Invitation of Papers for the
34th International Course on the
The Future of Religion:
The Three Abrahamic Religions and the Secular Modernity

IUC, Dubrovnik, Croatia,
April 26 – April 30, 2009

By

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Call for Papers for the 34th International Course on the

Future of Religion:

The Three Abrahamic Religions and the Secular Modernity

Dear Friends:

We are writing this letter to you, in order to invite you wholeheartedly to our 34th international course on the Future of Religion: The Abrahamic Religions and the Secular Modernity, to take place in the Inter-University Center for Post-Graduate Studies (IUC) in Dubrovnik, Croatia, from April 26 – 30, 2010. We invite you to our discourse, because we are convinced, that you as a scholar are most competent to contribute to the clarification, understanding, explanation and further development of our new topic.

Presentation of Papers

We hope very much that you can accept our invitation, join us in beautiful Dubrovnik for our 34th international course on the Future of Religion: The Abrahamic Religions and the Secular Modernity, and contribute to our very lively discourse. We encourage you to present a paper that combines your own research activities with the general theme of 2010. Our course will be part of a very rich IUC Program of courses and conferences in the Academic Year of 2009/2010. Dubrovnik and the IUC are indeed alive and well and even growing again in spite of all the tragic events of the past decades! We hope very much, that the whole region of the former Yugoslavia will soon become part of the European Union, We hope, that the further trials in Den Haag will be guided not by the Jus or Lex Talionis and by the motive of retaliation, but rather in the perspective of the Golden Rule, which is present not only in the three Abrahamic Religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – but in all the. living world religions, and of its secular inversion, and translation, and rationalization into the categorical imperative, and into the a priori of the universal communication community, and of a global ethos built on these religious and secular principles, and of an international law, which is rooted in them and will, therefore, never be without mercy and the power of atonement and of reconciliation. All ethics and legality must – in order to have motivating power - ultimately be rooted in the insatiable longing for the totally Other than the horror and terror of nature and history (see www.rudolfjsiebert.org).

Text and Context

Please, prepare your paper out of the material of your present research, in the horizon of our specific theme of this year, and in the context of the present historical situation, and in direction of our common goal: shalom, salam, peace among the Abrahamic religions. We are convinced, that there cannot be any peace among nations without peace among the world-religions; and that there cannot be any peace among the world religions without discourse among them; and that there cannot be any discourse among them without their mutual knowledge about each other and their interpretations of reality and their orientations of action. To such mutual knowledge among the Abrahamic religions and between them and the secular Modernity our texts intend to contribute. Your text must not be perfect. Nobody is perfect! You can still complete your paper to the level of publication-maturation after you have presented it, and after we have discussed it together, and after you have returned home. Our discourse may help you, to complete your paper, and to make it ready for publication.
Finally, we would like to collect our research papers once more for a third volume, following Professor Reimer’s excellent first volume - The Influence of the Frankfurt School on Contemporary Theology. Critical Theory and the Future of Religion. Dubrovnik Papers in Honor of Rudolf J. Siebert. Lewiston, New York, Queenston, Ontario, Canada, Lamber, Dyfed, Wales, United Kingdom, and Professor Michael Ott’s most outstanding second volume The Future of Religion: Toward a Reconciled Society, which has appeared with the publisher Brill in Holland and with the publisher Haymarket Press in 2007/2009, and which we shall celebrate especially and publically during our upcoming meeting. Maybe Jim Reimer and Michael Ott will assist us once more with their great publishing experience, to bring out our third volume in the not too distant future. My own three volume Manifesto of the Critical Theory of Society and Religion: The Wholly Other, Liberation, Happiness and the Rescue of the Hopeless, which is very much based in our discourses in Dubrovnik from 1977 to 2010, and reflects very much our common efforts, will come out with the publishers Brill and Haymarket in 2010, and can be of help to us in our future discourse meetings.

Resource Persons and Participants

Thus, we - the Director, Professor Rudolf J. Siebert, Western Michigan University, and the Co-Directors, Professor Mislav Kukoc, University of Zagreb, Professor Gottfried Künzelen, University of the Federal German Army, Munich, Professor Denis Janz, Loyola University, New Orleans, Professor Michael Ott, Grand Valley University, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Dr. Dinka Marinovic-Jerolimov, Institute for Social Research Zagreb, and the Coordinators Professor Tatiana Senyushkina, Taurida National University, Simferopol, Ukraine, and Dr. Goran Goldberger, Institute for Social Research, Zagreb, invite you very personally in the name of the IUC, to join us as resource persons or participants in our 34th international course on The Future of Religion: The Abrahamic Religions and the Secular Modernity in the IUC Building, from April 26 –30, 2010. We chose this year's course title once more in a democratic procedure. It grew almost logically out of the texts and the contexts and motivations of our previous discourses on the Future of Religion. This year’s theme is certainly once more of highest actuality considering the present world situation: the so-called war against terror, which unfortunately continues under the Obama Administration in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine, Yemen and elsewhere, and which is continually fought on both sides by Jews, Christians and Muslims according to the cruel Jus or Lex Talionis, without any real peace, or liberation, or redemption in sight, as the possible result of the praxis of the Golden Rule, which all three Abrahamic religions have in common, in personal, national, and international affairs: a praxis driven by the yearning for the totally Other, including the longing for light, friendship, love, as well as liberation and happiness, and the rescue of all the hopeless victims of society and history, who have never had their day in court.

Addresses: Home, Secretariat, and Hotels.

In case you have any further questions, please address them to me or my co-directors at the following addresses and through the following media. My home address is: 630 Piccadilly Road, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49006, USA. My home telephone number is: 269-381-0864. My e-mail address is RSieb3@aol.com. My Fax address is: 269-381-1935. My website is: http://www.rudolfjsiebert.org/. If you plan to come, please also contact directly the Secretariat of the Inter-University Center, Don Frana Bulica 4, HR 20000 Dubrovnik, Croatia, Tel.+385 20 413626/7; Fax +385 20 413628. Please, also contact either Hotel Argentina, Tel + 385 20 440 555, Fax + 385 20 432 524, or Hotel Lero, Tel. + 385 20 411 455, Fax + 385 20 432 501, or any other hotel or private pension of your choice in Dubrovnik for room and board. Hotel Lero is the less expensive one. Hotel Argentina is the more expensive one. Most of us will probably stay at Hotel Lero. For further information concerning the broader context of our international course on the Future of Religion, please look at my web site: http://www.rudolfjsiebert.org/. You can get a lower hotel price, if you make your reservation through the IUC
Suggestions

Please, allow me to make a few more concrete suggestions concerning the content of our discourse on The Future of Religion: The Abrahamic Religions and the Secular Modernity. One reason for such suggestions is to constitute further continuity between our past 33 courses on one hand, and the coming 34 discourse, on the other. In fulfilling this task of continuity, we are greatly supported by Professor Reimer's book The Influence of the Frankfurt School on Contemporary Theology. Critical Theory and the Future of Religion. Dubrovnik Papers in Honor of Rudolf J. Siebert, and by Professor Ott’s new book The Future of Religion: Toward a Reconciled Society. The other reason for the following suggestions is to indicate the possible direction, which our new international discourse on the Future of Religion: The Wholly Other, Liberation, Happiness, and the Rescue of the Hopeless may, or could, or should take, when we meet in Dubrovnik from April 26 - 30, 2010. The few suggestions may indicate the possible theoretical framework, level and goal for the texts, that we shall produce in writing or orally in and for the new Dubrovnik - and world-situation, and toward the goal of further human emancipation as reconciliation on the long road of human kind from animality to post-modern, global alternative Future III: the reconciled, free, just and therefore peaceful society, instead of alternative Future I – the totally administered society as predicted by Huxley, Orwell, Kafka, Horkheimer, Adorno, Fromm, Marcuse, etc., or alternative global Future II – the entirely militarized society continually engaged in conventional wars and civil wars, and in the preparation of ABC wars, and the consequent environmental disasters, maybe in the framework of a collision of religion-guided civilizations as predicted by the late Samuel Huntington, a disciple of Carl Schmitt, Adolf Hitler’s political theologian and main jurist, and a former Pentagon advisor. The following suggestions are, of course, only that - suggestions - and you may feel entirely free, to follow your own dialectical imagination and creativity, and to move in other directions as well, inside, of course, of the wider framework of the general thematic of 2010. (See website http: //www.rudolfjsiebert, org/).

Union

Throughout our discourses in Dubrovnik since 1977 we were guided to a large extend by the critical theory of society and religion, or by the dialectical religiology. From its very start in 1947, the critical religiology as we derived it from the critical theory of society of the Frankfurt School responding to our experiences with fascism, and with World War II, and with the cold war between the capitalist and socialist block, and more recently with the global war on terror, was constituted by a three fold dialectic: 1. the dialectic between the religious and the secular; 2. the dialectic in the secular; and 3, the dialectic in the religious. This three - fold dialectic constituted the very core of our comparative, dialectical religiology as it evolved from 1947 on to the present. We traced the dialectical movement: of religion from the original, traditional, medieval, relative union between the sacred and the profane, through their modern separation, to their possible post-modern reunion in one form or the other. Of course, there had existed a separation between the religious and the secular already in primitive, archaic, and historical- intermediate societies. Already the Tobriand Islanders differentiated between their work in the lacunae, where they could depend on their profane fishing technology, on one hand, and their work out on the ocean, where they depended on religion: on the help of the Baloonaes, the Spirits, and on magic and fetishism. The Torah’s, and the New Testament’s, and the Holy Qur’an’s differentiation between the religious dimension of God on one hand, and the profane sphere of the Emperor, or of money, on the other, or between the children of God and the children of this world, was not yet completely exclusive, and did not yet disturb the fundamental union between the sacred and the profane language, thought and action. In the Western Middle Ages, the scholastics, particularly Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventura, produced an ingenious balance between religious faith and secular knowledge with the help of Plato and then of
Aristotle, mediated to some extent through the Islamic Arabs, like Averroes Only in the late Middle Ages, the nominalists began to announce a double truth: a religious and a profane truth – the truth of Divine revelation and a truth of human autonomous reason.

Disunion

Only in the West, with the beginning of Modernity, with the Renaissance and the Reformation, the traditional relative separation between the sacred and the profane began to turn into a radical contradiction and an antagonism with deep tensions and explosions, which continue in the culture wars of today - in 2010 – not only in Europe and America and in the Near East, but all around the globe, as secular Modernity catches up with all continents and civilizations and world religions: particularly the three Abrahamic religions. There were beginnings of Modernity before in ancient China, when the Chinese invented the gunpowder, and in ancient Greece, when the Greeks constructed the first steam engine. But while Modernity did not take off in China or in Greece. it took deep roots in the West, in Europe. Obviously Christianity had something to do with it as it united in itself religious faith from Jerusalem, philosophy, and science from Athens, and political and legal structures from Rome, and provided the theology and metaphysics, which was demanded by the new modern rational world view Paradoxically enough, Christianity was also the first of the three Abrahamic religions to be hit by the onslaught of the modern enlightenment movements: then followed Judaism, and finally Islam. While the Evangelical Reformation was a deeply religious event, it contributed, nevertheless, also paradoxically enough, to the modern secularization process: particularly Martin Luther’s idea, that not only clergymen but all people had a vocation, and Calvin’s notion, that wealth was the sign for divine predestination to bliss in eternal life. The modern disunion between the religious and the secular carried conflict into the religious communities themselves, as some of their members emphasized their religious identities in a most radical orthodox way, while other members were more open toward secular Modernity and more willing to adjust to it. Thus, in Judaism orthodox Rabbis opposed the conservative and reform Rabbis. In Christianity the conservative Pope Benedict XVI is not able to allow the liberal Hans Küng to teach theology in the name of the Catholic Church. In Islam radical Imams oppose the more liberal Professor Ramadan and the modern bourgeois as well as socialist enlightenment movements and revolutions and waves of modernization, to which he would like to open up without sacrificing his Islamic identity. The onslaught of secular Modernity on the Abrahamic religions also pulls the particular religious communities into the national and international class struggle on different levels. Some believers side with the ruling classes and others with the poor classes. Some believers stand on the Right and others on the Left. Also this way religious communities are divided in themselves and thus participate in the guilt - connection of late capitalist society.

Religion and Science

Originally science developed in the Roman Catholic Church and was not at all experienced as a threat to religion or faith. When Copernicus visited the Pope and presented to him his new scientific, heliocentric paradigm, which would replace the geocentric Ptolemaic model, in the context of which the Hebrew Bible, and the New Testament, and the Holy Qur’an had been written, the Pope agreed with it. But 70 years later, after the Evangelical Reformation, the Holy Inquisition, which had invented the water boarding which the CIA has used in the past 8 years against Islamic so called terrorists, threatened the old Galileo, who continued to teach and promote the heliocentric paradigm of Copernicus, with torture instruments. This was very impressive. The Holy Inquisition could have burned the old man alive like Jordano Bruno, the pantheistic scientist, Galileo was at fault to some extend. He was arrogant and ridiculed the inquisitors and called them children and stupid, because they were unable to learn the new heliocentric advancements of modern science. The inquisitors simply wanted Galileo to collect more empirical evidence in support of his heliocentric theory, and to improve his
mathematics, and to sharpen the lenses of his telescope, so that Church authorities could gain time to inform their simple believers about the new discoveries, and to defend and protect the innermost citadel of faith at the most external cosmological, biological and psychological walls. But since Copernicus, the Church had been shaken by the Reformation and had become frightened, neurotic, and narrow-minded, or shortly un-catholic, and thus made the great mistake of alienating not only Galileo but also the whole scientific community from the very start up to the present. Galileo was no martyr material and thus rescinded, but not honestly: the sun turned around the earth again. While the old man suffered eight years of house arrest up to his death, his daughter smuggled his heliocentric book to progressive Holland, where its was published. The scientific truth could not be repressed forever by religious believes. From Galileo on the abyss between religious believes and scientific knowledge has continually deepened and the fast advancing sciences and the consequent technologies became indeed a challenge and a threat to religion. and continue to be that up to the present. Only recently the scientists of the secular university in Rome resisted the visit of Pope Benedict XVI, the former Great Inquisitor Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, because he had asserted as such, that the Holy Inquisition had been right after all against Galileo. The Pope had to cancel his visit to the secular university. In the perspective of the critical theory of society and religion, while faith can not be touched by science, religious believes can no longer be maintained, when disproved by verified new scientific discoveries. To be sure, the theories of Darwin, Marx, or Freud need further improvement, But so much evidence has been accumulated in their support, that they can no longer be ignored or denied by religious believers. Unfortunately, the Church has lagged behind the scientific development in the past 500 years. It therefore has lost its authority and credibility to a large extend. A Belgian priest developed the big bang theory, which today is accepted by almost all scientists. But it was this same priest, who warned Pious XII not to use his theory in defense of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic creation story. The Jesuit Priest Teilhard de Chardin helped to discover the Peking man. In consequence of his anthropological studies, he recommended to the Church the revision of the Christian story of the fall of man, of the original and even inherited sin, because it hindered or at least slowed down the progress of humanity into the logos sphere. Religious people became known to secular people and even to themselves as slow learners. Of course, there can be an advantage to slow learning. One does not make all the mistakes of the fast learners. But the Church’s mission to announce redemption to humanity suffers, when the possible recipients of such mission can no longer believe and trust in its authority. Therefore, the dialectical religiology works for the dialectical reconciliation of faith and knowledge through the evolution of both: the restoration of theology as the radicalization of dialectics into the theological glowing fire, which would mean at the same time an extreme sharpening of the social – and economical- dialectical motive.

God and Religion

Since 400 years, the modern European and American world has continually changed its view of religion and of God. While the Medieval world was more concerned with God, the modern world became more interested in religion; The place of theology was taken by religiology. The shock of the earthquake and the tsunami of Lisbon in 1755 pushed the theodicy problem into the center of the European interest. Long before Auschwitz as a moral catastrophe, the natural disaster of Lisbon shook the confidence of Europeans and Americans in the theodicy answers of the Abrahamic religions: the retaliation-, test-, or free will - theodicies. Voltaire ridiculed the undialectical theodicy of Leibniz in his Candide. Rousseau and Voltaire constructed deism: God had created the world, but had left it to itself. The world was as godless as God was worldless. There remained in deism the belief in virtue and immortality in a very abstract form. Deism took care of the theodicy problem, and justified the bourgeois enlightenment and revolution, as well as modern colonialism and imperialism. The God of the USA Declaration of Independence is the deistic one. The name of God does not appear at all in the USA Constitution. In consequence, students of the great Protestant theologian Paul Tillich, following Luther and Nietzsche, produced the specifically American God - is- dead - theology. Tillich himself believed in the post-theistic God, who remained after the God of theism, had disappeared in the anxiety, doubt,
and despair. of the 20th century: the God above God. Indeed in the perspective of the comparative dialectical religiology the view of God and religion has changed drastically in the horror and terror of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Religion and Morality

Even deep into modernity, up to Immanuel Kant, the Abrahamic religions had been the foundation of morality in the West and the Near East. Religion taught people the Fear of the Lord. The religion said to people that if they follow God’s law, they will be rewarded and will go to heaven, and if they disobey, then they will be punished and go to hell. That was a strong motivation for people to live a good life. However, the bourgeois enlightenment wanted to free people from their fear and to make them into masters of their fate. Kant did not only destroy the proves for the existence of God. He also laid the foundation for an ethics and a morality without theology - the categorical imperative -, which had never happened before in occidental or oriental philosophy. Today Apel and Habermas and others continue Kant’s ethical work on the basis of the American pragmatists: the a priori of the unlimited communication community. This attempt to secularize ethics and morality has certainly its problems. There is most of the entire motivation problem. Even if people know, what is good and bad, there is still the question, why they should do the good, when the bad seems so much more attractive, pleasurable, or useful in war or peace. While the critical theory of society and religion still remembers the theological foundation of morality, it is also open for an anthropologically grounded ethics for a secular world, into which religious values and norms can, nevertheless, be inverted or translated through the discourse among the expert cultures, and can thus be introduced into the communicative praxis of the life world, and even into the economic and political subsystems of the modern system of human condition and action system.

Modernization

We have noticed over the past 33 years of our Dubrovnik discourses, that the young people participate - with a few exception - fully in the global modernization or secularization process and that thus they have serious problems with the three Abrahamic religions and other world religions as well. They view religion more and more as something, which has been left behind by the historical process and progress, which however does not prevent them from tolerating it. This is true, no matter if the younger people hate religion, or if they long for it, or if they are indifferent toward it. In Eastern Europe we found that the departure from religion under socialism had been without resentment, which was often not the case in the West. But what is left in the East and the West today is a certain curiosity for religion: why the grandparents were still religious? A Baptist grandmother in upper Michigan may still have religious and moral opinions about premarital sex, abortion, negative artificial birth control, divorce, euthanasia, eugenics, stem cell research, evolution, war and peace, etc., which are very similar to those of the very conservative Pope Benedict XVI in Rome today, or the Taliban in Afghanistan, or the Shiites or the Sunnis in the Near East, or the Balkan, in Africa or in Asia, or the conservative Rabbis in Israel. But the daughter of this grandmother in upper Michigan may already have become ambiguous about these religious-moral problems and may have moved more from the religious to the secular side. The daughter of this daughter, who now sits in our university class rooms, may have a hard time even to understand the traditional values, norms and attitudes of her grandmother or her mother any longer, and rather allows herself to be informed in her daily thinking and behavior by modern, secular science. Slowly and more or less quietly the religious and metaphysical basis of modern civil society has been replaced by science and technology. Nothing in modern civil or socialist societies is justified any longer effectively by religious believes or by philosophical reason in the traditional sense, but rather by modern secular science and technology. That influences also the view of religion of. the younger generation. Some religions may still
preach against negative artificial birth control, but at the end of the day Jews, Christians and Muslims have the obligatory 2.1 % children, whom the economic system requires, no matter what the grandmother or mother may say. The believers simply ignore some teachings of their religion, and that even with a good conscience. How long can such a situation last without doing damage to religion and lead to further secularization? Daily the younger generation is confronted by the mass media and movies with secular insights, which are completely contrary to the religious believes and values, which they may have learned earlier on in family, and synagogue, church, or mosque. Catholic students come from Detroit to a secular university in other parts of Michigan and experience great difficulties if not with their faith then at least with some of their believes, which possibly can not be rescued from the impact of modern secular science: e.g. polygenesis, not to speak of evolution in general. They love their still religiously minded parents at home, but they can no longer share some of their religious-believes. and religiously grounded moral values. Even if in modern secular universities, in which theology has been dethroned as the queen of the sciences and even removed entirely, religion is still studied in a respectful and sympathetic way, this happens, nevertheless, in a secular, positivistic form, which can not grasp its deepest impulse: the longing for the totally Other than what is the case. Of course modern people are aware that something is missing. It is obviously not enough to know mathematics and the natural sciences in order to prevent the disasters of Auschwitz, Treblinka, Dresden, Hamburg, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Abu Ghraib, and Guantanamo Bay from happening again. To be sure a well educated person will not torture another human being or give the order to do so or obey the order to do so, even if it is given by the highest secular authority. But so-called educated people have de facto tortured other human beings until very recently. There is obviously a difference between being well trained and well educated. Finally there is the question, if a real education, which would prevent the torture of other human beings effectively, would not have to be rooted after all in the insatiable longing for the wholly Other than the horror and terror of nature and history continuing to be under the spell of what the fascists have called the aristocratic principle of nature: the inequality between the predator and the prey.

Reunion

As we developed the critical theory of religion in our Dubrovnik discourses, we were not only aware of the original traditional union of the sacred and the profane, and their modern disunion, but also looked forward to their possible post-modern reunion. We remembered, that the great idealists from Kant to Hegel, including poets like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and musicians like Ludwig van Beethoven, had an affirmative attitude toward Modernity and the modern separation of the religious and the secular. But they anticipated, that dialectical human reason would dialectically return to a reformed religious faith. After Hegel had described most adequately in his philosophy of religion the modern dissonance and antagonism between the religious and the secular, he arrived at a new reconciliation between reformed religious faith and secular dialectical reason. His whole philosophy of religion was devoted to this goal. At the same time Hegel was aware that this reconciliation was only partial, and that it was limited to philosophy, and that it would not help the common man in modern civil society to resolve the problem, since he could not have a demythologized faith and could not reach the highest levels of dialectical reason. After Goethe let in his master work Faust, an imitation of the Book of Job, his hero leave religion behind and devote himself to modern secular science, he brought him nevertheless back again to the sacred at the end of Volume II. But Goethe’s reconciliation remained limited to poetry and did not reach the masses in secular civil society. After Beethoven had worked hard to liberate music from the religious cult and to secularize it most powerfully, he wrote nevertheless his Missa Solemnis, and even believed it to be his best work. But Beethoven’s reconciliation of faith and knowledge remained limited to music, and did not reach the reality of antagonistic civil society, the secularization of which continued unhindered. The critical theorists of society became fully aware of the deficiency and failure of the idealistic attempts to resolve the modern problem of the antagonism between the religious and the secular in bourgeois or socialist society. Driven by their deep yearning for the totally Other and perfect justice and unconditional love,
the critical theorists of society could not be satisfied by the failure of idealism to return to theism or by an abstract atheism a la Bertolt Brecht taking its place, and therefore made the attempt at a historical-materialistic reconciliation of faith and knowledge in the form of Adorno’s and Benjamin’s negative, inverse cipher theology.

Inverse Theology

The critical theory of society contained an inverse theology, which inverted or translated theological semantic or semiotic materials and potentials, religious believes, values and norms, into the modern discourse of the expert cultures and into communicative action and politics: neighborly love into solidarity, the common good into the always more perfect union, etc. If it is true, that religion has made a contribution to the humanization of man particularly since what Jaspers called the axis time, and if it is true that the secularization process can really not be stopped any longer, then the dialectical religiology must see its main task in not only criticizing religion, but also in preserving, and elevating, and even fulfilling it in a new humanistic form. In late modernity, people feel, that there is something missing in their lives. Religion needs new translators! Religious people and enlighteners know that without Transcendence the Ego loses its sovereignty, and Ego - weakness sets in, and the Ego can no longer deal in conformity with the ethical demands of the Super-Ego with the negative stimuli from outside, from antagonistic society, as well as with the negative impulses from inside, from the libidinous and aggressive aspects of the Id. Necrophilia overwhelms biophilia. Some of the semantic materials and potentials of religion have to be rescued in a new humanistic form, if society should not move to post-modern alternative Future I – total administration in a technocratic, or a Hitlerian, or a Stalinistic form, and post-modern alternative Future II – total militarization, and continual conventional wars and civil wars, and finally the collision of the civilizations with Christian, or Islamic, or Jewish hydrogen bombs, but rather to post-modern alternative Future III - the reconciliation of the antagonisms prevailing now in civil society, particular that between the Abrahamic and other world religions on one hand and secular Modernity or Post-Modernity, on the other. The negative, inverse, cipher theology can help to stem the barbarism threatening Western civilization since the beginning of the 20th century.

The Dialectic in Enlightenment and in Religion

In the perspective of the dialectical religiology, there existed not only dialectic between the religious and the secular, but also one in the secular enlightenment. Enlightenment as the attempt to free people from their fears and to make them into masters of their fate did turn against itself into a positivistic form and could as such produce more fear among the people and make them even more dependent. There can come into existence pathology and criminality and defeatism of reason. Likewise there can be found dialectic in religion. The religion of love can turn against itself and become the source of Anti-Semitism, heresy trials, crusades, the Holy Inquisition, witch hunts, which cost the lives of 10 million women, or most furious religious wars, etc. The religion of truth can dialectically turn against itself and provide ideology, understood critically as false consciousness, the masking of racial, gender, national and class interests, or shortly as untruth. It allows slaveholders, feudal lords and owners of capitalist banks and industries to legitimate their private appropriation of the surplus value of slaves, serfs, and wage laborers.

Fundamentalism

The critical theorist of religion deducts from the threefold dialectics of the sacred and the profane three alternative futures of religion. First of all there can possibly come about a fundamentalist society, following e.g. the book Leviticus or the Sharia. Religious people are so frightened by the dialectic of secular
enlightenment that they flee back into religion, into fideism, into faith alone. While all three Abrahamic religions have their fundamentalists, fundamentalism as such is an entirely modern phenomenon. It is the result of the shock of the modern enlightenment movements. A fundamentalist is a religious believer, who has experienced the shock of modern enlightenment, and is thus afraid to lose his center, his balance, and his hold on life. He does not know any longer what to teach his children in terms of personal and social morality. Instead of giving up his first naiveté and go through the secular enlightenment all the way, and arrive at the other end at a second naiveté, which has concretely superseded. in itself the first naiveté as well as the modern critique of religion, the fundamentalist tries to escape backward to the fathers and to the sacred texts and their literal non-contextual interpretation, in order to find a metaphysical grounding for his life. There is, of course, a high price to be paid for such regression. The fundamentalist loses contact with the progressing history. He comes in conflict with modern civil or socialist society and constitutional state. The fundamentalist may interpret the use of modern secular medicine as distrust in God’s Providence, and may thus reject fideistically blood transfusion for his sick children, and may then have to be forced into treatment by the secular state. When fideism overwhelms rationalism, rationalism overwhelms fideism. Both extremes are likewise untrue

Secularism

According to the dialectical religiology, secular modern people may be so horrified by the dialectic of religion, that they aim at and push forward to a totally secular society and state: total secularism. The bourgeoisie initiated such entirely secular states, after the shocking experiences of natural and moral catastrophes: after the earthquake and tsunami at Lisbon in 1755, and after the religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries, which left most villages and towns of Europe in ruin. Voltaire and Rousseau constructed deism – the absent creator God, virtuous life, and immortality – in response to these catastrophes and in order to resolve the theodicy problem. Voltaire’s Candide laughed Leibniz and his elaborate positive theodicy out of court. The abuse of religion by the second Bush Administration in order to legitimate two wars, will only initiate new waves of secularization, and will let the atheists sing that they are not afraid of Yahweh, Jesus, or Allah, but that they are only afraid of what Jews, Christians and Muslims are doing in the name of their God. Of course deism was also created, in order to legitimate the revolutions of the third estate against the first and second one. The bourgeoisie started to create its own de-theologized ethics and morality in the form of its civil rights declarations. Up to the present, the Abrahamic religions, particularly Islam, have a hard time to accept the bourgeois human rights declarations, because they lack supposedly a theological foundation and legitimation, not to speak of the strength of motivation. There is of course also a high price to be paid by absolute secularism. Religion told people mythologically, where they came from, and most importantly where they were going. Thereby they gave meaning to people’s life and particularly to their suffering, and thus mitigated it. Thereby the religions also gave people an absolute theological foundation for their morality and ethics, and most of all a strong motivation. A totally secular society has a hard time to give people a meaning or moral foundation or motivation for living a good life. Without meaning boredom sets in, The pain of boredom is overcome by drugs. Drugs are more a demand then a supply problem. If in late capitalist society there were not such great demand for drugs, the supply would soon dry up, since it would not longer be profitable. The critical theory of religion can deduct from the great need for drugs the degree of boredom, and from it the depletion of the resource of meaning in consequence of the secularization and modernization process.

Reconciliation

In our international courses in Dubrovnik in the past three decades we have taken into consideration the possibility of post-modern alternative Future III – a reconciled society. In such a society a non-fundamentalist, reformed religious faith would newly be reconciled with a non-secularist, but rather reflective enlightenment.
The contradiction between the sacred and the profane, as well as in the secular enlightenment and in religion would be resolved not on the religious side, as the idealists tried to do, but rather on the secular side in humanistic form. In Dubrovnik secular scholars, who had reflected on the dialectic of enlightenment and religious scholars who had repented the dialectic of religion would meet each other in open discourse, which was not closed up dogmatically or fundamentalistically on the religious side, or positvistically and naturalistically on the secular side. They approached topics of the ongoing culture war: stem cell research, religious and secular terror, abortion, homosexuality, eugenics, euthanasia, separation of Church and state, etc. The task of the neutral secular state was to guarantee both religious and secular people equal entrance to the public sphere. In public discourse the best argument was to prevail. Both sides will try to come closer to each other e.g., in case of stem cell research. Religious and secular people are interested in finding cures for diseases like cancer or Alzheimer’s. Both sides can agree, that the human embryo is different from even the chimpanzee embryo. But there remains still disagreement in that for the religious people inter subjective presupposes subjectivity, and for secular people subjectivity presupposes inter subjective, Thus for the religious people the human embryo is a person with all its rights already before birth and even since conception, while for the secular people the human embryo becomes an ego, which differentiates itself from id and super-ego only after birth through interaction with mother, father, doctors, nurses, siblings, etc., and only then becomes the carrier of human and civil rights. While for the time being, religious and secular people may have to agree sometimes to disagree, it must not be forgotten that not only science but also religion is an open human project, and that both change from one paradigm to the other, and that therefore in the future an agreement may become possible.

General Orientation

We hope very much, that those few concretizing suggestions may give you some general orientation for your own preparatory work for our international course on The Future of Religion: The Abrahamic Religions and the Secular Modernity. You can make your own comments and objections to those suggestions and to this general orientation, when we come together in Dubrovnik in the last week of April 2010. We hope very much, that you shall be able and willing to come to our discourse, and that you shall, if possible, present a paper, or papers, concerning aspects of our general theme, unfolded in the above suggestions and orientation, or not. The general theme is broad and gives you much freedom to adjust your paper to it. If you have a hard time to connect your paper to our general theme, we shall do that for and with you in our discourse. Please, let me know as soon as possible, if you shall join us in Dubrovnik, and if you like to give a paper during the last week of April available to us in the IUC Building? Tell me also, if you desire to give your paper at a specific day and hour, and how much time you would like to have. I shall do what I can, to give you as much time as possible.

I am with all my best wishes for you and for your dear family, and for your good work, your

Rudolf J. Siebert
Professor of Religion and Society
IUC Course Director
Director of the WMU Center for Humanistic Future Studies

Professor Siebert and his colleagues will conduct a course, entitled Future of Religion: The Abrahamic Religions and the Secular Modernity, at the Inter - University Centre, Dubrovnik, from April 26 - 30, 2010. You are very much invited!

If you would like to read the Call for Papers, please visit
http://www.rudolfjsiebert.org/web_publications/Dubrovnik-34.pdf
APPLICATION FORM FOR HESP/OSI BUDAPEST SCHOLARSHIPS

The purpose of the HESP scholarship grants is to help the academic development and improve teaching skills for young scholars from selected former communist countries. Scholarships are available only for selected courses in the field of humanities and social sciences.

Eligibility Criteria: The applicants must be

• graduate (primarily Ph.D.) students or young faculty members;
• studying or teaching in the field of social sciences and humanities;
• under 40 years of age; and
• nationals and permanent residents of one of the following countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Republic of Georgia, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine.

Course

Surname Mr./Ms.

First and other names

Date of birth

Citizenship

Country of residence (permanent / temporary –please indicate both)

Field of study (in humanities/social sciences)

Degree(s)/ Institution
Current academic position / Institution (Students enrolled in a Masters or Ph.D. program should state so. Young faculty members should also state courses taught at home institution)

Address for correspondence

Telephone &Fax

E-mail

Please indicate if you had been HESP grantee in earlier years or in the current year. Yes/no
If yes, when?

The HESP/OSI Scholarships may not be used to cover the 40 EUR fees, which each participant must pay.

**Please enclose:**
1. a short CV
2. **Statement of purpose** (max. 1 page describing the reasons for participating in the course and requesting financial support).

Scholarships will cover expenses, which occur in Dubrovnik (accommodation and meals) only.
There are a very limited number of partial travel grants available for participants coming from the following countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kosovo, Moldova, Republic of Georgia, Russia and Ukraine.

**Date:**

**Signature:**

Applications should reach the IUC Secretariat at least one month before the start of the course. Incomplete or late applications will not be accepted.

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