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Resentment and Religion – Modern Dialogue between Europe and the Non-European

Georg Stauth

1. ›Europe‹ and Resentment

An essential component of the proposed normalization of the relation between Europe and Islam is the key role that Europe could play in promoting a new type of self-definition for Muslims. It is important to note that, in this debate, poverty, conflict, and cultural deprivation among non-Westerners and in the non-Western world are often seen as being overloaded by »resentment«. On the other hand, non-European thinkers often refer to »resentment« and unlimited Western instrumentalism and materialism. My aim in this article is to highlight some of the paradoxes and misunderstandings circulating in this debate.

Since Nietzsche's shattering attack on the morality of resentment and Christianity, much of the modern discourse on religion and Western modernity rests largely on questions as to how to come to grips with Nietzsche's critique and his attack on the Christian priest. In response to this attack, the issue of resentment was turned into an underlying pattern for understanding the sublime and diverse directions of secularization. Islam is the religion without priests, but what does it mean in this context? In contrast, European self-understanding rests on the »priest« as a relatively independent power-neutral or even power-challenging institution. Is there less »resentment« in modern Islam? This is a contradiction that deserves reflection.

Max Weber defined the limits for an approach to modernity that depends largely on the independent role of modern bureaucratic rationality. From Weber's perspective the secular turn in the transition from »priest« to »*Amt*« (i.e. office) is an institutional achievement. On the other hand, non-European and Islamic thinkers have referred to this syndrome in arguing that the West is the throne of secular nihilism, the morality of resentment, and materialism. What does it mean to criticize the West in these terms? To what extent have modern religious intellectuals themselves become involved in the morality of resentment when responding to Nietzsche's »*Kulturkritik*«? In forming a framework of reference for counter-concepts, responding to

new institutional contexts and demands, the critique of the West is easily converted into ›authentic‹ principles of religious tradition (Stauth 1999). The paradox is that Islamic religious affirmation apparently assumed alternative paths of modernity while at the same time being fully included in the dialogical framework of modernity. This makes theorizing dialogue difficult. Despite alternative rhetoric, new critical concepts of de-colonization and de-Westernization of culture and science became largely motivated and linked to Islam. Overall, the use of Western tools of cultural production, including a general syndrome of resentment, is now part of a generalized modern dialogue and of the diverse multiple formations of the cultural programs of modernity.

Europe itself is undergoing a process of unification and expansion. This process has reinstated the problem of modern culture and religion and the debate as to the declared universal terms of self-definition can be broadened could easily take a new and contradictory turn. On the one hand, European unity and expansion will not succeed if its culture were to be merely perceived in religious terms as being – between critique and affirmation – essentially Christian. On the other hand, to give up an old idea in European thought could in itself be judged as being based on a tradition of falsely motivated altruism. Competing universalist programs for the Christianiziation or Islamization of modernity are largely counter-productive, inciting conflict rather than solving problems and producing moments of cultural retardation rather than of human progress. Certainly, the modern presence of Islam in Europe appears to be linked to various and, possibly competing, attempts to view the ›new‹ Europe as a ›higher‹ stage of cultural composition. However, the ›new‹ Europe will not solve the existing national problems of cultural confrontation with Islam unless an open debate about the critical cultural issues takes place. Despite all difference, there seems to be no alternative to developing an inclusive conceptual terrain in viewing the world outside of ›Europe‹. In addition to reason, asceticism, and resentment, other more inclusive terms of reference will have to be developed. However, it is time for opening up this debate on the cultural future of Europe by incorporating the perspective on as cultural a tool as resentment which has shaped the inner culture of Europe so decisively and, more specifically, the human character which it represents.

2. The Sociology of Modernity

As described above, the concept of resentment remains meaningless without being linked to the modern discourse of culture and the construction of power. When we ask after the sociological aspects of Nietzsche's critique of modernity and its impact

on the theory of modernity, it becomes quite clear that the Nietzschean diagnosis of modern nihilism has led to the most serious scientific consequences. We should note that with respect to Christianity and its impact on modernity, Georg Simmel, Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch, Max Scheler, Sigmund Freud, and Karl Jaspers are perhaps the best known figures in modern thought who engaged strongly with Nietzsche. Weber, for example, argued that we should forget Nietzsche's negative reduction of Christian ethics to resentment. He stressed Christian virtues of acosmistic love, brotherhood, and absolute altruism. In fact, Weber's sociology of religion turned into an ambivalent intellectualist and moralistic affirmation of asceticism, individualism, professionalism, and institutional rationalization. The program was to save science from religion and from the Nietzschean critique of the religious bondage of science. In general, up to today, Christian ethics stood in modern theory in relative interdependence with the modern processes of rationalization of social institutions and individual life worlds, the moral foundation of the individual social actor and responsibility. It is my personal conviction – which I should state here right from the start –, and certainly an underlying point of reference for all that follows, that the indirect and ambivalent dependence of modern social theory on Christian concepts of morality – in fact its being the hidden core – is one of the basic constraints to open dialogue and cultural exchange in a modern world that depends largely on the cultural reconstructions of civilizational differences. I have previously agued that »Weber's sociology of meaningful action purports to offer a ›positivistic‹ sociological reinterpretation of Nietzsche« (Stauth 1992: 230). Certainly, Max Weber's sociological constructions remain foundational to all modern social theory and this should be taken into account. However, I will refrain in this article from elaborating further on Weber's vision of Nietzsche. My reflections, here, are on resentment, Europe and the non-European, and I will instead depart with some reflections on Karl Jaspers, Max Scheler, and Sigmund Freud.

Mainstream sociology today re-institutes the fact that both Nietzsche and Scheler would have agreed that resentment characterizes modern culture, but as a result of bourgeois society and not Christianity. This is a point to which Freud would have subscribed with his thesis on sublimation as the ascetic cost of civilization. In this sense, resentment has often been described as a contingent attitude in the moment of envy or as a reactive or reflexive feeling resulting from general powerlessness. This would, indeed, minimize the discussion of the problem to a frequent, however, potentially abolishable psychological condition of mass society and modernity. Indeed, to review resentment purely in terms of a fundamental cultural attitude of self-empowerment of the weak would again limit our perspective to mere positivist psychological considerations. The task set here is a critical sociological one related to cross-cultural analysis.

3. The Global Issue

Although the concept of resentment is widely used today, it often remains restricted to the meaning of a psychology of envy and hate of the socially and culturally deprived. The processes and actions to which the concept of resentment now refers are largely seen as those of the have-nots and the powerless. Recent interpretations of Max Scheler's work have perceived resentment in its ultimate state as a psychology of terrorism (Frings 2004: XVIII-XX). Although often using it in a very limited psychological sense, psychologists have contributed considerably to the enormous increase in the diffused usage of the term today. Sociologists and political scientists remain ambiguous in their often very loose use of the term. A good example of this ambiguity is perhaps Richard Sennett's denunciation of the secular charisma of Richard Nixon among the American middle class in the 1970s as being retrieved from the »politics of resentment« (Sennett 1983: 314).

As opposed to these examples, the main focus of my discussion lies on resentment and religion. This includes an exploration of the theory of modernity and the roots of the modern in ancient religious developments. Coming from this angle, the following three points are of analytical importance:

Firstly, the concept of the morality of resentment should be treated as an essential and irreversible cultural »break« in the history of civilizations. The issue of resentment can not be dealt with separately from the issue of the rise of the West and the fundamental institutional and intellectual changes which we have come to refer to since Karl Jaspers as the Axial Age, i.e. the millennium which is associated with the rise of monotheism and the monotheistic world religions. As in relation to Nietzsche's discovery of the morality of resentment, it is linked with the respective rise of the priesthood as a public religious institution.

Secondly, there is the problem of the morality of resentment being absent from the focus of mainstream modern discourse. It is, however, an inherent concept of the discursive treatment of the effects of rationalism and asceticism on the human character. The point I would like to make here is very simple: it is time to come to grips with the issue of resentment and to treat it openly as an irreversible tool of cultural and political construction and action. Certainly, and this is the main issue on the contemporary scene, as a tool resentment has enormous effects with respect to cross-cultural communication.

Thirdly, it is not only due to Edward Said's (2003) latest discussion of *Freud and the Non-European* that the issue of the Non-European and the Non-Western in general, became imminent to modern discourse. There is a continual process of modern inclusion of 20th century Islam, in the course of which, in recent years, the new »this-worldly« ideological orientations of Islam became fully obvious. It is certainly difficult to address a kind of genealogy of resentment with respect to the rise of

Islam, or to give a direct answer to the question as how the resentment issue should be treated in the context of the process of the universalization of individualism, egalitarianism, and democracy. Taking Nietzsche seriously, it would appear that Eastern religions and, particularly the latecomer among the world religions, Islam, have avoided the institution of the priest as such or have maintained different treatments of asceticism and inner-worldly attitudes of the self through respective religious solutions intended to avoid or reverse the resentment break. It is difficult to see that such a statement could withhold the facts of the internal development of these religions in modern times. As for today, we can see that resentment politics have become of – at least – corresponding importance in all parts of the non-European world; in fact, they have assumed their own dynamic there. The point I wish to develop here again is that we will hardly be able to come to grips with these developments if we continue to blame the other without openly disclosing the double-sided mechanisms that underlie the process of resentment politics today. To stipulate – indirectly or openly, intentionally or unintentionally – the political control of millions of people by the smallest and lowest of fanatic religious preachers and, having done this, to potentially legitimize the use weapons of mass destruction and atomic power against them is perhaps another of the nihilist and destructive ends of what Nietzsche called the most atomistic revolution.

4. Nietzsche's Critical Departure

A few words on Nietzsche: in a strict genealogical sense, he made a strong distinction between revenge and resentment. For Nietzsche resentment is not just reactive psychology, it includes and incorporates the institutional field of religion, the body, a specific this-worldly attitude, the mind, and knowledge. Nietzsche treated Judaism differently to Christianity. While he rejected the religious orientation to reality, in general, and treated religion as a kind of renunciation of passions and denial of life, he saw in Christianity the start of the institutionalization of guilt and resentment. In other words, starting from Nietzsche, resentment belongs to the broad syndrome of the »ascetic cost of reason« (Foucault 1988)[1], of which Weber and Foucault have given us appropriate modern accounts. For Nietzsche, most ambiguously, resentment features as a negative tool of cultural reconstruction, a result of both axial forms of negation of power and modern reproductions of priestly tastes. Today we would say, perhaps, that resentment is one of the modern technologies of cultural

1 Author's own translation from the German edition (Foucault 1993: 25).

constitution which has become part and parcel of the diverse and multiple formulations of the cultural programs of modernity throughout the world.

Nietzsche's discovery that the inner motivations of modern man rest on the religious institution of the priest and his diagnosis of modern nihilism has had very serious scientific consequences. Nietzsche relates resentment and priesthood to a kind of evolutionary process from Judaism to Christianity to Protestantism to secular modernity and to the modern culture of the sciences. This was a very challenging idea in late 19th and early 20th century. Nietzsche's genealogy of morals threatened the concept of Christian »love« in saying it was invented out of low and fearful reactions to the concept of the »revengeful« God. It should be noted that, for Nietzsche, Christian altruism and the Christian way of generalizing morals, and specifically the moral of love, produced a kind of inner self-distancing and disinterest towards the lived-in-world. This image of the moral and cognitive *désinteressé* weighed heavily on modern post-Nietzschean philosophers. Modern thought was and is, perhaps, still strongly engaged in a process of converting Nietzsche's reduction of Christian ethics and his pessimistic understanding of acosmistic love, brotherhood, and absolute altruism into a positive view on intellectualism, rationalism, and modern science. The affirmative project of modernity is largely engaged in a reversion of Nietzsche's critique, turning it into an ambivalent intellectualist and moralistic affirmation of asceticism, individualism, professionalism, and institutional rationalization. The problem was to save science from its religious bondage.[2]

5. Affirmative Revisions: Weber, Scheler, Deleuze

I would now like to explore briefly three examples of repression or the limitation of resentment in modern discourse.[3] I will start with Max Weber's distinction between – what he calls – the »Jewish religiosity of retribution« (*die jüdische Vergeltungsreligiosität*) (Weber 1980: 302) or the »specifically obtrusive resentment of a Pariah people« (*das spezifisch penetrante Ressentiment des Pariavolks*) (Weber 1980: 304), on the one hand, and the »joyful message« (*frohe Botschaft*) and »acosmistic love« (*akosmistische Liebe)* (Weber 1980: 203ff.) of Jesus and his followers, on the other. This distinction appears to serve the purpose of idealistically freeing Christian religiosity of resentment. However, Weber's call for limiting the »significance of the factor of resentment« and his attack on Nietzsche's »dubiousness in applying the conceptual schema of ›repression‹ almost universally« (the German – obviously Freudian –

2 For more detailed discussions of these issues, see Stauth and Turner (1986, 1988) and Stauth (1992).
3 For an extremely neutral and logical-pragmatic discussion of resentment, see Strawson (1976).

word used here is *Verdrängung*)[4] appears to reveal that his attack on Nietzsche is more broadly concerned with denying an inherent relation between class and psychological determination. Weber's intention, in fact, points to the saving of »priesthood«, religious, and modern intellectualism in general from indulging the morality of resentment. Modernity could not be judged as being inclined to the kind of morality based on the lower instincts of the negatively privileged or to »the slave's revolution of morality«. In declining resentment as a tool of cultural re-construction, Weber makes it an issue of low class and negatively privileged. Hence, the issue remains indirectly and silently incorporated into Weber's main interest in and awareness of the »iron cage« of modernity.

In contrast to Weber and his class psychology, Max Scheler engages in a different conceptual limitation, restricting the resentment issue to value and knowledge generalization. For Scheler, any cultural resistance lies in the recreation of religious principles and visions. This poses a problem with respect to the moral bondage of knowledge. *Wertgegenständlichkeit* means the bondage of value to objective experience. The need to transcend it is the source of basic cultural reconstitution. Scheler agrees with Nietzsche that identifying an individual value object and tying it to the general fate of humanity as a whole, is an invention of priestly pathos. However, for Scheler, this is a general condition of the human experience and a tool for instigating the process of generalizing recognition. Generalization remains for Scheler a surrogate of value immediacy (Scheler 2004: 88ff.). Linked to this transformation, Scheler admits, resentment turns into a modern condition of value generalization (*Wertverallgemeinerung*). This is where Scheler limits the problem of resentment to the question of the moral impact on recognition and knowledge. The question that arises here is what are the effects of transforming a very individual and critical value observation into a general culturally recognized affirmative position? This Scheler problem had an influence on modern scientific discourse. Scheler, anticipating later projects involving ›smoother‹ adaptations of science and technology, argued – to limit the modern impact of resentment – for a return to value immediacy against the moral construction of generalizations linked to the rise of modern bourgeois society.[5]

Finally, I see Gilles Deleuze as completing Weber and Scheler's secularizing transformations of the resentment issue. He re-positions Nietzsche's theory of resentment with respect to modern character and psychology. In his study on Nietzsche and philosophy, Deleuze (1962) initially reduces resentment to a psychological problem of the interplay between active and reactive human forces. Re-

4 See Weber (1978, I: 499; English version) or Weber (1980: 304; German).

5 On a kind of silent impact on the idea of the immediate object of value, see Dumont (1983: 237) and Robertson (1992: 25).

sentment begins where reaction, as a normal, corrective, psychological force to action, stops. Reaction becomes blocked by resentment and is reversed to become an inner feeling. Similar to Freud, Deleuze stresses internalization as a tool of constituting power. Moreover, Deleuze returns to the civilizational issue and, based on Nietzsche, defines the impact of Christianity as the combination of an »increase in suffering through the change in the direction of resentment« (*Vermehrung des Leidens durch Richtungsänderung des Ressentiments*) and – in a Freudian sense – the »internalization of suffering through the change in the direction of resentment« (*Verinnerlichung des Leidens durch Richtungsänderung des Ressentiments*) (Deleuze 1976: 139ff.) It is important to note that Deleuze agrees with Nietzsche on the impact of the rise of priesthood in the Jewish and Christian religions and refers to the priest as the very inventor of the change in the direction of resentment (Deleuze 1976: 143ff.). In conclusion, Deleuze stages the rise of modernity as the threefold victory of the reactive forces of resentment, bad conscience, and the ascetic ideal. However, rather than speaking of the psychology of individual powerlessness, Deleuze leads us to the genealogy of the inner empowerment of modern subjectivity through forms and tools of detachment and distinction.

6. The Axial Age Impact and its Impasse

The main theme of resentment is that it is exclusively linked to the genealogical view of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in terms of the definition of European modernity. It is only with Karl Jaspers's theory of the Axial Age that the problem of resentment and religion takes a universal dimension. It was Karl Japers who, in 1949[6], in a significant parallel to Nietzsche's genealogy of the priest, re-positions the priest into a perspective of historical objectivism for research. In a remarkable inclusion of Asia, Karl Jaspers developed his thesis that in around the 1st millennium BC, in a period of crisis for the old mythical civilizations of antiquity, new spiritual and intellectual solutions emerged that prompted an intellectual revolution. Benjamin Schwartz – the famous scholar of Greek antiquity – called this »a pathos of negation and constraint *vis-à-vis* the forces of human pride and passion« (Schwartz 1975: 1). Schwartz also speaks of a period of change in the cultural landscape of the Eastern Mediterranean between Greece and Egypt, Cyprus and Babylon in the 1st millennium BC. The intellectual revolution relates to new critical religious-philosophical movements. Transcendental visions and principles were used as tools for

6 Not to forget his previous profound treatment of the issue of resentment in his lecture on »Nietzsche und das Christentum« (Jaspers 1938).

envisioning and constructing new »this-worldly« social orders. A new ethos of morality was created by professional specialists and submitted to transcendental orientations, the control and interpretation of which were left to the new stratum of priestly and intellectual professions. Priests and other religious figures began to challenge the stability and the power centers. Indeed, heterodoxism and »negation« destroyed the circular character of history in the empires of late antiquity. It may be noted here that from the 1960s on this was perceived as a kind of archaic version of modernization – the arch-model of the historical breakthrough of autonomous intellectualism. Later, cross-civilizational analysis developed this theme as the prevalence in the modern world of the tension between critical and affirmative intellectualism, heterodoxism and orthodoxism, linked to the evolution of egalitarianism and modern democracy (Eisenstadt 1998).

In his book *On Origin and Aim of History*[7] of 1949, Jaspers sketches the rise of Islam as being inherent to the rise of the West[8]. Indeed, Europe, Byzantium, and Islam appear here as equivalent stages in the development of the Western part of the world. However there is no further mention of Islam in the text itself. The Middle East and Europe »stand as a relative unity *vis-à-vis* India and China« (Jaspers 1949a: 101) and Islam remains an absent category in the process of West-East differentiation, even in the period following the Greek antiquity. For Jaspers, the three-fold historical change in China, India, and the West represents »a demand for unlimited communication«. He sees this demand for communication as the best means against the »failure of exclusiveness« bound with pure truth of belief. For him »the exclusiveness of a claim of truth is a tool of fanaticism. It is inherent not only in the instrumentalization of religion, but also in the arrogance of secularism and so-called scientific world views« (Jaspers 1949a: 8).

In contrast to Jaspers's theory, the unfolding of the communication process in the modern world of today is overloaded with fanaticism and conflict and not – it would seem – with understanding. So what happened? My point is that Jaspers's perspective on the universality of the Axial Age experience and communication needs to be modified to include the universality of resentment. The treatment of resentment and religion today longs for the comprehensive inclusion of the Non-European. Despite all Weberian and Jasperian reservations, I wish to propose to treat the issue of resentment as a global issue of religion and modernity. Given the limits of time, I would like to raise briefly two questions with respect to Islam:

7 My comments are based on the original German text Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte (Jaspers 1949a: 48).

8 See also his article of the same year Die Achsenzeit der Weltgeschichte in Der Monat (Jaspers 1949b). In this short article, when presenting his theory of the »Axial Age«, Jaspers argued that the unity of the experience of the revelation is the unity of the axial experience, a threefold experience between China, India, and the West.

firstly, the question of the so-called Western impingement on Islam; and, secondly, the question of inner reflexive evolution in Islam.

7. Islam and the Ideology of Religious Abolishing of Resenment

With respect to Western impingement, I will explore briefly three basic momentums that denominate the new awareness and meaning of Islam and that have led to the transformation of the modern arenas of Islam.

Firstly, the process of de-colonization has triggered a deep ideological crisis. It became obvious in the context of post-colonialism that the conceptual apparatus of Enlightenment and modernity – based on a critique of religion – was inherent to colonial power. In the colonized world, »secularization« suddenly appeared to be a strategic concept of cultural domination. Islam was recognized as emerging from a silent culture of the marginalized and impoverished popular masses and assumed a new significance in the process of modern reconstruction. In many ways it was perceived as a functional substitute for Protestantism. The momentum of the de-colonization of culture facilitated the emergence of Islam as a global ideological force. It led to a completely new conceptualization of religion as a form of return of the suppressed, a momentum of civil rebellion and the organization of a symbolically empowered public self (Fanon, Shariati, Bennabi, Mawdudi, Abdelmalik, etc. in opposition to von Grunebaum, B. Lewis, and the other Western authors who warned of a »return of Islam«).

Secondly, the idea of Islam as a process of civil society and of public religion propelled by media globalization, consumer culture, and migration emerged in the 1990s. The re-conceptualization of Islam was also linked to the concomitant decomposition of the Western image of the »civilized man« and his semantic institutional fields. Islam appeared as a movement fostering new alternative cultural and institutional programs of modernity in a non-European context (Robertson, Seligman, Eisenstadt, Casanova, Arkoun, Asad, etc.).

Thirdly, recently, the idea of the self-determined and self-regulated subject and the various facets of religious self-empowerment became linked with Islamic reconstruction. Key-words here include liminality, total autonomy, and actualizing the self. »Islam« assumed the importance of a new cultural tool with respect to the transcendence of the self, the disciplinary and visionary techniques of »real« and »imaginary« transformation, and the body (Foucault, Turner, etc.).

As you will understand, I have translated the »impingement of the West« issue into a broader movement for the re-conceptualization of religion on the contemporary scene of the past 30 years, within which these various momentums signalize in

different terms and in diverse directions the main arenas in which Islam became directly or indirectly re-conceptualized into the inner engine of modern cultural and political discourse.

It is necessary to go one crucial point further here and to consider that under modern global circumstances the issue concerning the morality of resentment was literally transformed into an underlying theme of Islamic reconstruction. Aware of the discursive integration of Islam, Islamic intellectuals and religious institutions maintained a sort of relentless »pathos of distance« towards what they called the »nihilism« of modernity and the West. The very intellectual products of Islam took on a defensive and at the same time reconstructive stance defining an exclusive intellectual hegemony over human character and social accommodation. I should mention here Mohammad Iqbal, a leading figure of Islam in India, Pakistan, and South-East Asia in the first half of the 20th century and his vision of – as he called it – the »spiritual democracy as the ultimate aim of Islam« (Iqbal 1954: 180). Iqbal signifies the post-Nietzschean international reconstruction of Islam as a spiritual rule and a method for accessing reality. In fact, Iqbal speaks of the Kantian »I can« as a momentum of Islamic Sufism (Iqbal 1954: 198).

Certainly, Islamic reconstruction is not one-dimensional and Iqbal's influence on Islamic thinkers in the Middle East is very limited. However, the general idea of Islam as being resistant to Western decadence, resentment, injustice, and false secular methodization, is a widespread pattern of thought among all Islamic intellectuals.

8. The Global Inscription of Resentment

»There is no doubt in Islam!« according to Mohammad Naqib al-Attas, a contemporary Islamic theorist who is influential in Malaysia and Indonesia.[9] Can one say this? Can one really claim – as I did above – that »(t)here is no priesthood in Islam«, indirectly arguing that there is no resentment in Islam. Why there is self-affirmation not self-restraint in confronting the obviously greater powers? Why stones against tanks? Why suicide bomb attacks against non-combatants? Can one really claim that these are acts and convictions that relate to Islamic dogma and world-view? There is no serious evaluation of the concept of resentment with respect to any religious institution in Islam, nor with the interplay of resentment in cross-cultural exchange.

9 Personal communication in a discussion on Nietzsche and Islam in 1995. As for al-Attas's basic reversion of Western cultural criticism into a new path of Islamic reconstruction see his Islam, Secularism and the Philosophy of the Future (Al-Attas 1985).

For Nietzsche, Jesus reflects a type of unintended cause of slave mentality in the ethical pathos of the West – denied and affirmed in later discourse about religion and modernity. In contrast Nietzsche viewed Muhammad as the founder of an aristocratic moral pathos. We may regret the neglect of any spirit of critique with respect to both the power image of Muhammad and the effect of it on Muslim moral affirmativeness, so relentlessly controlled by Orthodox intellectual politics. The reflexive breaks in Islamic history came through Western science, viewed often enough as »Orientalist« resentful distortions by the West.

My concern lies – in the broadest sense – with the type of nihilistic spirals of performative games, declining the common roots, stages, and breaks in the creation of different forms of religious institutions and the related types of morality of resentment. These are emerging today with non-reflective violent tools based on cultural falsifications. In the context of the contemporary breaks and turns, we can observe the unfolding of the interplay of different resentment politics building on the global inscriptions and institutionalized forms of morality of resentment. From the limited perspective of »resentment and religion«, I merely wished to point to some of the fundamental gaps and misunderstandings that are prevalent in the contemporary process and in the dialogue and cultural exchange between Islam and the West.

The conventional wisdom about a resentment-free modern secular science and the affirmative intellectual culture of the West has proven wrong. The »return of religion« shows the effects of the global incitement of institutionalized forms of resentment and of political theology as a means of empowerment. In Karl Jaspers's terminology we may call this a reinvention of pre-Axial or early Axial forms of empowerment with disastrous effects. I have pointed to the limitations of the critique of Western affirmative culture. Any meaningful cross-cultural dialogue would have to imply the provision of inner Western cultural critique as a kind of inclusion in the terms of business.

This is what I could envisage as an important dimension of a new European stance on the inner modern presence of Islam, challenging Muslims to reflect and make similarly available today a falsely and wrongly imagined ethic of power, undisputable self-affirmation, and visions of world conquest.

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