

EXPLORATIONS AND RESPONSES

WHERE DIFFERENCE MATTERS: SOCIAL ETHICS IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD¹

The global changes of the last quarter of a century, the impact of which we are just starting to realize, have been truly stunning. If we were to beam ourselves back to the 1980's it would feel like going back to another age. Globalization processes based on what has been called the Third Technical Revolution (Internet, etc.) have fundamentally changed our lives, as well as those of people worldwide, and continue to do so at an amazing speed. This constitutes an immense challenge for the whole of humanity and, thus, for each and every one of us. Globalization as *the* sign of the times thereby is more than a technical process to be managed by technical means. It is first of all a process of growing global interconnectedness and interactions between and among humans that has to be guided by human thinking and human engagement so as to become compatible with a truly humane life, with human dignity and human aspirations worldwide. This requires intensive ethical reflections so as to reach a better understanding with regard to the actions as well as the institutions needed to further humanization processes in the contemporary world.

1. What Is Ethics? Religious and Immanent Humanism

If one asks this question of those who are not experts, one will get rather different answers. For many it will seem like a topic for university specialists in ivory towers. Others will immediately voice their doubts that politics and economics—as they perceive them—have anything to do with ethics. Religious people of all shades tend to see the contemporary world as being in outright moral decline, whereas others, mostly secular-minded, consider it to be in an inherent evolutionary process that will produce good results by itself. None of these positions hits the mark. Ethics as the reflection on human action certainly is not something only for specialists. It is the very stuff of our social existence. As newspapers show daily, we evaluate the actions of business leaders and politicians according to ethical standards, because humans are free agents by their nature. They have the ability and therefore the responsibility to discern what is right and what is wrong in the many complex situations with which they are confronted every day, and they have to act on these insights in the ever-changing circumstances of their lives. It is this myriad of responsible or irresponsible choices—past and present—that shape our world.

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Ethics can be defined as the reflection about rules and norms, virtues and role models that give orientation to human decisions. The supreme aim of moral action thereby is to lead a good and decent life individually as well as in community. Social ethics, more specifically, is concerned with laws and institutions (such as basic rights, democratic procedures, and market and ecological regulations) created by human ingenuity so as to regulate social interactions on a permanent basis, nationally as well as globally. It thus reflects primarily not on the action of individuals but on institutions with regard to their being just or unjust. If one looks at it from this angle, ethics is indeed the hidden energy or the vital nervous system of the world. Ultimately, it is what people do or do not do that determines the quality of the lives we lead and will lead in the future.

At a closer look, therefore, both religious pessimists and secular optimists get it wrong. There is no reason for pessimism. Billions of people all over the world act decently—caring for their families, working hard on constructive jobs, helping others in their communities and beyond, every day. It is truly impressive how many people, religious and nonreligious, invest time and money to work for ethical causes, many of which nobody would have thought of one or two generations ago: the improvement of women's status in society, the reduction of poverty, the improvement of human-rights standards, the ecologically sound use of natural resources, and many others. The surge of a global civil society with its internationally interlinked institutions is one of the hope-giving signs of our time. It would, however, be presumptuous to think that nothing can go wrong because world development is set on a determined path toward ever greater perfection and progress. Rather, it will be the decisions humans take that will make a difference. We are thus called to influence life on earth for the better in all areas where we carry responsibility. If many people act this way in accordance with ethical standards in their personal and professional lives, they contribute to the flourishing of their lives and to that of their communities.

Jewish as well as Christian traditions concur in this ethic-centered view that indeed it is responsible or irresponsible actions that ultimately lead to blessing or disaster for individuals as well as for whole societies. This is the message of the prophets, in the line of which Jesus the Christ stands. Similar positions are *mutatis mutandis* to be found in other religious and philosophical traditions, particularly in antique Greek ethics, which exerted a powerful influence on the Western way of thinking about the good and the just.

The basic question of ethics—of what is good for humans, what is just and decent—can never be answered *tout simple*. This is even more so in the complex world in which we live. Adequate answers and solutions require profound ethical reasoning, critical thinking, wide-ranging experience, and methodological analysis based on the social sciences. Sociology, economics, political science, jurisprudence, and related sciences are indispensable for a viable ethical discourse. It is worth noting that, although culturalist tendencies that negate a common human nature are sprouting, all these sciences are based on a universalist worldview. In other words, what humans are and therefore also what is good for them are considered to be basically the same all over the globe. The main reason for this is that material as well as immaterial needs of people are similar: Every person needs not only food, clothes, shelter, and basic health care to survive but also social life, education,

beauty, and play in order to live a truly human life. Every person also needs some security in his or her social life, which depends on the moral behavior of others as well as protection through law by state authorities. Cultural differences exist. They are, however, by far outweighed by similarities. There is no culture that condones manslaughter, considers false testimony to be good, or praises theft. In every culture kindness, generosity, and goodness are held in high esteem. Cultural differences are thus less important than the common ground that exists between and among different cultures.²

The ethical rules, norms, and virtues that constitute the foundations of social life can be legitimized on either religious or immanent humanistic grounds. As the Pastoral Constitution of the Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, states: "According to the almost unanimous opinion of believers and unbelievers alike, all things on earth should be related to [the human being] as their center and crown" (GS, no. 12).³ This is indeed today's global situation, which is characterized by ethical reflections and moral motivations based on both secular and religious belief systems that exist side-by-side. In many countries religious codes are thereby growing in importance for private lives as well as for the public sphere. There are, however, also many nonbelievers who act according to the ethics of an immanent humanism. More important, national as well as international legal standards are legitimized on a secular rather than a religious basis as the only way to guarantee non-discrimination of all religious communities and beliefs.

The complex interaction between secular and religious ethics requires respectful and serious intercultural and interreligious dialogues at many levels on what is good and just in today's globalized world. Such dialogues also help to ground and enrich our ethical universe, since nobody knows everything—so also in ethics. This fundamental insight, however, must not undermine the basic assumption that all humans, to whichever religion or culture they belong, have common needs, are vulnerable to the same plights, and share the same joys. In other words, what divides them is much less than what unites them. This also allows for common visions of what it means to lead a good and decent human life in justice and peace.⁴

II. The Present Age as a Kairos for Ethics

Of the many new developments in this "runaway world," as British sociologist Anthony Giddens called it,⁵ three seem of paramount importance, constituting a

²One prominent voice for a universalist ethics (based on Aristotle) is that of the American philosopher Martha Nussbaum; see her latest book: Martha Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011); and Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, eds., *The Quality of Life* (Oxford, U.K.: Clarendon Press; Oxford, U.K., and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

³Available at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat_ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

⁴For more detail, see Ingeborg Gabriel, "Weltethos in Bewegung: Zwischen religiöser und säkularer Ethik," in Erwin Bader, ed., *Weltethos und Globalisierung* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2008), pp. 149–163.

⁵Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalisation Is Reshaping Our Lives* (London: Profile Books, 1999; New York: Routledge, 2003).

watershed in world development. In addition to globalization, these are pluralism and the reappearance of religion in the public square.

Allow me to share a personal reminiscence at this point. In 1968–69 I was an exchange student with the American Field Service in Long Beach, California. At the end of this year, which I was able to spend with a wonderful American family, we made a bus trip across the United States, at the end of which we (about 3,000 young people from all over the world) were invited to a reception held by then-President Richard Nixon on the lawn of the White House. It was, incidentally, the day on which the first human stepped on the moon. This very positive personal experience with globalization strongly influenced my future life.

Today many young people all over the globe have possibilities to communicate with each other so as to gain firsthand knowledge about one another. Thus, to give but one example, we have been organizing a Christian-Muslim Summer School in an Austrian Benedictine monastery for about fifty students from around the world who spend three weeks studying and communicating with each other. What is most impressive is the determination of these young people to make a difference in the life of their communities, to improve relationships between different religions and cultures, and to further peace.⁶

The amazing and far-reaching innovations in the field of communications technology that make such events and their follow-up possible conquered the world only in the late 1980's (Internet *et al.*), creating a degree of global integration previously unknown in history. Global transformations of an unprecedented magnitude have since changed all areas of life—not only economically, but even more culturally. Everywhere around the globe people learn about other regions and get new ideas through the media. All this leads to a rethinking of traditional beliefs and the adoption of new worldviews as the basis for making new choices. One example of this is women's movements—religious and nonreligious—sprouting worldwide to further the empowerment of women, their equal rights, and their possibilities to participate fully in the life of their communities.

Of course, these transformations often meet fierce resistance and inspire religiously legitimated, fundamentalist counter-movements, thereby creating new social rifts and conflicts. The "clash of civilizations" that Samuel Huntington predicted in the early 1990's is not taking place.⁷ There is, however, what may be called a "clash within civilizations" as a reaction of societies' being confronted with Western modernity, both its advantages and its disadvantages. The transfer of law and cultural goods (such as human rights, democracy, women's emancipation, and moral convictions) thereby proves to be more controversial than that of technological and material commodities. However, rifts concerning moral issues also exist within Western societies. Here and there, cultural traditions—often intricately intertwined with religious beliefs and cultural changes—affect the deepest affiliation of human beings, religion. This asks for a theological and ethical reinterpretation of religious beliefs and worldviews so as to create a viable synthesis of the old and the

⁶Vienna Christian-Muslim Summer University (VICISU); for further information, see www.vicisu.com.

⁷Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

new,⁸ a process that takes time as well as favorable academic and political conditions, one of the problems being that the global changes have often been too fast and too vast to be properly accommodated and internalized. This holds true even for the West, where modernization already started two centuries ago. It constitutes an even greater strain for non-Western societies, where it is a much more recent phenomenon. Today's world may thus be seen as an immense laboratory where experiments with new forms of living together nationally and internationally take place at a large scale. This calls for intensive reflection on a (global) ethic. The many attempts to formulate such an ethic are a vivid expression of this need.⁹

A second trend is growing ethnic and religious pluralism because of migration as well as a loosening of the ties of tradition. Societies all over the world are coming to resemble more and more the multiethnic and multireligious U.S. and other immigration countries than the largely homogeneous lands of some decades ago. This is the case both in Europe and in other parts of the world. It poses fundamental questions such as: On which values are the nascent pluralistic multiethnic and multireligious societies to be based so that a majority of the citizens can identify with them? How can social cohesion be strengthened and social strife resulting from cultural differences be avoided? How may social discrimination of those not belonging to the majority be reduced? In other words: How can people of different ethnic origins, languages, races, and religions live together and get along reasonably well? Religious communities do have to contribute to giving answers to these questions.

A third important trend to be mentioned here is the return of religions to the public square, nationally as well as globally. During the past decades religious movements have increasingly influenced world politics both for better and for worse. To name but two examples: The Polish Catholic movement *Solidarnosc*, by resisting the Communist Party, made a decisive contribution to the downfall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Iranian revolution, which happened at about the same time, led to the establishment of a clerical Shiite theocracy and a new, troubling form of political Islam.¹⁰ This religious renaissance—Peter Berger called it “desecularization”¹¹—is thus a rather multifaceted phenomenon that can have positive as well as negative effects. It may also lead to a cross-fertilization of religions.

Religious movements have become political even in far-off places like Myanmar (Burma). Buddhist monks there led the protests against an oppressive military regime in 2007 and supported an upheaval for democracy that bore fruit some years later after immense sacrifices. In Middle Eastern countries the struggle for new

⁸On the concept of cultures' reinterpreting themselves, see Michael Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), which the author has developed further in his work.

⁹See Leonard Swidler, “Toward a Universal Declaration of a Global Ethic,” *J.E.S.* 42 (Summer, 2007): 337–350; idem, *For All Life—Toward a Universal Declaration of a Global Ethic: An Interreligious Dialogue* (Ashland, OR: White Cloud Press, 1999); as well as Hans Küng, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹⁰See José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); and idem, “Public Religions Revisited,” in Hent de Vries, ed., *Religion: Beyond a Concept* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), pp. 101–119.

¹¹Peter L. Berger, ed., *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999).

constitutions pits those who want to have Islamic principles inscribed in them against those who opt for a more secular state. All these examples show that the religious renaissance is politically rather ambivalent and that it inspires movements toward greater liberty and emancipation, justice and tolerance, but it also supports fundamentalist regimes that are ready to use violence on a large scale. Often, both happen simultaneously in the same society and state, as well as in the same creed. Movements in either direction are then fighting on both sides of the fence—for freedom, justice, and tolerance, or against these fundamental values.

Globalization, pluralism, and a religious revival as major “signs of the times” (as Vatican II called them) are to be seen not only from an empirical but also from an ethical and theological point of view. How far do they lead to peace and justice and further the unity of humanity, therefore corresponding with the will of God for humankind?

The overall effects of the transformations taking place globally cannot be foreseen today. It is, however, evident that religions—at the forefront, Christianity, which counts the largest number of believers worldwide (every third human being a Christian)—carry a huge responsibility in this process. As Vatican II stated, it is the task of the Catholic Church in this world to further unity and peace among all peoples (GS, no. 92), becoming a sacrament of unity for this world (GS, no. 42, citing the Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, no. 1).¹² The Church should do this together with all other Christians, as well as with believers from other religions and immanent humanists, so as to “manage” the process of globalization in a way that facilitates as much as possible the “personalization” of every human being—this being the ultimate aim of world development (compare GS, no. 6).

This also constitutes one of the great tasks of Christian ecumenism. The present *kairos* thereby calls Christians to put aside their dogmatic differences in order to do justice to their mission of spreading the “good news” and to use their spiritual and intellectual capacities together so as to work toward more humane solutions wherever justice and peace need to be promoted in this age. This will prove that their faith is alive, a faith that proclaims God’s love, peace, and justice for all. It also constitutes one of the preeminent ways toward Christian unity (see *Unitatis redintegratio*, no. 7).¹³

III. Where Difference Matters: Fundamental Ethical Challenges of Today’s World

The present world situation confronts us with a plethora of ethical questions of an unprecedented magnitude. This is—so to speak—the price for living in interesting times. To treat them all would by far exceed the range of this presentation. I will, however, try to map out some of the challenges lying before us. As Director of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Austrian Bishops’ Conference, I will do this under the headings of justice and peace, adding the “conservation of creation” or ecology as a third major concern of this time.

¹²Available at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

¹³Available at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html.

Justice: The word of the prophet Isaiah, "Peace is the work of justice" (Is. 32:17), is as valid as ever today, justice being at the very foundation of all human societies. The biblical notion of justice thereby is much wider in meaning than it is in modern languages. God's justice and, correspondingly, human justice refer to the just application of law, as well as to social justice, and they come close to what we call love and mercy, particularly for those who are in distress. In our highly interconnected globalized world, these questions of justice have become global. Therefore, we must look not only at the national but also at the global common good, which has been a central topic of Catholic social thought since the early 1960's. Today global justice is no longer a demand of lofty idealists but is the only realistic perspective for the world as a whole, since domestic politics cannot be separated from world politics. This is the case for small as well as for big states that are no longer able to shape global dynamics alone. September 11, 2001, and its aftermath have made this terribly clear. This is, however, often overlooked in a public discourse centered on domestic issues. It is obvious that this parochialism is outdated in a world where no person or nation is any longer an island.

Therefore, we need to think in terms of global legality as well as global solidarity, taking seriously the basic Christian creed that all humans have been created equal and have been endowed by their Creator with the same dignity and thus also have the same rights. This concept of human dignity and human rights that is enshrined in the American and other constitutions is truly revolutionary and has to be spelled out anew in every time. It is the backbone of a global international order that includes civil rights and liberties as well as social rights. If humans worldwide have the same dignity, they also have the same right to pursue happiness and live under social conditions that make such a pursuit possible.

There are some culturally formed differences in how justice is perceived in concrete situations, but as mentioned before there is a large, overlapping consensus in what people aspire to all over the globe. Nobody wants to go hungry while others indulge in luxury; nobody wants to be sick and not have the means to call a physician; nobody wants to be suppressed or trampled on. Social and legal systems everywhere are built on elaborate notions of justice to realize the common good. In today's world all these ideas on justice come into contact with each other and make people ask new questions. Public discourses are taking place all over the globe about what is just, in which human rights that were generated in the West as a fruit of the Enlightenment play an important role. Religious liberty, freedom of speech, and other civil as well as social rights are thereby being interpreted and reinterpreted so as to reconcile them with ancient religious and cultural concepts of justice. Civil and social rights are thereby seen as having equal importance.

The lack of political or religious freedom impedes human dignity, but so do hunger and poverty, the eradication of which must be a priority, since social justice constitutes the basis for a decent individual life as well as for a well-ordered society.¹⁴ It is also fundamental for sound economic development, as recent studies show. Too much inequality harms individuals as well as the society and the econo-

¹⁴See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971); and Avishai Margalit, *The Decent Society*, tr. Naomi Goldblum (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

my as a whole.¹⁵ It ultimately damages social cohesion and contradicts the liberal creed that everybody is able to develop his or her abilities as a human being. Thus, the common good today has become global, asking for a global consensus on fundamental values concerning rights and duties. This means that in our individual decisions we also have to take into account the well-being of all other human beings worldwide, and it requires institutions and authorities that do this on a global scale.¹⁶ What difference is there—St. Augustine asked in a famous dialogue in his *Civitas Dei* between a pirate and Alexander the Great—between bands of robbers and empires, if the latter do not practice justice?¹⁷

Peace: Peace is the work of justice, but justice is also the result of peace. Both wars between nations and civil wars gravely violate justice and always hurt the weak, the women, the children, and the elderly the most. The number of civil wars has increased steadily during past decades mainly because of ethnic and religious disputes. Social changes and tensions often fuel these conflicts. The question of how the international community should react in cases of grave national violence, human-rights violations, and ultimately genocide is a burning ethical issue.

Conflict prevention is, of course, much better than conflict resolution. One of the important means toward this end is dialogue, particularly if identity conflicts are endangering peace. Pluralism has always been a challenge. In a globalized world this challenge is particularly urgent so as to find the right balance between cultural and religious identities and an overarching worldwide communality. Therefore, dialogues in various fields and by various actors are ever more important as a peaceful and reasonable way to further understanding. Infantile triumphalism and confessional fundamentalism have become suicidal and are to be replaced by respect of the other—and the insight that this respect is a human, as well as religious, duty. It was this global vision of Vatican II that initiated a change from a hermeneutics of exclusion to a hermeneutics of recognition with regard to other Christians, nonbelievers as well as believers of other religions, which was decisive for the Catholic Church.¹⁸

In this context a frequently asked question is what to do with those who refuse dialogue or who use it for political means. The fact that such people exist is all too obvious, but it is not an argument against dialogue. Of course, hard-core fundamentalists of all shades will not give up their ideology. Most people all over the world, however, are not fanatics but want a good and decent life without violence and with a fair amount of social justice for themselves and for their children. It is with these normal people that cooperation in an “Alliance of the Moderate” is possible.

¹⁵See, among others, Joseph Stiglitz, *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2012); and “True Progressivism,” *The Economist* 405 (October 13, 2012): 14.

¹⁶Ingeborg Gabriel and Ludwig Schwarz, eds., *Weltordnungspolitik in der Krise: Perspektiven internationaler Gerechtigkeit* (Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 2011).

¹⁷Aurelius Augustinus, *Civitas Dei (The City of God)*, chap. 4/4.

¹⁸See Ingeborg Gabriel, “Christliche Sozialethik in der Moderne: Der kaum rezipierte Ansatz von Gaudium et spes,” in Jan-Heiner Tück, ed., *Erinnerung an die Zukunft: Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil* (Freiburg: Herder, 2012), pp. 537–553, wherein I try to show that one of the basic intentions of Vatican II was to promote a “hermeneutics of recognition.”

This deeply humane process of cooperation should be pursued in as many different ways as possible, without blinders or ideological fixations. It aims at a better understanding of the other, as well as a consensus on a global humanitarian ethos—a new grammar of the humane—which is to be spelled out in the different fields of our highly complex global world, in ecology, politics, economics, business, and culture in order to further peace.

Conservation of Creation: The limits of natural resources for an ever-growing world population with ever-growing material needs and the degradation of the natural environment—most important, climate change—have become major challenges with regard to justice as well as peace. As much as a better life for many is welcome, the resource-intensive Western lifestyle cannot be imitated by the present, and even less the future, world population, which is forecast to reach 9–11,000,000,000 by 2050. Ecological concerns have to be at the top of the agenda for promoting justice, because the negative effects of natural degradation most severely hit those who have profited the least from better living conditions during the past decades. A scaling down in the use of natural resources by individuals as well as better regulations at the national and international level, particularly for carbon dioxide emissions, are urgently needed to improve standards of intergenerational and intragenerational justice. For Christians deeper awareness of the beauty of nature, gratefulness toward its Creator, and a more relaxed view with regard to material goods may help to enhance the motivation toward the paradigmatic change that is so urgently needed, thereby contributing decisively toward both peace and justice.

IV. Final Remarks

I am a Catholic theologian, so I will close with two observations—one on Catholicism and one on ecumenism.

Vatican II started fifty years ago. Hence, 2012 has been a time of reflection on its teachings, particularly on the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, whose initial words spell out the essence of any global Christian ethos, “*Gaudium et spes, luctus et angor*”: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men [and women] of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ” (GS, no. 1). In what follows, it described the eminent chances and challenges and the dilemmas and dangers of the present age. Some of these processes have accelerated, and some new themes (such as the ecological question) have to be added. Still, this overview of the modern situation in all its ambivalence is still valid and worth reading fifty years later. It is also to be seen as a call to action. History is an open process, with both progress and regress possible. Though as finite beings we will not be able to create a perfect world, if we live up to our responsibilities the best we can, each one of us in his or her field, there is hope for a better world. This requires both a clear analysis and bold action at many levels of society by each of its multifarious actors: in civil society, in religious communities, in business, or in state administrations. Despite our limitations, we are not blind agents driven by fate or systems; therefore, these actions will bear fruit.

I close with an ecumenical vision. Imagine that all of the 2,200,000,000 Christians worldwide—or at least a majority of them—decide to follow Jesus, thinking and acting according to the moral precepts of the gospel; that they seriously reflect on how to give every human being on earth the respect owed to him or her, whether rich or poor, healthy or sick, black or white, smart or ignorant; that they do whatever is within their power to assist those lacking material and immaterial goods; that they avoid conflicts, personal as well as political, and to mitigate those that exist, working toward reconciliation; that these 2,200,000,000 Christians—or at least a good part of them—consider themselves first and foremost Christians and only then Catholics, Protestants, or Orthodox, ready to discover the riches of their diversities; and that they consider it their first responsibility to work for the national and global common good so that this united church may truly become a “seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race” (*Lumen gentium*, no. 9).

Such a change of mind—in Greek, *metanoia*—is unlikely to occur overnight, but Christians should keep this vision in their minds and hearts. The divisions among them have historical and theological reasons. They nevertheless remain a scandal, not least because they hamper their bearing witness, above all in deeds. Since any action must be guided by reflection particularly in this complex world of modernity, the book presented today (for the production of which I give my heartfelt thanks to several people, particularly to Professor Leonard Swidler, Nancy Krody, and Rebecca Mays) is to be a small mosaic stone and humble contribution to this big task. It is to stimulate discourse on how to humanize this new, exciting world that is full of hope but also threatened with depression, paving the way for a “new heaven and a new earth in which justice reigns” (2 Pet. 3:13).

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