

CLASH OR KISS OF PEACE BETWEEN CIVILIZATIONS? REFLECTIONS ON COSMOPOLITANISM

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Abstract: The essay first distinguishes the positive sense of cosmopolitanism from exist other concepts of cosmopolitanism. It explores whether global peace and cosmopolitanism are merely big illusions. Doing so, it examines S. Huntington's view on clash of civilizations. It then demonstrates: a) there is no such necessity of a clash of civilizations; and b) Huntington's various arguments for his thesis cannot stand and cannot refute cosmopolitanism and peaceful coexistence of humanity. It further indicates that a cosmopolitan spirit and peace presuppose consensus on some basic truths, values and rights summarized in the charter of basic human rights and in the "golden rule."

SEID UMSCHLUNGEN, MILLIONEN!

Diesen Kuß der ganzen Welt!

Brüder – überm Sternenzelt

Muß ein lieber Vater wohnen. (Schiller, 1776-1788, 164)²

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I. Seven Senses of “Cosmopolitanism” and Its Desirable Type

Any discussion of cosmopolitanism and peace has to begin with the difficult task of clarifying the things meant by the term “cosmopolitanism”.

1. By a “cosmopolitan” we do not mean here the rare species of human beings who, having travelled much and lived in many countries, speaking many languages and moving elegantly in society, feel at home around the globe wherever life leads them.

2. Nor do we think of a kind of shallow “man without qualities”, who lacks any tradition and culture of his own because he shakes all of these off as soon as he enters another part of the world far from his home. If he thus – “chameleon-like” – adapts to any culture, language, or religion of the world that accidentally is around him, he is an unprincipled person whose “cosmopolitanism” is just a facade and has no solid foundation. Such a person could just as well join ideologies that constitute an antithesis to any cosmopolitanism, such as the Nazi-ideology. Thus he is more an opportunist than a cosmopolitan even though the aspect of moving easily in different cultures and countries may give the impression of cosmopolitanism because it is also part of the first and reasonable, though somewhat shallow, concept of it mentioned above.

3. With the term “cosmopolitan” we also do not refer to the proud or self-centered man who despises the narrowness of his hometown and flees – under the pretext of being a citizen of the world – the obligations he has to his own home-community: family, city, country. Some have interpreted Diogenes’ (the first philosopher’s who called himself a citizen of the world) cosmopolitanism in this way (Kleingeld and Brown, 2011).

4. Likewise, it is not my intention here to use the term “cosmopolitanism” in a fourth sense in which it refers to a thought or movement that promotes the founding of a world state and a world-government, or a league of autonomous states under the rule of a supreme world court (and possibly, as a somewhat logical consequence, of a world-government), as proposed, in very different degrees and varieties, by Kant and others. (Kant, 1795/1796; Habermas, 1998; Held, 1995).

Such a single world state, a kind of cosmically extended USA, seems, in the face of the modern media, no longer to be an absolute practical impossibility or absurd idea, as it has been in previous centuries. All the more so since even in the past, prior to any telecommunication that has transformed the earth into a global village, not only frequent attempts at ruling the world have been made, for example by the Persian empire, by Alexander the Great, Caesar, Napoleon, and Hitler, but also entirely different conceptions of a world state have been developed during the enlightenment and German idealist transzendental philosophy. The historical predecessors of the idea and reality of a world-state show the need for a radical critical examination of its conception. In fact, an adequate model of such a single global state would have to be

² “Receive this embrace, millions!/This kiss to the whole world!/Brethren – above the starry sky/there has to dwell a loving father.” (transl. mine, JS).

based on an entirely different concept of a world state and free itself from radically undemocratic earlier efforts in this direction.

Nevertheless, it is remarkable that since more than two millennia the idea of a politically, juridically, and administratively united mankind has been pursued energetically and sometimes with considerable success by empires such as the Roman Empire that dominated for a while large portions of the globe and brought at least to some of the countries it dominated many cultural goods and a superior body of Roman Law. Instead of wars of conquests and subjugation of other nations, a new idea and motivation for the founding of a cosmopolitan state would have to be born today, inspired by the effort to impede unjust wars, racisms, egocentric and barbarian battles between states and to create a well-founded unification of the world upon principle of right and justice. In a cosmopolis in this sense one would literally be a cosmopolitan (a citizen of the cosmos-state and subject to world-laws and a world-court). It is hard though not impossible to separate the much more attractive idea of an internationally composed supreme world court, some form of which can be seen in the court of The Hague or in the UN, and in any juridical institution of international law), from that of a world government. I believe that Kant and others gives some good reasons for establishing a cosmopolitan world court and perhaps also sound reasons for establishing a world government but, while I am entertaining great doubts about the feasibility of the latter, and its real separability from the former, this is not the cosmopolitanism I want to speak of in this paper.

5. Much more vigorously I exclude a fifth meaning some sects, unions, societies and movements have given to the term “cosmopolitanism” from my consideration. Their “ideological cosmopolitanism” has many faces, some quite contrary to others. It can take on, for example, an aggressively sectarian form, which on the one hand integrates some elements of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, on the other hand some results and theories of science, and then combines all of this with some general ethical and humanistic elements and some kind of objectivist philosophy of knowledge, values, justice and natural law. All of this is then connected with an entirely new messianic vision of the cosmos, built partly on an exceedingly free interpretation and reading of the Bible or Koran, altering these texts and their meanings, and crowning a confused reinterpretation of these world religions with some auto-prophecies of the founder about himself, who, in at least one of these sects, takes on, with his wife, the role of some kind of new Adam, super-redeemer and head of a paradisiacal couple from which a new pure humanity will emerge. According to some such sect, any wholesome humanity of the future will have to emerge as a cosmopolitan and eschatological community. Such a cosmopolitan “sect of the elect” frequently considers its adherents as future single survivor group of mankind and as a small remnant after some catastrophe will have wiped out the rest of humanity. As such a sect considers itself to be the last word in history and the last undestroyed remnant of humanity in the imminent future, it suggests that its members will be the true and only cosmopolitans. Spreading this and other similarly “universalizing” cosmopolitan and at the same time extremely narrow sects frequently occurs through a kind of psycho-terror. Apostates or non-believers in such a sect, after having first been treated like a horde of slaves in the service of such a “Church,” are frequently terrorized and treated

like sons or daughters of perdition, solemnly expelled and cursed. I can neither feel the slightest bit of sympathy for such a cosmopolitanism nor is its discussion my theme here.

6. "Ideological Cosmopolitanism" can also take on a very different form of a secular liberal and individualistic ideology, not infrequently linked to some idolization of democracy of which it predicts a future unifying effect and power over the whole world, possibly leading to a single world-state. Some of today's non-religious and non-ideological cosmopolitanisms include, next to exoteric teachings, some secret esoteric doctrines addressed solely to the enlightened and initiated. Some such secret societies promote a certain view of the whole world, frequently a *Weltanschauung* unrevealed to the outsider, aim at its universal rule and fighting in subtle and secretive ways against institutions or religious communities that do not share their liberal cosmopolitan outlook and agenda. Something of this sort free masonry may have in mind. However, many more distinctions would be required within this class of cosmopolitanisms; my topic here, however, is not in any way an analysis of such "ideological" cosmopolitanisms, neither the sectarian one described before nor the liberal, nor a communist one.

7. Rather, I will speak in this paper of a cosmopolitanism only in the sense of giving a certain priority to one's belonging to the community of humanity over one's being a member of an individual nation and citizen of a specific state, and to a universal ethics and basic human rights over the positive laws, traditions and constitutions of the nation and state to which one belongs but which must never violate the universal ethical and juridical order applicable to all human persons. Thus I mean by a "cosmopolitan" any person who, however attached she is to her country or village, is as it were a citizen of the world first, realizing - along the lines of Diogenes and the ancient Stoics - that what binds together all of humanity is more important than what separates or distinguishes nations and cultures from each other. Such a person may herself have roots in strong cultural traditions and have profound religious beliefs, of which she knows that they are not shared by humanity at large and of which she nonetheless believes that they exceed in importance everything else and ought to be embraced by all men, while she at the same time favors full freedom to have distinct *weltanschauungen* and religions, as long as these and their concrete aims are in keeping with justice and human rights. Notwithstanding her potential sense of belonging more deeply to her religious community and family than to the more abstract and less contentful and close community of humanity as such, she feels vividly her membership in the human family and is in search of those basic moral values and rights which can give to cross-cultural and multinational pluralist communities, and, in a less concretely lived way, to all human inhabitants of the universe, a firm ground to stand on. This cosmopolitanism conceives of the entire human community and of all states as partaking in the same *logos*, in the same meaning and law common to all, as the Presocratic Heraclitus has formulated it. According to this ideal of cosmopolitanism which sometimes also cites St Paul's remarks that Christians are citizens of the world and co-citizens of the Saints in heaven, all communities and states are called to build their respective social and political life, and their positive laws, notwithstanding their different cultures, on some

same universal prepositive law, and on some universal values and principles of a well-ordered society so as to form a universal human community and culture of justice, of life, and of love. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights could be regarded as a historical and partial triumph of such a world-ethics and of natural law, and is a proposal of the cosmopolitan world order in which the same fundamental human rights would be recognized universally by all nations in a nutshell.

Such a cosmopolitan ethics does not wish to eliminate or diminish the multitude of religions, as the fifth one, nor does it aim at a single world-religion or world-ideology, but seeks to encourage the positive elements common to all world religions of a certain level of ethical and humane standard, and of agnostics and non-religious persons as well, formulating such a world-ethos in a universally accessible way so as to invite members of all religions and heads of states, and humanity at large to nourish and foster it. In other words, cosmopolitanism in this sense is mainly concerned with universally recognizable human rights, morals, respect for liberty and for the equal dignity of the entirety of the human community, men and women, children, members of all nations, cultures and religions. Such a cosmopolitanism is a positive thing, perhaps even part of a survival kit of humanity if we do not wish to enter a new area of nationalistically, ideologically or culturally motivated totalitarian regimes or devastating wars and if we desire to keep up the hope that humanity will avoid catastrophes such as a third world war or new genocides and murders of millions such as those that have occurred 80 years ago in Stalin's extermination of 7 million Ukrainian farmers through artificial famine in 1932, in Hitler's genocide of Jews and gypsies or the singularly cruel and even bestial genocides of the 20th century on the African continent, or in crimes against humanity like those committed in Europe during the Balkan war, or similar extermination crusades against the mentally handicapped, the unborn, or the elderly.

Such a commendable "cosmopolitanism" may seek, without eliminating the plurality of states, to put society on basic principles of justice and human solidarity, whose implementation can spring from an ethos already partly shared by the wisest and morally most mature members of all world religions, an ethics of respect for human rights of the sort Hans Küng's concept of *Weltethos* intended (1997). But the ethos necessary to secure world peace may also spring from attitudes proper to a specific religion, such as Christian charity that, being based on a faith in the unheard of immensity of love of a God who united a human nature to his divine nature and died for the salvation of all men on the cross, goes in its quality and content far beyond a more general and basic ethos shared by all great religions, but includes the latter *per eminentiam*.

Those who share this ideal of cosmopolitanism see the growth of such a world-ethos and its support from all religions as an urgently needed remedy in order to avoid the political catastrophes, genocides and wars of the last century and previous history. Underlying Küng's and similar ethical cosmopolitanisms is perhaps at least a trace of an optimism that such an ethos will actually triumph and form global human society or that it already is at work in the bulk of the communities of world religions in our new century and millennium, replacing the century of unspeakable horror by a new peaceful "cosmopolitan" one. But such a naïve optimism is not part of this idea of

cosmopolitanism; for the latter can remain on the level of an ideal without believing in its guaranteed triumph in the real historical world, whose bleak past and present moral devastation immediately brand such optimism as hardly more than a naive illusion.

If we do not just call an individual a “cosmopolitan,” but speak of cosmopolitanism or of a cosmopolitan society informed by some kind of “world-ethos,” we certainly imply that the main representatives of a “cosmopolitan” society or age and the majority of its members should be persons who recognize that they are not only citizens and members of a given city, state or nation, but citizens of the world, i.e., of a global human community that is bound together by some metaphysical facts and basic principles and human rights respect for which and moral values is necessary in order to guarantee a peaceful coexistence of individuals and societies – despite the obvious distinct cultural and religious backgrounds or *Weltanschauungen* of different persons and groups. In other words, in midst of differences and grave obstacles to worldwide social harmony posed by a world that, through modern means of communication, has on the one hand shrunk to the size of a global village – and on the other hand brought its multi-cultural wide cosmos to the smallest countryside rural community - these different cultures and religions ought to coexist on the basis of mutual respect for universal human dignity, justice, basic human rights and peace.

II. Is Such a Cosmopolitanism and Global Peace Possible or Probable? A Critical Examination of Huntington’s Objections

But is such a global peace and cosmopolitanism possible or is it nothing but an illusion? The Harvard political scientist Samuel P. Huntington is speaking of an inevitable *Clash of Civilizations* (Huntington, 1996, i ff.), instilling great fear among his readers that the 21st century (while it will foreseeable not be dominated, at least in Europe, by nationalistic mutual bloodsheds, nor by ideological frictions or a cold war between East and West) will be overshadowed by a dangerous and bloody „clash of civilizations” that would constitute the radical antithesis to a cosmopolitan society in our seventh sense.

Huntington starts out with his main thesis:

... The world will be shaped in large measure by the interactions among seven or eight major civilizations. ... The most important conflicts of the future will occur along the cultural fault lines separating these civilizations from one another. CIVILIZATION IDENTITY will be increasingly important in the future, and the world will be shaped in large measure by the interactions among seven or eight major civilizations. These include Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African civilization. The most important conflicts of the future will occur along the cultural fault lines separating these civilizations from one another. The fault lines between civilizations are replacing the political and ideological boundaries of the Cold War as the flash points for crisis and bloodshed (Huntington, 1996, iii).

... It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will be the battle lines of the future. Conflict between civilizations will be the latest phase of the evolution of conflict in the modern world. For a century and a half ... the conflicts of the Western world were largely among princes — emperors, absolute monarchs and constitutional monarchs attempting to expand their bureaucracies, their armies, their mercantilist economic strength and, most important, the territory they ruled. ..., and beginning with the French Revolution the principal lines of conflict were between nations rather than princes... This ... pattern lasted until the end of World War I. Then ..., the conflict of nations yielded to the conflict of ideologies, first among communism, fascism-Nazism and liberal democracy, and then between communism and liberal democracy. ...

These conflicts ... were primarily conflicts within Western civilization. (*Huntington, 1996, iii*)

With the end of the Cold War, international politics moves out of its Western phase, and its center-piece becomes the interaction between the West and non-Western civilizations and among non-Western civilizations...(*Huntington, 1997, i*) One could ask here a very fundamental and interesting question raised by Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri (*Altwaijri, 2002, 17 ff.*): Is it at all civilizations that clash with each other or can civilizations in principle, in virtue of their very nature, never clash but only possess a series of other attributes?

I will not pursue here this question here. Instead, I will start with the simple observation that there is some real, even if possibly not very precise, sense in which one may speak of a potential clash of civilizations; that Huntington's thesis assumes the existence of some necessary historical law by which present civilizations will inevitably clash in the 21st century. I will argue that a) there is no such apersonalistic necessity of a clash of civilizations but a free choice of individuals and whole peoples between clashing and peacefully coexisting with others; and b) that Huntington commits a number of errors, confuses different things, and offers some wrong arguments for his hypothesis. Huntington advances six very different arguments for his thesis. Let us briefly examine these reasons carefully and critically

III. Examining Huntington's Arguments for Clash of Civilization

1. Exposition and Critique of the Huntington's Argument.

The argument is this. First, differences among civilizations are not only real; they are basic. Civilizations are differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, tradition and, most important, religion. The people of different civilizations have different views on the relations between God and man, the individual and the group, the citizen and the state, parents and children, husband and wife, as well as differing views of the relative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority,

equality and hierarchy. These differences ... are far more fundamental than differences among political ideologies and political regimes. Differences do not necessarily mean conflict, and conflict does not necessarily mean violence. Over the centuries, however, differences among civilizations have generated the most prolonged and the most violent conflicts. Here Huntington first makes a very reasonable and correct observation: Differences between civilizations truly are not just real but basic. They form our understanding of many of the most important matters: God and man, man and woman, sexuality and marriage, etc.; and they may indeed lead to conflicts and bloodshed.

We may admit all this without sharing two implicit claims of Huntington:

(1) First, the claim that our views on all these things are nothing but cultural products. This is incorrect. When it comes to important ethical, metaphysical, or religious issues, their whole dignity and the dignity of the human person would collapse if these were nothing but cultural products rather than objects of man's quest for truth and answers to his queries. Moreover, the culture and religion of an adult person calls for free choices. Religion in a mature adult person is not just a question of cultural upbringing but the result of his religious quest, his convictions concerning truth, a free response to the religious claims made by the sources of his faith. (2) Secondly, we cannot share the implicit equation between cultural and religious differences. Are not differences of religion evidently clearly distinct from those of civilization? In our Western or American style civilization we find about any conceivable religion; the same is true of other civilizations; there are Arab Muslims and Arab Christians and Jews in Egypt; therefore religion and civilization differ profoundly. Moreover, we belong to a nation and have historic roots which we cannot change or only change with difficulty. Now while these national and cultural roots are no doubt profoundly shaped by the dominating religion or religions, religion itself does not have the same kind of "inevitability." Two persons who share the same cultural background or belong to the same family may have entirely different religious faiths or no particular religious beliefs; and two members of the same religion may come from entirely different cultural backgrounds.

Both civilization and religion shape a person very deeply, but very differently, and certainly religion much, much more deeply than civilization. Compared with religion, cultural differences remain on the surface. Religion is not a matter of upbringing and birthplace, or folklore, but involves our mind, will, and heart and is therefore also much less "inevitable." Hence it is a fundamental confusion to identify differences of civilization with differences of religion, however closely they are connected *de facto* in many ways. From the correct observation that civilizations and much more so religions are *basic*, Huntington proceeds in his first argument to make an extremely problematic claim, namely: "*These differences...are far more fundamental than differences among political ideologies and political regimes....*" More drastically, "*the fault lines between civilizations*" are designated by Huntington "*as the flash points for crisis and bloodshed*" (Huntington, 1996, IV). In critique of this argument we ask: How does Huntington defend this claim? Are there not many countries, such as Egypt, Palestine before 1945, or the Austrian-Hungarian Empire before 1917, in which entirely different cultural groups and persons belonging to

different civilizations and religions lived together fairly peacefully? Cannot persons from different cultural backgrounds and different religions even live in a great mutual friendship?

Cannot humans of different cultures and religions often live side by side much more peacefully than different groups who share fundamentally the same cultural and religious background, such as Northern Islanders and the British whose ancestors delivered millions of Irish to death through famine? (McCormick, 2002). Cannot persons from different cultural backgrounds, and even members of extremely different and mutually exclusive religions, which is far more difficult, as is evident once one makes the sharp distinction between culture and religion, have a profound mutual understanding and friendship incomparable with the one that exists between many persons of the same civilization or even of the same religion? With regard to the claim that the differences of civilizations are far more significant than ideological differences, we ask: Are not all those nations of many civilizations which not only signed the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, which is itself a first rate document of authentic cosmopolitanism, but abide by it in their actions, politically and socially much more closely united than one and the same civilization whose members are or have been divided on fundamental issues? Did not a Stalin divide those Russians who were in favor of him from those who were against him far more deeply than any of the different civilizations were divided that lived together for thousand years in the Tsarist Russian Empire where many different cultures and tribes shared the one big Mother Russia? And is it not evident that the greatest divisions among people come from other sources than from differences of civilization?

2. Critique of Huntington's Second Argument

His argument is as follows: "the world is becoming a smaller place. The interactions between peoples of different civilizations are increasing; these increasing interactions intensify civilization consciousness and awareness of differences between civilizations and commonalities within civilizations.... The interactions among peoples of different civilizations enhance the civilization-consciousness of people that, in turn, invigorates differences and animosities stretching or thought to stretch back deep into history" (Huntington, 1996, iv). This argument again, while containing some undoubtedly correct commonplace observation, namely that it is easier to be in peace with another civilization thousands of miles away than with one at one's doorstep, fails to justify the claim that the growing awareness of cultural differences by the intermingling of civilizations necessarily leads to increased tensions. Are not the United States an incredible mix of races and civilizations and yet, at least presently, a peaceful nation? And is not the aversion against foreigners, on the contrary, usually stronger where it is uncommon to see them and where they are treated as strangers as soon as they appear among us, compared to the case in which we and our children live side by side, form friendships or engage in sports with them?

3. Critique of Huntington's Third Argument

The argument goes as follows: "Third, the processes of economic modernization and social change throughout the world are separating people from longstanding local

identities. They also weaken the nation state as a source of identity. In much of the world religion has moved in to fill this gap, often in the form of movements that are labeled „fundamentalist.“ ... The “unsecularization of the world,” George Weigel has remarked, “is one of the dominant social factors of life in the late twentieth century. “The revival of religion provides a basis for identity and commitment that transcends national boundaries and unites civilizations” (Huntington, 1996, iv).

It is no doubt correct that it may be the case, though probably rarely, that the mere loss of cultural identity may lead to a strengthening of religion as a substitute of the lost cultural identity (though more often the opposite will happen). It is equally correct that there are not only orthodox but in a negative sense ‘fundamentalist’ movements within religious communities, in the sense of movements that are characterized by narrowness, hostility, and possibly violence against members of other civilizations and religions. *But more often than not this political violence does not flow from, but contradicts, the respective religion;* it does not come from “too much” but from “too little true religion.” And such fanatical religious groups are not the only possibility. Moreover, how can Huntington invoke a “growing unity that transcends national boundaries and unites civilizations” as argument for the clash of civilizations? His remarks in this respect seem much rather to imply the new paradigm proposed in this paper, as an ideal and possible development of seeing the encounter of civilizations in the world today in terms of a “brotherly kiss of civilizations” and of the persons who belong to different civilizations, instead of a “clash of civilizations”. Such a brotherly peace does not cancel the fight against what one regards as errors, in the sense of Augustine’s statement *interficere errorem, diligere errantem (kill the error; love the person who errs)!*

4. Critique of Huntington’s Fourth Argument

His argument is the following: The growth of civilization-consciousness is enhanced by the dual role of the West. On the one hand, the West is at a peak of power. At the same time, however, and perhaps as a result, a return to the roots phenomenon is occurring among non-Western civilizations. Increasingly one hears references to trends toward a turning inward and “Asianization” in Japan, the end of the Nehru legacy and the “Hinduization” of India, the failure of Western ideas of socialism and nationalism and hence “re-Islamization” of the Middle East, and now a debate over Westernization versus Russianization in Boris Yeltsin’s country. A West at the peak of its power confronts non-Wests that increasingly have the desire, the will and the resources to shape the world in non-Western ways (Huntington, 1996, vi).

This point is possibly the strongest argument of Huntington. For the clash between a West at the peak of its power and a growing number of expressly non-Western style leaders of many countries can indeed give rise to bitter clashes, to viewing Americans as potent barbarians, to hate American uniform ‘culture’ as an enemy to the civilizations of developing countries or countries of the second world. A USA at the peak of its might and often brutally interfering, on many levels of social, political and family life, in other countries easily gives rise to a partly true but largely distorted and artificial picture of America as the “great enemy”. Frequently, irrational resentments build up in such a situation (Scheler, 1955), more dangerous when they

link up with a correct assessment of many faults of the West, of its moral corruption, its arrogance vis-à-vis developing countries, etc. The correct critique and irrational resentment then are intertwined and form a tight wool ball in which white and black threads can hardly be disentangled.

In such phenomena one may indeed identify many roots of the great threat of a clash of civilizations inspired by envy, by anger over the use of power of big nations, especially when their economic superiority seduces them to treat foreign cultures disrespectfully or even to eradicate them. But also such a clash between the civilizations of the poor with those of the powerful and rich is by no means inevitable – if and as long as there are on both sides leaders who make sincere efforts towards a peaceful dialogue and mutual understanding, who show genuine solidarity and interest to help, for which the United States in the best of their international aid programs throughout history (and only in them!) is a great model, and to respect the other without an egocentric exploitation, etc. Moreover, the conflicts which easily arise under the historical conditions well described by Huntington are by no means due to the differences of civilizations as such. On the contrary, at a time when Arab countries were very rich and entertained many commercial relationships with Western European civilizations, their difference of civilization was rather found enriching and had positive influence on friendly personal and commercial relations precisely because the different countries did not produce the same kind of products or belonged to the same civilization. Tourism and connected as well as unrelated branches of commerce largely live from complementary differences of civilizations. Think likewise of the attractiveness of cities such as Singapore, New York, or Switzerland, precisely because one finds there people, quarters, or cantons, entirely dominated by different civilizations. Such a close cohabitation of cultures is in no way per se a source of conflict. Chinatown in New York in midst a Western style American population, for example, is very peaceful and in no way leads to a clash of civilizations, and the same holds even more true for Switzerland.

5. Critique of Huntington's Fifth Argument

He argues: Fifth, cultural characteristics and differences are less mutable and hence less easily compromised and resolved than political and economic ones. In the former Soviet Union, communists can become democrats, the rich can become poor and the poor rich, but Russians cannot become Estonians and Azeris cannot become Armenians. We may ask Huntington: What in the world does the more or less mutable or immutable character of differences have to do with them being a source of a worse clash? A villainous rapist can more easily be converted than become a woman. But the natural immutable difference between man and woman is not per se cause of a clash, while the difference between the rapist and murderer and his victims is. In class and ideological conflicts, the key question was “Which side are you on? And people could and did choose sides and change sides. In conflicts between civilizations, the question is “What are you?” That is a given that cannot be changed. And as we know, from Bosnia to the Caucasus to the Sudan, the wrong answer to that question can mean a bullet in the head.

This argument strikes one as outright unreasonable. For as is well known, in Nazi and Stalinist times the answer on which side one stood politically caused millions of bullets in heads. Ethnicity per se, except in racist societies or under racist regimes, does not have inevitable and divisive consequences. Moreover, where ethnic or racial differences did have such horrific consequences, these *were not due to the ethnicity as such* but to *racist or otherwise erroneous ideologies* which denied the equal dignity of each human person. Therefore the merely apparently ethnic conflicts that Huntington contrasts with ideological conflicts *precisely were largely ideological*. Let us turn to Huntington's further argument grouped under his fifth reason: Even more than ethnicity, religion discriminates sharply and exclusively among people. A person can be half-French and half-Arab and simultaneously even a citizen of two countries. It is more difficult to be half-Catholic and half-Muslim (Huntington, 1996, v-xi).

The fact that a person cannot be half-Catholic and half-Muslim, while she can be half-French and half-Arab is undeniable but this distinction per se in no way explains why there should be armed conflicts or bloodsheds based on religious distinctions. For again, somebody can also be hardly half female, half male, and yet this fact alone has nothing to with either masculinity or femininity giving rise to conflict.

Huntington could have given, instead of his rather superficial reasoning, a much deeper argument pointing out for example, that often religious beliefs are linked with the conviction that those who do not share them blaspheme God, deserve earthly or eternal punishments, serve demons, corrupt the youth, endanger the eternal salvation of our kindred, etc. And, human nature being what it is, these convictions which sometimes are inseparable from the essential contents of a religion (for example the Islam and Christianity), easily link with ugly inclinations of hatred and calumny, terror and mutual violence. But they do not have to. Jesus who taught and Saint Francis, who followed him, holding that the eternal salvation of human persons may easily be in peril, were extreme models of peacefulness. However, the clash of civilizations mostly is not due to these religious differences as such, which could lead a Saint just as well to pray for those whom he fears to lose eternal salvation, or to speak peacefully to them. Rather, these clashes are due to evil attitudes which, while they are frequently linked to a religion such as Christianity in its historic actions, do not flow from this religion but rather are opposed to it. We must therefore sharply distinguish between *those acts which flow from a creed*, from *those acts which are opposed to a religious creed even though in the real world they are frequently committed by its faithful*.

In the light of this distinction, we must not attribute to a religion the many evil deeds performed by its members *against the spirit of this religion*. Unfortunately, human history is full of these and countless people commit this unfortunate confusion for which also the perpetrators of crimes in the name of religion bear a heavy responsibility. For instead of shining with the splendor of God they betray a spirit of evil and dark fanaticism. There is of course the other possible case in which religious tenets themselves, such as an encouragement to kill all infidels or all converts of one's own religion to another one, etc. give directly rise to terrible consequences and endanger peace between those who strictly adhere to different religions. Regarding these clashes of religiously shaped societies, once all of us recognize the high value of

peace, we ought to examine our interpretations of the meaning of our own and other religions as to whether they themselves, or only their misunderstanding, forbid not only bad forms of “peace” which stem from false compromises but really are directed against the high good of a peace that is antidote to bloody clashes and to the breakdown of a cosmopolitan spirit. It seems evident that a true religion never can be enemy to authentic peace and to the other elements of a cosmopolitan society and therefore someone who honestly discovers that his own religion is the cause of cruelties, crimes, violation of human rights, etc., should change his religion, while the person who finds that a correct interpretation and living of his religion bears only good fruits, should work towards overcoming in himself and others around himself bad actions which bring his religion into disrepute for incorrect reasons.

6. The Economic Argument

Huntington offers at last one sixth argument for his thesis of the clash of civilizations which is of purely economic nature and which I do not feel competent to criticize here although I feel great skepticism in its regard (Huntington, 1996, vii-xi; Weidenbaum, 2-3).

IV. The Choice between a Clash and a Peaceful Brotherly Kiss of Peace between Civilizations – a New Paradigm for Cosmopolitanism in the Third Millennium

Thus, if the claim of an imminent clash of civilizations is made in form of an unconditional assertion that the result of the indeed inevitable encounter of different civilizations in the modern global world-village will lead to bloody clashes, it is fundamentally flawed.

1. Three Conditions of peaceful relations between different cultures and religions

For if minimally three conditions are met, the undoubtedly very real threat of a “clash of civilizations”, or rather a clash of persons formed by different civilizations, can cede to a peaceful coexistence and even to a “brotherly and sisterly kiss of civilizations.” In less flashy language, communities adhering to different religions and cultural worlds can enter not only into peaceful relations but also into a mutually enriching and authentic community.

At least three conditions need to be met, however, in order for this lofty goal of an intercultural peaceful and cosmopolitan world to be reached: 1). There must be respect for each human person which of course includes respect for persons who are believers of other religions and members of other cultures and races. 2). There must be respect for all true values in other civilizations and religious communities different from our own. More than that, we must also be willing to learn from values of and in ‘the others,’ for example Christians can learn from the far greater respect for sacred places the Muslims show to their mosques than for example Catholics for their Churches, or from the decency of women’s dresses among Muslim women. And Muslims and members of all other religions can learn tremendously from the models of Christian virtues and charity found in Saint Francis or Mother Theresa. 3). Full

religious liberty must be guaranteed to believers of all creeds as long as they respect the dignity of all persons and do not attack those contents and rights which constitute the foundations of any free and flourishing society. To the extent that the practice of adherents of a religion, or converts of one's own religion to other religions, or missionaries who follow their conscience by proclaiming what they believe to be the truth, are threatened with punishment or death, true peace among members of different religions and a cosmopolitan society do not merely encounter serious obstacles but are even rendered impossible. Instead, clashes of civilizations and oppression of members of other religions follow, as well as religious fanaticism that fails to recognize that religion must be a free act and must never be imposed by violence are inevitable. Therefore, full respect for the freedom of religion is one of the most important fundamental elements in a peaceful dialogue between civilizations, religions, and states. Only respect for this right helps to avoid otherwise unavoidable clashes.

2. Not Relativism and Skepticism but a genuine though loving commitment to truth (veritatem in caritate diligere) leads the way to interreligious and intercultural peace

Contrary to popular belief, truth-claims do not only belong to the essence of any philosophic world-view inherent in *any civilization* and in *any religion* such that they *cannot be abandoned* without destroying these civilizations and religions and without self-contradictions, it is also wrong to believe that they would have to be abandoned in order to avoid the clash of civilizations. On the contrary, an unwavering and strong commitment and ever more unprejudiced and complete openness to *all* truth, and especially the truth about human dignity, human rights, and justice, is a condition of providing a firm foundation to a peaceful relation between civilizations that does not depend on volatile popular consensus or on similarly volatile critical discursive consensus of the sort Habermas' theory of truth as foundation of cosmopolitanism implies (Habermas, 1973, 1984, 211–265; Seifert, 2009b). Such an unwavering commitment to the truth about God and man is the source of an authentic bond of unity among civilizations and thus also of an authentic cosmopolitanism. Therefore, neither the frequently demanded complete ethical and religious relativism nor an abandonment of truth in one's culture can allow for a brotherly relation between civilizations. When members of different civilizations and religions are united in some profound common values such as the sincere quest for truth itself, the members of different civilizations can gladly exchange the greeting of peace.

Philosophy can make a crucial contribution towards a better understanding of the conditions of a culture of peace between civilizations and most of all between different religious communities by clarifying the foundations of the respect due to every person, the nature of religious liberty, and many other things. In the light of such a clarification it becomes evident that granting religious freedom and fully respecting members of other creeds in no way requires an abandonment of any true content of one's own convictions. On the contrary: only the holding fast to shared truths and values can unite humanity. Without any truth about God, human dignity

and fundamental human rights, and without a continuous search for their deeper understanding no stable peace and no community or mutual respect are possible.

Certainly, this commitment to truth will also entail the potential and reality of conflict, as long as not all human persons are united in their ultimate beliefs and do not even agree on fundamental human rights such as the right to religious freedom. But over existing differences and potential clashes let us not forget an astonishing unity: human dignity and the large catalogue of human rights declared in 1946 in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* are subject of a very broad consensus of governments representing over 90 % of states. Moreover, there are many human, moral, and cultural values that can be and ought to be shared and implemented by a Cultural and Ethical Roadmap to Peace; a purely economically and politically conceived Roadmap for Peace without them must fail. Certainly, wherever our philosophies or religions exclude each other, we cannot hold the other one to be equally true, and this contains a potential for conflict or at least involves opposite convictions. But this conflict neither has to imply a clash nor a war nor terrorism but can lead to a peaceful community of members of different civilizations and religions, to deep friendships in mutual respect, and to intense peaceful dialogues, as long as the above mentioned three conditions are met. Also the doubtlessly continuing conflicts in a world of partly mutually exclusive cultural and religious elements and beliefs must not be fought with guns, not even against countries alleged to form the “axis of evil,” nor with mutual calumnies, discrimination, oppression, or with the arms of terrorism of any kind which are essentially evil, from whatever side they come, but with „the arms of the spirit.” The inevitable battle in the encounter of different civilizations and religions must be fought in that charity which alone can bring about the “kiss” of peace of civilizations for which the war- and terror-ridden humanity, on the deepest level of its existence and of its belonging together, is desperately yearning.

Such a charitable encounter of members of different civilizations and religions constitutes one of the greatest historic chances and challenges of humanity in the 21st century. It ought to be based on an authentic appreciation of our different civilizations, national identities, and works of art, traditions, customs, and habits etc., which are for a large part complementary. Where there are incompatible elements, different replies are called for. When the disagreements, for example those that concern the freedom of religion, can be settled by rational human insight and argument, a serious dialogue ought to take place that appeals to human reason. Where there are deep religious differences, such as the faith in a one-personal or a triune God, we must recognize the mystery of faith and understand that such differences never justify mutual violence. Where the incompatibilities do not contain outright contradictions, such as between the way Muslim women dress as opposed to Western women, we Westerners must not take an arrogant attitude of feel superior – because in fact many of the traditional dresses of other civilizations and religious communities such as of the Hindu and Muslim women are aesthetically far more beautiful and far more expressive of delicacy and modesty than our modern ones. Moreover, many of the Muslim or Hindu women dressing codes have been also dressing codes for Christian women in past times and still are so for nuns. When therefore a Western tourist enters into a country in which such dresses are demanded, *he should adapt* as far as required and, when he

enters these countries, he should not wear clothes thought offensive there (or by decent people everywhere). Even less should a Western state or school, as it happened in Germany and other European countries, demand that Muslim women adapt to our far less decent and beautiful dressing habits. This is a clear infringement on the right to religious and cultural liberty of Muslims and members of other religions in Germany, France, or other countries. Therefore I would passionately defend the right of Muslim women teachers in Western Europe to wear the veils and dresses their religion asks them to wear. Something similar applies to many other realms.

Another important condition of a cosmopolitan society of peace is this: the fascinating experience of entering into the world of another civilization should lead us to an even intensified and deepened adherence to all truth about man, world, and God and to all genuine values that we find in our own as well as in other civilizations, habits, traditions, arts, and religious practice and experience. A truly open-minded attitude that is ready to learn from others, ought to be inspired by loving truth more than any tradition in which we have our own roots. What is more, if our own tradition or an aspect of our civilization is less close to genuine values and to truth than another civilization, we should appreciate the other one more; and if we find elements in our ways of living that are opposite to true values, we should eliminate them as far as possible. I would take one big further step and say: we should always be ready to give up our own cultural and historic roots upon perceiving elements in them that are not good or true or beautiful and to abandon even our religion if it clashes with truth and authentic values. At the same time, we should also be strictly determined not to abandon adherence to any value and truth which we sincerely believe to have found in our culture and faith, even if such a commitment should cost our freedom or life.

Certainly, wherever our philosophies or religions exclude each other, we cannot hold the other one to be equally true, and this contains a potential for conflict or at least involves opposite convictions. But this conflict neither has to imply a clash nor a war nor terrorism but can lead to a peaceful community of members of different civilizations and religions, to deep friendships in mutual respect, as long as the above mentioned three conditions are met.

A still deeper foundation of peace than rational dialogue and the unconditional respect for human rights is charity. If a truly charitable spirit reigns, as members of all civilizations and religions can find it embodied in persons such as Socrates, St. Francis, Gandhi, or Mother Theresa, the encounter of civilizations will not give rise to a clash but to a charitable bond between civilizations that could lead to a new golden age of peaceful cohabitations. Some (though all-too few) elements of a peaceful life together of different civilizations have been achieved in some golden periods of history and there is no good reason why the 21st century should not become again such a golden age. Of course, a universal brotherhood and “charitable kiss of civilizations,” so magnificently expressed in the words of Schiller’s *Ode to Joy* and above all in the music accompanying these words in the fourth movement of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, is still far from us and the “clash of civilizations” is lurking around the corners of history – showing already now its ugly head in the Near and Middle East and in many other regions. Let us not blind ourselves to the facts by mere illusory words of a desirable universal world-peace: In the actual relations

between Jews and Muslims, Hindus and Muslims, Muslims of different sects, Christians of different and even of the same confessions, and in many other groups there exist frequently terrible tensions which throw profound darkness over many parts of the world. These tensions have deep-seated causes in the proud, impure and unloving hearts of men and women but not in authentic religion.

In the face of this complex origin of tensions and its moral-spiritual dimensions, a purely *economical and political* “Roadmap to peace” in the Middle East has miserably failed and will continue to fail without an authentic *cultural and ethical Roadmap to peace*, of the sort the *Research Center for Peace and Human Dignity* in the International Academy of Philosophy in the Principality of Liechtenstein keeps investigating since over a decade. In the relations between Christianity and Islam in Europe, we have passed from a state of mutually ignoring each other to one of confrontation, which not only emphasizes differences that ought to be emphasized but fails to search for what unites us and to respect the consciences of the faithful of other religions. The same applies to the relations between many other civilizations and religions, such as the Islam and Hinduism or Buddhism. This is why we have to undertake the hard work of overcoming sources of violent conflict and commit ourselves in the often painful strife for justice and peace, for which Gandhi has become a shining and admirable example for members of all cultures and religions. His example and its extraordinary peaceful political and historical consequence, as well as that of the Solidarity-movement in Poland that contributed decisively to the unbloody end of the communist Soviet empire, shows once and for all that bloody clashes between civilizations and religions and states are no necessity at all and that an ethics and political struggle of non-violence is possible (Wierzbicki, 1992).

V. Concluding Remarks – Some Observations, Some Prophecies and Some Pieces of Good Advice for the Roadmap to Peace

Speaking of a brotherly kiss of peace versus a clash of civilizations, we need to repeat two other observations already made above but worth repeating: Potential and real clashes are not restricted to civilizations or even primarily found between them in politics and in private life. Clashes between good and evil individual persons are much more intense than between civilizations. Just think of the divisions in Israel at the time of Moses or at the time of Jesus. Or consider medical ethics: physicians and nurses *within the same culture* and often in the same hospital clash more deeply in their views than physicians and nurses who belong to different civilizations but share profound common bonds (Seifert, 2004). Of course, there remains the great potential threat of a clash of civilizations as well. Therefore, only a comprehensive cultural exchange in the arts, sciences, in literature and philosophy, a dialogue based on mutual respect, an education to, and a culture of, peace can help to arrive at a veritable peace between members of different civilizations.

Such a dialogue is often sought in a faceless, bloodless, emaciated so-called common basis built on money, business, and some vague elements of *Weltanschauung*, mostly relativistic indifferentism. This is without any doubt the

wrong pathway to peace and authentic cosmopolitanism. A truly peaceful dialogue does not have to shun the honest admission of the differences that separate us but ought to focus expressly on the authentic *broad basis of shared values and truths*. Any such authentic dialogue must be imbued by the profound respect for each person and each genuine element of civilization and culture, for personal dignity and fundamental human rights. On the religious level, it must aim at a universal agreement on a number of conditions of peaceful coexistence: granting full religious liberty to the faithful of other religions – not because of a relativistic abandonment of one’s own faith but because only the granting of full freedom is appropriate to the dignity of human persons and of the religious act; and only on the fertile soil of free assent religion can blossom.

To the extent that all religions will be inspired by the respect for the faithful of other creeds and grant them full liberty to profess and practice their religion, the clouds of conflict will dissipate. Religions ought to resist the strong tendency to complete secularization and relativism as a condition for a culture of peace because at the end of this road their members would be left not with true peace but with nothingness. Instead all of us must rediscover the many, many shared values that truly unite us, and simultaneously rediscover the treasures in our own civilization and religion, and become rooted in the most foundational virtue: the unconditional love of truth coupled with supreme openness and loving respect for other persons.

1. The “Golden Rule” as a Foundation of Peaceful Relations between Different Cultures and cosmopolitanism

Acting on these simple principles and on the “golden rule” that unites Jews, Christians and Muslims with Laozi and other civilizations and religions, holds the key to peace reigning between civilizations and to an authentic cosmopolitanism. It is also closely related to the topic of solidarity so much emphasized by Max Scheler (Scheler, 1970, 1973; Seifert, 1997). This golden rule has been expressed in very similar language in the Sacred Books of the Jews and Christians, but also in the Koran, in the books of Hindus and Buddhists, as well as in many philosophical writings and religious texts

The golden rule is known to Christians from two Gospel passages: “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” (Lk 6:31); “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets” (Math. 7:12). There is also a Jewish formula of the same principle (*Leviticus*, 19: 17-18): “17 You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself. 18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.” It is likewise contained in the Book Tobit of the Bible: “Do to no one what you yourself dislike” (Tobit 4:15). An Islamic version of the golden rule is: “None of you is a true believer if you do not desire for your brother what you desire for your self,” (Hadith 13, Al Bukhari); the Hindus formulate: “Do not do to others what would make you suffer if it were done to you.” This rule was already expressed much earlier in Confucianism: “In human relations, construed as those between one person and another, jen is manifested in chung, or faithfulness to oneself and others, and shu, or

altruism, best expressed in the Confucian golden rule, ‘Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself’ ” (Encarta, 1994). The golden rule calls for an attitude that also underlies the deepest sense of Kant’s otherwise problematic formulation of the categorical moral imperative: namely that the maxim of our action should always lend itself to becoming a general law.

The golden rule can be conceived in two very different but compatible ways: A). It can be seen as being rooted in a specific content of the nature and dignity of the human person, as it is formulated in Kant’s personalist formulations of the categorical imperative: “Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in another, always as an end and never as means only” (Kant, 2012, 54). “Act with reference to every rational being (whether yourself or another) so that it is an end in itself in your maxim” (Kant, 2012, 64). This is much more than a general formal and self-sufficient principle of the moral law and of morally good acts, as Kant conceived it in his general ethical formalism and non-personalistic formulations of the categorical imperative, for example: “Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a moral law” (Kant, 2012, 44).

B). The golden rule can, however, also be understood as a *practical device* which, when followed, makes us see what we ought to do concretely. In other words, the golden rule can be read as asking from us: Can you honestly want that what you inflict on others be inflicted by them on you? Can you will that they act towards yourself, your children and families, as you act towards them? To apply this principle recognized in virtually all religions in its fundamental role for ethics, is not only key to the moral and religious life of each religious and moral person but also to the foundation of peaceful cohabitation. It entails the conviction that we learn what corresponds to justice and love precisely when we mentally place ourselves in the place of the other, the object-person of our action, whether she be suffering, hungry, bitter, or only in need of receiving aid towards taking a last step towards her happiness (for example of being able to marry, as the tradition illustrates that ascribes to the bishop St. Nicholas having left three golden apples in the window of three poor girls so that they would have the dowry required by the family of their grooms). The change of standpoint and of looking at the world the golden rule requires, this seeking to think what we would desire or hope for, or what we would suffer from and shun, if we were placed in the position of the other, is extremely helpful for what is good. Precisely such a not looking at our actions from our own perspective but from the vantage point of the other, is not a purely formal principle from which we could derive the moral law or its content. Rather, it is an extremely helpful device for practicing the ability of empathetic knowledge, of sympathy, and of transcending our one-sided, nationalistic, chauvinist, racist, and other subjective and ego-centered attitudes and considerations. And as we recognize the contentful goods and evils to which this rule can be applied, we recognize concretely what is good and what is bad which requires knowledge of the *content of concrete goods and values*. In the attempt to apply the golden rule as a help towards seeing what concretely is right and wrong, we may for example ask: “Would we not demand *our* property back, while we refuse to return it to others? Would *we* not demand a right to return to *our own* country after

having been unjustly expelled from our homeland? Would we not want to receive at least compensation for lost property, be treated as equal before the law, receive relief when we hunger and thirst during a famine, etc.?, Would we consent to abortion, if *our own lives* were at stake?”

Of course, such knowledge is not enough if it is not coupled with the will of fulfilling what the golden rule requires. The “golden rule” is a very distinct and discrete exhortation and moral imperative that, unlike such imperatives as “thou shalt not kill, steal, commit adultery, etc.,” does not have any concrete content and yet, by saying nothing, merely inviting us to consider what we would in such situation want the other person do or not do unto us, it says in a way very much or even everything. This rule is also based on a psychological and anthropological insight into the fact that we are in such an inevitable unity with ourselves that it is far easier for us to recognize any injustice, fault against love, cruelty, meanness, when we imagine them being committed against us. Of course, the main situation in which this rule is helpful is when what we suffer from another person is unjust or painful. In wrong acts that provide both us and our partner pleasure, we do to the other what we ourselves want them to do to us and yet the act may be very wrong, such as wasting all our time in games, or organizing a wild sex orgy. Yet in almost all other situations the change of “place” from ourselves as subject who performs an act to imagining ourselves being the object-person towards or unto whom the action would be done, immediately reveals the goodness or evilness of acts. The rule is in a sense merely another version of the commandment to love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves. If we followed strictly the golden rule formulated in almost all the religions that are called to coexist in the 21st century and if mankind applied it rigorously, this would suffice as an ethical road-map and not just a map but a road, to universal peace and goodness, and thus a cosmopolitan culture in our sense of the term would result, because, in the attitude called for by this rule, we would gain insight into what is right and what is wrong, what is noble and what is mean, what is good and what is evil, and on such knowledge and an adequate response and life founded on it peace of a worldwide human community could arise, even if it’s true and far deeper community has many more conditions. One might also see Derrida’s chapters on hospitality and forgiveness in relation to cosmopolitanism – in spite of his deconstructive claims of the impossibility and contradictory self-cancellation of forgiveness – as signs of his recognition that some virtues and positive attitudes are conditions of genuine cosmopolitanism (Derrida, 2001). Mariano Crespo offered a solution of Derrida’s construction of an inner contradiction within forgiveness, taking important clues from Reinach’s brief phenomenology of forgiveness (Crespo, 2002; Reinach 1983, 1989, 1989 c, 2012).

2. Our historical fate is within our hands – history and free will

I am not a prophet who can foretell at the end of these reflections whether humanity will ever live according to this golden rule, whether a majority of humans will respect the dignity of each human person or not, whether a clash or a kiss of universal brotherhood and peace will dominate the coexistence of civilizations in the twenty

first century, but I affirm with the present-oriented prophecy fitting for a philosopher: We are free persons (Seifert, 2011 a; 2011b). It is therefore up to us whether we will opt for the clash and make the evil choice in favor of unjust wars, terrorist acts, and bloody encounters – or opt for justice, forgiveness, peace and universal brotherhood. History is not dominated by some kind of impersonal law which could force bloodsheds and wars upon us, as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (Hegel, 1949) and Karl Marx have suggested, but on the contrary: history is above all a consequence of free wills, of human free choices, of goodness and, sadly, of the forces of evil and darkness (Kierkegaard, 1957/1958). If we recognize divine free will, history is also a synthesis and mysterious cooperation between divine providence and human free will and a drama of the finite versus infinite freedom. To Soeren Kierkegaard, Augustine, (Augustine, 1950, 1961, V.10), and Cornelio Fabro (Fabro, 1967) we owe a profound critique of this Hegelian view.

If we recognize the tremendous role of our will and of which options we choose, we realize that the historical fate of humanity is largely in our hands. Thus we ought to wake up and choose the forces of light and justice and love and never act towards others in ways we would not want them to act against us. The future of history is not determined by material or even by a divine causality that would *force us to opt for or against clashes* and thereby ultimately exculpate man. We must not attribute the responsibility for our injustice and our crimes to nature or to God. Hegel's thesis of a necessary unfolding of the world-spirit (*Weltgeist*) through a dialectical movement which entails different spirits of different epochs (*Zeitgeist*) which would dominate all individuals and ultimately be dependent on the world spirit and cause wars and clashes, is simply not true. There are no inevitable wars and clashes, but Plato's insight applies: Our sort, while being dependent on a good God who takes personal care for those who do the good (as Socrates asserts in the *Apology*), is largely put into our own hands, as Plato says in the myth of ER (Plato, *Rep.*, X.620a-621d). Applied to our topic: each one of us has to choose between peace and a clash of civilizations. Let therefore each one of us make the right choice.

Humanity has the momentous chance of building a cosmopolitan world of a closer and more respectful community of civilizations than ever existed in the past, and in this respect a European Union in which since 67 years no more external war between its different states has raged, is a symbol of hope but no real fulfillment of the hope for a universal peace which includes all human beings. Humanity stands at a threshold of history and it got to choose its way, and hopefully will make the right choice, that choice it *ought to make* – the choice for a deep respect for each human life from the first moment of conception to the last moment, regardless of age, sex, or creed; let us choose to act according the golden rule and that pure love to all human brothers and sisters recognized as being united in the universal brotherhood of mankind, in which Vladimir Solowjew saw the innermost essence of the "Russian Idea" (Solowjew, 1988), so sadly perverted into its opposite by 20th century Russia. The grasp of this objective universal brotherhood of mankind is powerfully embodied in the monumental synthetic unity of poetry and music of Schiller and Beethoven to which the lines quoted as Motto of this paper refer and which constitute a moving testimony and common reference point for all true cosmopolitanism, even though

they do so in a singularly powerful way for Jews, Christians, Moslems and other monotheists who believe in an all-holy and all-merciful personal God and father who created all of us and who loves each one of us. On the metaphysical and religious reference to God which this universal brotherhood objectively entails, I cannot enter here, nor can I unfold here even briefly the philosophical evidence and proofs for the divine existence and essence (Seifert, 2000; 2010).

To conclude: Without falling into an utopian hope in no way justified through past and present history, we must never abandon authentic hope and must not cease to hold out to humanity its ideal vocation, ardently desiring its realization. May then this kiss to all men, women, and children, of which Beethoven and Schiller speak, so powerfully shaking the inmost soul, become the new Motto and paradigm for all mankind in the 21st century and all future history.

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