form (say post-structuralism, deconstructionism, value pluralism etc.). The point is, yes, to look for meaning (in the sense of what Ricoeur is after, and not in the sense of how Derrida sees it), but at the same time this search is an end in itself, a practice (in contrast with viewing this search for meaning only as a necessary tool for a "final or religion-independent definition").

The majority of the global ethical models, such as Martha Nussbaum's and Amartia Sen's Capabilities Approach and Hans Küng's Global Ethic Project, may be seen as turning the attention away from the conflicts at the level of theory to the common worries at the level of action. In that they reflect the same idea as James P. Sterba's philosophical version above. What does it matter, on what grounds religions and world views justify their actions, if the actions fostered by different religions are more or less the same? Every religion endorses something like a golden rule (Küng), human rights declaration charter was universally accepted even though the grounds for its acceptance were completely different by the different cultures and parties involved (Paul A. Brink), and capabilities approach addresses only the basic all-human needs without taking stand on religious matters (Nussbaum & Sen).

However, what is also attractive in these models, at least for a Western reader, is that they tend to stress the importance of a global perspective on the side of the local one with an aim to provide any (contextual/local) moral action with the necessary conceptual and argumentative plausibility. My question is, why not reserve that role to the very religions themselves? I would like to claim that particularism of a certain (religious) view does not exclude its global plausibility even though it might exclude its universal plausibility-but I am afraid that any kind of universal plausibility is gained at the risk of hovering in the air of abstraction.

The problem with the above mentioned models of global ethics is that while it is indeed possible to sketch general ethical patterns that unite all religions, for instance, when it comes to action, one needs much more concrete guidance: How am I to apply golden rule to this situation? What does the freedom of religion mean when there are ten conflicting interpretations of how to secure it in this or that political situation? And so forth. And this is not a minor detail, but it tends to question the whole idea of recourse to action with the cost of theory, at least considering the global ethics and theology of religions. The summons that seem to be similar in different religions are still too formal in order to enable action in a conflicting situation where different values collide with each other. Ironically, dwelling on the comprehensive world views gives the needed concreteness to enable action in a multicultural situation, and not the other way around. Precisely here is the strength of Scriptural Reasoning: while changing perspective from theory to action, that is, to the open dialogue as practice, it welcomes the comprehensive doctrines of religions back into that process-and with them the radical disagreement. In that way, SR could be seen as giving the needed flesh to the otherwise too formal and harmonious principles of Hans Küng and others. While "theory" (comprehensive world view) is not enough, the actions are neither. There has to be integrity between the two-and this means that the contest of mutually exclusive religious and other world views is impossible to be excluded from the dialogue.

Religious Exclusivism

In fact, it might be possible to interprete even Hans Küng's Global Ethic Project itself in this way, as an appeal tostart a dialogue in general, instead of as determining the direction of that dialogue. However, it is not easy to render Küng's position along these lines, because of his ambivalent relation to religious exclusivism and religious truth. He writes in his Projekt Weltethos (PWE):

> Seen from outside, from the perspective of so-called religious science, there are different true religions: religions that despite all their ambivalence at least ultimately fulfill certain common (ethical as well as religious) criteria. There are different ways of salvation (with different figures of salvation) to one end, ways that even partly overlap and in any case can contribute to each other.
>
> Seen from inside, that is from the New Testament-oriented believing Christian, that is

for me as encountered,challenged person,there is only one true religion:Christianity,insofar as it testifies to the one true God,as he has made himself known in Jesus Christ.[5]

My thesis already in my earlier mentioned book is that infact this PWE's standpoint toward religions can be applied precisely on the basis of Karl Jaspers's philosophy. For Jaspers as a peculiar kind of existentialist philosopher, there is no substantial connection between religious or metaphysical symbols such as 'ciphers' and the transcendental reality they intimate. Hence,it would seem that it does not make any difference in the thinking of Jaspers, which of the countless metaphysical symbols, that is historical religions, is used to denote being-in-itself (or, we may simplify, "the highest being"). To a certain extent this is indeed true for Jaspers who characteristically reaches out beyond particular expressions of faith to what he calls the 'general fundamental knowledge' of all the varying experiences of 'Being'. General fundamental knowledge is related to his doctrine of 'encompassing'. This he names as 'periechontology', a word whose ambivalent connection to 'ontology' is meant to exemplify Jaspers's hostility to any dogmatic fixations of the faith in one particular expression of faith. To be sure,inasmuch as 'Being' transcends any specific doctrinal expression or even any intimation of it,in the manner of negative theology, 'Being' is also equally present in any such expression,in the manner of 'periechontology'.[6]

At the same time, however, this particular account of 'periechontology' and 'general fundamental knowledge' reflects only one of two outcomes of Jaspers's philosophy. The other account emphasizes the non-arbitrariness of any authentic conviction. In other words,from the fact that the self always operates through thinking,even in experiencing transcendence,there follows the fact that there isonly one possible way in which the unconditional manifests for each self. To refer restrictedly to the interchangeability of 'ciphers' does not address the fundamentality of the personal element in Jaspers's philosophy, the essentialness of 'existential truth'. Ultimately, man in his existence does not have anything other than a particular conviction by which he is in a position to direct himself to transcendence in the first place. Hence,Jaspers opposes mysticism that detaches itself altogether from the chains of time;the articulation of faith is an indispensable part of what,in the final analysis,cannot be articulated.[7]

One upshot of this is the idea of 'general fundamental knowledge', which very much likens Küng's project to examine the doctrinal content of different faiths as articulations of faiths without at the same time doing away with the additional necessity for personal commitment to only one of these faiths.[8] Another upshot likens the idea of PWE equally strongly,namely,the ideal of dialogue:

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〔5〕 Hans Küng,*Projekt Weltethos* (6th paperback ed. Serie Piper 1659,München:Piper,1990),129:"Von aussen gesehen, sozusagen religionswissenschaftlich betrachtet, gibt es selbstverständlich veschiedene wahre Religionen:Religionen, die bei aller Ambivalenz zumindest grundsätzlich bestimmten generellen (ethischen wie religiösen) Kriterien entsprechen. Es gibt verschiedene Heilswege (mit verschiedenen Heilsgestalten) zum einen Ziel,die sich sogar zum Teil überschneiden und sich jedenfalls gegenseitig befruchten können. Von innen her gesehen,also vom Standpunkt des am Neuen Testament orientierten gläubigen Christien,für mich also als betroffenen,herausgeforderten Menchen,gibt es nur die eine wahre Religion:das Christentum,insofern es den einen wahren Gott,wie er sich in Jesus Christus kundgetan hat,bezeugt."

〔6〕 Leonard H. Ehrlich,Karl Jaspers. Philosophy as Faith (Amherst:University of Massachusetts Press,1975),6-8.

〔7〕 *Ibid*.,58,157-163.

〔8〕 *Ibid*.,119.

> At bottom, then, the relation of man to man, where the historicity of the human realization of truth and the indispensability of freedom for it is valued, is that of communication no matter whether 'man' in that relationship be a fellow human being or a human actuality such as an authority, an institution, or one's heritage. Jaspers's idea of philosophical faith is founded on the conception of the 'unreserved', 'unrelenting', 'boundless' 'loving struggle' of communication as the historic and the free man's way to truth. The more intense the awareness of the historicity of truth for man, the more intense the appreciation of the multiplicity of this truth. The consequence of this awareness is a person's affirmation of another person's truth for that other person, even as one's own truth is absolute for one's own historicity. The submission to or even the flirtation with another's historicity is as truly the death of communication as is the imposition of what is absolute for oneself upon the other. The search for the one truth by virtue of philosophical faith does not imply a community of believers in one faith but a communicative solidarity of believers, each with his own historic vision of truth upon which he freely risks grounding his life, without confusing this vision with the one truth transcending all historicity.〔9〕

This sets out the basis for dialogue between particular traditions. Indeed, relentless inter-faith dialogue is for Jaspers the upshot of his philosophy instead of inter-faith indifference or one meta-religion. In this he could not have better anticipated the spirit of PWE. As Küng states further:

> None of the religions will be able wholly to avoid applying their ownvery special truth criterion to other religions, be it Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist or Confucian. Dialogue means really no self-denial. And the stranger-criticism remains necessary. But he who keeps reasonable and honest knows that these criteria can be relevant, not to say binding, most of all for the respective religion itself and not for the others.〔10〕

On the basis of Jaspers's discussion, it is again easy to recognize the applicability of his philosophical considerations to the position that Küng represents in a more theological manner. PWE's position, which resists both exclusivism and inclusivism as well as pluralism without collapsing into relativism, to an important extent reflects Jaspers's position.

A characteristic of our historical situation is the acute awareness of traditions and fundamental conceptions of the truth of Being other than our own. The ensuing problem posed for mankind and for philosophy is, according to Jaspers, to come to terms with this multiplicity. Jaspers rejects a relativistic resolution of it. And rightly so. For the cause of truth is not served by denying those who deemed themselves in possession of it and thereby gained fulfillment. And that all human visions are

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〔9〕 *Ibid.*, 119.

〔10〕 PWE, 113: "Keine Religion wird ganz darauf verzichten könne, die ihr eigenen, ganz spezifischen Wahrheitskriterien auch an die anderen Religionen anzulegen, seien es die chritslichen, jüdischen, islamischen, hinduistischen, buddhistischen oder konfuzianischen. Dialog heisst ja nicht Selbstverleugnung. Und Fremdkritik bleibt nötig. Aber: Wer nüchtern und erlich bleibt, weiss, dass diese Kriterien zunächst nur für die jeweilige Religion selbst und nicht für die anderen relevant, gar verbindlich sein können" (italics added).

relative can be as little known as the absoluteness for all men of one of these visions. Neither can man rise above humanity in such a manner that he can gain enough insight into all possiblehuman visions of truth to assign each its place in a comprehensive synthesis. The only synthesis which,in Jaspers's view,is possible,is of the modes of truth,their scopes and limits,their forms and possible contents, and their peculiar opposition to falsehood. It would have to open up the regions in which human realization of truth can take place. This would have to be done without adulterating or gainsaying what has been realized by man in the past,and without prescribing or proscribing what may yet be realized. Moreover it would mean recognizing as truth and promoting truth which is not one's own fulfillment of truth. [11]

Therefore,along the lines of Jaspers/Küng, it has to be concluded that there are many incommensurable metaphysical accounts of good that may be completely incompatible,yet they may all be true. After all,as I have argued inConstructing Ethical Patterns, this contention, the like liberalist neutrality,is based on the misunderstanding that it is possible to look at traditions from a bird's-eye point of view. According to Alasdair MacIntyre,behind the inability to understand this underlying notion is a revealing modernist misunderstanding. [12] MacIntyre continues,

> The perspectivist,moreover,fails to recognize how integral the conception of truth is to tradition-constituted forms of enquiry. It is this which leads perspectivists to suppose that one could temporarily adopt the standpoint of a tradition and then exchange it for another,as one might wear first one costume and then another,or as one might act one part in one play and then a quite different part in a quite different play. But genuinely to adopt the standpoint of a tradition thereby commits one to its view of what is true and false and,in so committing one,prohibits one from adopting any rival standpoint. Hence the perspectivist could indeed pretend to assume the standpoint of some one particular tradition of enquiry;he or she could not in fact do so. The multiplicity of traditions does not afford a multiplicity of perspectives among which we can move,but a multiplicity of antagonistic commitments,between which only conflict, rational or nonrational, is possible. Perspectivism, in this once more like relativism,is a doctrine only possible for those who regard themselves as outsiders, as uncommitted or rather as committed only to acting a succession of temporary parts. From their point of view any conception of truth but the most minimal appears to have been discredited. And from the standpoint afforded by the rationality of tradition-constituted enquiry it is clear that such persons are by their stance excluded from the possession of any concept of truth adequate for systematic rational enquiry. Hence theirs is not so much a conclusion about truth as an exclusion from it and thereby from rational debate. [13]

Here for the first time we have arrived at a postliberal context for dealing with the essential

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[11] Leonard H. Ehrlich,Karl Jaspers. Philosophy as Faith (Amherst:University of Massachusetts Press,1975),5-6.

[12] Alasdair MacIntyre,Whose Justice,Which Rationality (London:Duckworth,1988),366,367.

[13] *Ibid.*,367-368.

question posed by this study, namely, what is the ethical stance vis-à-vis ideological and religiousexclusivism? Ricoeur criticizes Jaspers in a manner analogous to MacIntyre's rebuke of perspectivism and of relativism in general. Jaspers is walking a fine line,proclaiming all world views to be of the same type,on the one hand,because of their mutually analogous failure to capture the truth they are referring to in their doctrinal symbols,while on the other hand,insisting against stubborn relativism;the fact that all of these views are myths does not in any way mitigate the necessity for a human individual to keep his commitment to one of these world views as reflecting the truth against the other world views and,accordingly,to consider the rival views to be wrong. The first of these aspects is what Jaspers calls the 'doctrine of encompassing' and is available to a philosopher unmasking the totality myths around different cultures, yet a philosopher who nevertheless understands the necessity and nature of the more 'narrow' existential commitment to these same myths. However,as Ehrich explains Ricoeur's objection:"Does not the philosopher run the risk of losing the 'narrowness' and the 'commitment' of Existenz when he embraces the totality of myths-those of Greece, those of India, those of Christianity-like a Don Juan courting all the gods?"[14]

There are, of course, direct corollaries to this kind of MacIntyrean-Ricoeurian critique of relativism with respect to PWE:as has become clear,global ethics cannot be consistently argued through suchanti-exclusivist figure as Jaspers,although his was shown to reflect alternative liberal interpretations of PWE. It is paradoxical that,by attempting to transcend the inevitable conflict between moral traditions with the help of what appears the most consiliatory standpoint along the exclusivism-inclusivism-pluralism debate,Jasper's and,for that matter,Küng's still reflects such an Enlightenment thinking that always and necessarily loses grounds for a reasonable resolution of the conflict.

The Social Implications of Scriptural Reasoning

What positive,then,may come out of SR,if the fundamental ideological conflict is penetrates almost every topic in the dialogue,and in a much more radical way than many Western models of Global Ethics are prepared to admit? Of course,much positive may emerge,for sure,but I am interested in asking what positive fruit we are able to identify beforehand,and even with a relative certainty. Let me try to answer by changing perspective.

I am inclined to claim,that the standard Western universal,rational and,to my mind,too abstract approach has already shown its weakness[15]:there is no escape to any kind of,even the subtlest version of "impartial bird-eye-view," a some kind of "ideologically neutral" vantage point that is used to evaluate the success or failure of inter-religious dialogue or global ethics. If any global

[14] Leonard H. Ehrlich,Karl Jaspers. Philosophy as Faith (Amherst:University of Massachusetts Press,1975),75.

[15] For instance,in my book Constructing Ethical Patterns in Times of Globalization,Hans Küng's Global Ethic Project and Beyond (Leiden & Boston:Brill,2012) I have elaborated the Western discussion and drawn these conclusions.

or "universal" (I would rather like to save this concept for the view I criticize) bird-eye-view is of any use, it has to flow directly from the particular religions (or other comprehensive world-views themselves). To say the least, the religions or world views should have the ultimate say (that is, on the basis of their own comprehensive doctrines) on whether any religion-independent perspective is possible (which, by definition, would make any possible "impartial" vantage point ultimately a "partial" one). Now, in this situation, a neutral observer, for instance, a Kantian liberalist, would say that cross-cultural or inter-religious dialogue is impossible. A religious believer, on the other hand, would say that only now an authentic dialogue is possible! But the results of that dialogue are now not to be defined beforehand. One must only choose, whether to opt for a dialogue or segregation.

Now, I think, what we can say with certainty, is that the alternative to dialogue is indeed segregation. And even more, segregation products prejudice and antipathy. To get back to my original question, what is the use of a non-liberal inter-religious dialogue, and, I would like to add, especially in the form of Scriptural Reasoning? I can identify two clear corollaries of dialogue that relate to, how I/we see and treat the Other(s) inter-religious encounters, cross-religious interaction, and multi-religious coexistence:

1. Objectivity vs. prejudice. It is plain truth, that the more you are in interaction with the Other (person/group) and the more you sincerely try to listen to and understand the other positions' adherents and their arguments the more you avoid misunderstanding her/them or labeling them falsely. The dynamics of growing prejudice as a snow-ball effect is an undeniable social and psychological notion. Prejudices have a tendency to be inflated especially at a collective level between different cultural, ethnic, but also ideological groups. There is something irrational and uncontrollable in this trajectory. Worst of all, growing prejudice increases hatred and violence. It demands extra effort to eliminate the growing of prejudices, because prejudice is a natural phenomenon for humans, indeed, the dark side of all humanity. SR is precisely one of those frameworks that are able to tackle the inter-religious prejudices through bringing different religious groups together in interaction. Its method of reading and discussing the authorative sources increases the objectivity of mutual knowledge and thus hinders prejudices.

2. Sympathy vs. antipathy. Even if, after practicing SR, some negative convictions concerning the other(s) remain, indeed, even if, through increasing knowledge, they deepen, there is still another benefit in SR. Namely, "the othering of the Other" still tends to diminish the more the Other is seen as a human being. I take it as an all-human feature, that the more interaction and enlightening discussion on the motives and rationales of certain actions or viewpoints of the others, and this done with the 'Others', the more sympathetic is the attitude towards even those actions and viewpoints that are inevitably in tension with one's own values. The question is about recognizing rival convictions and values as those endorsed by those who are human persons, the same flesh and blood with me-irrespective whether vehemently one might despise or condemn the views themselves. This increase of sympathy with the cost of antipathy-which I see as almost an inevitable fruit of such person-oriented and grass-roots-level interaction as SR. When the dialogue does not have ideological pressures from the start, but is over and above (or below) these dogmatic preconditions it tends to

evoke mutual sympathy between the participants.

These two benchmarks of "anti-demonizing" are not rationally or scientifically definable in the final analysis,even though they may be collected together under the term 'resistance to othering'. They are much more about the holistic personal renewal that I started with in this commenting paper. This I take to be the direct aim of SR,but the indirect aim is no less important. There is no question,that everyone sees these two corollaries of dialogue as crucial ingredients of developing and consolidating religious identities through different encounters with the Other. However,anyone may clearly notice the societal potential as well-in terms of peace building and cross-cultural co-operation for the good of common good.

At the same time,one may quite easily see that these two benchmarks,cross-cultural objectivity and sympathy, are relatively modest aims for a Western liberalist, who is eager to construct a universal model for multicultural society. But the one,who has given up with such an ambition sees these two as critical turning points, which determine much of the future of multicultural society, globally and locally. Perhaps she even sees them as the key dilemmas that are not tackled in a sufficient manner-exactly because of concentrating too much on the universal and systematic model for global ethics in the past.

中文题目:
理解经文辨读的努力

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提要:作者在本文尝试了对理解经文辨读的努力,首先,他提出了经文辨读的理论基础问题。其次,他尝试探索从理论到实践的经文辨读。接着,他继续研究了理论和实践之间的诚信问题。在作者最后提出结论之前,他还研究了经文辨读的社会意涵。

关键词:经文辨读;理论基础;从理论到实践;理论与实践之间的诚信;社会意涵