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2001

# Compassion as a Global Programme for Christianity

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## Recommended Citation

Haker, H. "Compassion as a Global Programme for Christianity." *Concilium* 4, 2001.

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## II. Achieving Universal Values: Theological Reflections

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### Compassion as a Global Programme for Christianity

HILLE HAKER

#### Introduction: dangerous memory

'Compassion as a global programme for Christianity?'' That sounds provocative, and not only for the global ethic programme, which insists on a minimal consensus on values, criteria and basic attitudes that transcends cultures.<sup>2</sup> It sounds even more provocative for the current political tendency at the beginning of the twenty-first century – a tendency which Johann Baptist Metz has cuttingly labelled 'cultural amnesia'.

Compassion as a global programme for Christianity as Metz understands it claims to be a universal programme at least for the religions, but in fact for humanity generally. So there is no retreat into the particular niche of the religious confession, which the liberalistic, compliant, amnetic culture of the religions all too readily points to. There is no communitarian relativistic programme which hurts no one and therefore can change nothing. To this degree Metz sees himself linked to his counterpart within theology, the *global ethic programme*. But unlike Küng's *catalogue of values and responsibilities*, compassion cannot even build on a minimal ethical consensus which makes individual virtues a responsibility, in so doing possibly undermining the notion of freedom and stamping the memory of the sufferers on all too tiny coins.<sup>3</sup>

In view of the globalization which goes with a 'constitutional pluralism', the question arises, as Metz puts it, 'how a theology "with the face of the

world" . . . goes on the offensive against this pluralism without evading the questions of truth and authority and without abandoning the conviction that Christianity also has something to say to all human beings precisely because of this constitutional pluralism'.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, theology understood in universalistic terms must stand in the tradition of a 'reflective monotheism', a monotheism which understands 'God's passion as compassion', in other words 'as the compassion springing from God's passion, as a participatory perception of the suffering of the other, as active remembrance of the suffering of the other'.<sup>5</sup> This monotheism, with its concept of the unity of the love of God and neighbour, is in some sense a rival to a mysticism of suffering which is apolitical in the sense that it dissolves the relationship of mysticism and morality in favour of mysticism.

Thought of as a political programme, compassion is the first element of a peace policy which allows the suffering of the other, the partner in the conflict, to stand alongside one's own suffering, which perceives it and integrates it into historical memory. Secondly, the notion of compassion can inspire a new politics of recognition, in so far as it sets the asymmetrical recognition of treaty partners alongside the symmetrical recognition. According to Metz this does not imply any emphatic concept of politics, but it does imply the necessary association of morality and politics. But thirdly, compassion may set cultural and political memory over against cultural amnesia, a memory which 'cries out for justice' and is opposed to political and cultural forgetfulness.

The universalism of compassion is based on the universality of suffering. Rightly understood, reason subjects itself to the 'authority of the sufferers', whose universalistic 'claim to validity' must be perceived and acknowledged. Reason, ethics and theology or the church, along with religions and cultures, cannot ignore this claim to the perception of the suffering of sufferers and the emotional and political recognition of their right – they can only submit to it. But is not the aim here the same as that of the 'consensus programme' in the global ethic? No, says Metz, for 'a global ethic is not a consensus product. Anyone who wants to derive this global ethic from assent alone forgets that the consensus, the assent, of all can be the consequence of a universal claim but not its basis and criterion'.<sup>6</sup>

Compassion is empathy, but also God's gracious concern for human beings and that of human beings for one another. Compassion is not a sophisticated concept of the Christian tradition but carries within itself a 'dangerous memory' if one investigates its semantic history more closely. For compassion is also remembrance of God's care in the exodus experience, belief in the resurrection of Christ and the hope for redemption. Thought of

in exclusively individualistic terms, the political dynamite of Christian faith would turn into bourgeois contentment or allow itself to be reduced to a postmodern future performance. With the memory of God's mercy the notion of compassion at the same time provokes the only appropriate human answer to human suffering.<sup>7</sup> Compassion is compassion towards the sufferers and participation in their suffering and as such is a central element of love of neighbour. Metz is concerned with this ethical dimension, and that will be my concern here.

## I. The theology of Johann Baptist Metz

### 1. *Anamnestic reason*

Metz's main attention is focussed on the appropriateness of talk of God, which can be thought of legitimately only in connection with talk and action of and with human beings. I want simply to mention four key theological terms which underlie the programme of compassion.

First of all comes the key term *anamnestic reason*. It is more than the complement to a 'pure' reason which is at core ahistorical. Anamnestic reason is also not only, as Habermas thinks, the 'invasion of philosophy (or theology) by historical thought'.<sup>8</sup> It is rather that 'dangerous memory' which in the Hebrew *zkr* combines memory with ethical impulse: 'Israel, remember your God who brought you up out of Egypt – remember your God who thought of you in Egypt.' Metz's concept of anamnestic reason, which he owes first of all to Walter Benjamin, is equally an ethical concept, and thus also at the same time a prophetic-political concept. With it Metz takes the field against 'cultural amnesia', against the forgetting of the specific memory which today still in Germany is above all memory of the victims and perpetrators of Auschwitz, and he takes the field against forgetting the memory itself, which has found a place deep in our culture.

Not only Judaism, but Christianity, too, is established on this principle of memory – the farewell discourses in the Gospel of John and the memorial meal itself point a clear way here. Anamnestic reason makes itself concrete in the memory of God in so far as this also expresses the memory of human suffering. 'To speak of this God means to express the suffering of others and to lament responsibility neglected and solidarity refused.'<sup>9</sup> Moreover it becomes concrete in the memory of Christ as the *memoria passionis* [the memory of his suffering]. We could say that compassion is an ethical implication of the anamnestic conception of reason understood theologically – compassion, allowing oneself to be affected by the suffering of others, makes

the memory dangerous because and in that it looks the sufferers themselves in the eyes. As Psalm 22 also says of God: 'He does not hide his face from him, he has heard his cry.'<sup>10</sup> A further aspect seems to me important in the emphasis on a theology of memory, but now understood in the narrower sense of memory: memory is the mode of narrative, as is emphasized by all theories of narrative since Aristotle's *Poetics*. But now narrative is the medium of religious experience, remote from any romantic immediacy of the experience of God, which moreover here loses its identity as being in principle other. Rather, religious experience includes the reflective memory of the exodus narrative, the judgment, the repentance, the hope for redemption after the resurrection narrative, in short the memory of the history of God's covenant with his people and finally with all peoples, meant in the two senses of the word. So in respect of religious experiences, too, in the sense of the Jewish-Christian religion it is dangerous memory.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. *Negative universalism*

The second key term that I want to mention is *negative universalism*, as the opposite to a universalism of domination. A universalism of domination at least implicitly imposes its own values on all possible cultures, but in contrast to imperialism does not have recourse to power and strength but to the 'nature' of human beings or anthropological assumptions. Like Küng, Metz too is sceptical here: he takes the critique of various theoreticians of culture seriously, but on the basis of anamnestic reason formulates the universality of suffering as a universal evil as the starting point of ethical and cultural understanding. This divided negative as a universal basis for understanding between cultures, as opposed to a minimal consensus of positive values, produces a strong motivation for universal responsibility and, Metz thinks, an obedience which precedes any moral foundation:

Our 'neighbour' and thus partner in our responsibility is never just the one whom we regard and allow as such. The sphere of responsibility, the extent of this responsibility, is in principle unlimited. The criterion for its measure and extent is and remains the suffering of others, like the man who fell among robbers in Jesus' story, whom the priest and levite pass by 'out of higher interests'.<sup>12</sup>

For Jon Sobrino, the most massive form of suffering today is suffering from poverty, violence and structural injustice which slowly and violently leads to death. According to Metz, in language taken from Nelly Sachs, this

poverty, but also reflection on Auschwitz, is a 'landscape of screams', and this experience is the experience underlying compassion.<sup>13</sup>

But theology goes beyond the question of appropriate action in the face of the universality of suffering and thus the ethical question of how to deal with suffering. Theodicy raises the question of God – it begs for deliverance as Israel begs for deliverance, as Jesus calls on his God, and as all sufferers literally beg for deliverance somewhere. Theodicy is the perception of the suffering of others, the cry of theology for deliverance, a lament which does not know whether it will be heard, how it can ever be heard. And thus, as Ottmar Fuchs rightly says, it also becomes complaint against God, accusation. Care is one side of compassion as a response to the despair of sufferers. But the compassionate cry for justice is the other.

### 3. *Limited time and orthopraxy*

In view of this radicalization of the question of God as a question *to* God, my third key term is that according to Metz theology is always also eschatology, with a strong apocalyptic colouring. As Walter Benjamin has it, it is the expectation of the messianic time. Eschatological theology, as *theology of the 'limited time'*, to use Metz's words, expects, more impatiently than patiently in view of the suffering of specific individuals, a break in history, a break between the present and history which is a history of injustice and suffering.<sup>14</sup>

The fourth key term takes me back to the starting point, anamnestic reason. According to Metz, the justification of faith does not take place by means of a theoretical proof of God but is the *orthopraxy* [right action] which is the foundation of faith. Here again Metz knows that he is at one with the theology of liberation:

In the face of a suffering world, one's primary reaction is that of a compassion intent on eliminating such suffering. Like any other human and Christian activity, theology participates in this primary reaction, though in its own specific way. Thus theology will become an *intellectus amoris*, which will include the historical specifications that love assumes when confronted with a suffering people (love as justice) . . . In contemporary terminology, compassion becomes liberation. I am thus affirming that there is something ultimate, pre-theological and even pre-religious in such compassion, just as there is in the suffering of today's world.<sup>15</sup>

Along the lines which govern liberation theology, orthopraxy in the sense

of a theology of memory of the suffering of others means the quest for justice, a justice which is grounded in compassion. This specific compassion is not a compassion from above, but means the literal recognition of the other, who is not only the universal vulnerable human being but the concrete human being, who encounters people hurt, humiliated, robbed of their happiness.

The whole of Metz's theology underlies these few key terms. But it also contains a question to the ethical approaches which are currently dominant, in so far as these start from an exclusively egalitarian universalism, and it implies a critique of any ethics which seeks to resolve conflicts of interests by morally legitimated processes (procedural approaches).

But is the idea of compassion also as programmatic, as fundamental to ethics as Metz nevertheless suggests? Or on closer inspection does the ethical impulse which stems from it dissolve into a mere appeal for good will? Is there a correlation between compassion with a theological orientation and the ethic of compassion known to the ethical tradition? And can theological ethics make an independent contribution towards the mediating of theological and ethical understanding? So the theme of my second part is the question in what way empathy, or, more usually compassion, is expressed in ethical reflection.

## II. Compassion and empathy in ethics

### 1. *The origin and value of empathy*

Two sets of themes characterize the historical discussion of the concept of empathy. First there is the dispute over the *origin* of compassion: is this feeling innate and thus part of the human make up, is compassion a passive affect and to be determined largely independently of rationality, or is it first evoked by upbringing and thus an acquired virtue? No final verdict has been passed, but ethicists today are agreed that compassion or empathy can at any rate be dependent on upbringing and education. Despite all the criticism of the Enlightenment theatre of Lessing and Schiller, this was and still is the approach by means of aesthetics and ethics today, for example in Martha Nussbaum.

Secondly, however, the history of the ethical discussion of compassion amounts to a dispute on the *value and status* of compassion: independently of their views of the basis for the sense of compassion, the English moral-sense school, Rousseau, Lessing and especially the Romantics down to Schopenhauer see it as the virtue which makes it possible for human beings

to overcome their isolation and egotism. The defenders of an ethic of compassion say that compassion is an altruistic attitude in which morality is ultimately grounded.<sup>16</sup>

Wide of the mark, Nietzsche said mockingly, with reference above all to the great tradition of the opponents of compassion in the Stoa, that compassion is the expression of the greatest weakness of all in human beings, ultimately based on self-interest – out of delight at the gratitude of the victim or the approval of those around, also based on delight in suffering and ultimately on fear – fear of one's own suffering and, in the history of evolution, fear of the threat from others whose movements, including changes of disposition, need to be studied so as to provide self-protection.<sup>17</sup>

The Stoics had already emphasized that compassion is blind, particular, subject to chance; it is the 'defect of a petty spirit which collapses at the sight of the suffering of others', as Seneca says. It is a deep conviction of Western moral philosophy that compassion is unworthy of a rational person (meaning of course a man) and Hobbes still accepts this tradition: compassion is a *perturbatio animi*, a confusion of the spirit.

These objections to compassion can be robbed of their force, since in the end they rest on far too narrow a view of reason and feelings, as we shall see; moreover, as Scheler has shown, they remain too rooted in a conception which sees compassion grounded in a reference back to oneself – like the moral impulse in the Golden Rule.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, the objections can help to develop a conception of ethics which can integrate compassion appropriately. Thus for example mediaeval theology gives compassion a specific function within ethics. For Thomas Aquinas, for instance, compassion becomes a virtue in so far as it converges with justice; in other words, justice is the criterion for the appropriateness of compassion. Here, however, the contribution of compassion is underestimated since, as I shall demonstrate, *compassion is itself the expression of a comprehensive sense of justice.*<sup>19</sup>

But another charge made by Nietzsche against the ethic of compassion hits the mark: compassion, he says, is not only self-interested and a product of the weak spirit, but in addition also knows no respect for the other. In other words, in some circumstances does not compassion extend the suffering of the other by regarding it as a condition from outside? How do we know, for example, whether a blind and deaf person is suffering and accordingly needs our compassion? How can we think of compassion and respect at the same time? How can we separate contempt from compassion?

It has to be conceded that the ethic of compassion has long failed to find an adequate answer to this charge. Among other reasons, this is because it has neglected to give an appropriate definition of the status of compassion



and feelings in relation to respect for others. It has been too concerned to warn against a rationalistic moral theory – often enough misunderstood – to want to see the limits of the ethics of feeling. If one defines the status of compassion in the mode of a moral principle, one misses its specific function for morality. But if, like Kant, one pushes the feelings right to the periphery of moral reflection, one similarly misses their function. So one can say that the discussion at the beginning of modern ethics does not lead to an adequate understanding of the relationship between compassion and respect. That is the historical situation.

Now since in the current formation of theories the ethics of virtue is undergoing a renaissance which could not have been foreseen even twenty years ago, the ethic of compassion is also reviving. The ethic of compassion is so to speak sailing in the wake of the ethic of virtue. Now if this is the case, and if the mistakes of the controversy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are to be avoided, then it is of central importance to clarify again the content and status of compassion or empathy within ethics. So my concern now is to develop a concept which can do justice to the demands of an altruistic understanding of compassion.

## 2. *Shared humanity*

To do this I shall take up a characteristic mentioned in an article by Lawrence Blum and attempt to deepen it – in respect of the envisaged mediation of theological-ethical and moral-philosophical reflection.<sup>20</sup> Blum defines compassion primarily in terms of its object. It relates to human beings, but largely also to animals and other entities which we shall not be concerned with here. The attention, the focus of compassion, is not the person as such but the state in which the person is. In order to arouse empathy, this state must be in close relation to the actual life or at least to the elementary well-being of the person; it must be capable of being described as misery, distress, suffering or the like. Thus empathy relates to a negative condition which points to a serious deficiency in respect of human life that can be described independently of subjective feeling.

Blum defines the attitude of empathy with the aid of four constitutive elements. The first constitutive element of empathy is *identification with the sufferer*. Preserving the distance but recognizing a basic similarity between it and the sufferer, the empathizing person perceives this situation, transfers it imaginatively to his or her own situation, and thus achieves the change of perspective inherent in all moral action.

The second constitutive element is *concern for the well-being of the other*.

This element ensures that the empathy is really focussed on the other and not on my notion of his or her situation. The imagination is in a way controlled and guided by concern for the well-being *of* the other, and not *for* the other, with all the paternalistic connotations of that. Compassion thus become reflective, and only in this way fulfils the condition of a moral feeling as a second-order feeling, which relates to the well-being of another. It is thus marked out as a partial concept of the more universal concept. We can also take up the third element mentioned by Blum and think about it further: Blum speaks of a '*shared humanity*' which produces compassion. Put in more general terms, empathy necessitates the conviction that there is a binding link between me and the sufferer, so that the suffering of the other meets and affects me in my person. Frequently the binding link only becomes visible through an imagined change of perspective or through attention which brings the sufferer near. In ethics, recourse is frequently had to a shared capacity for suffering rather than shared humanity as the common element. I cannot clarify this here, but it is certainly the case that, as I have already said with reference to Metz, in compassion we begin from a shared concept of the common evil, which produces a fundamental fellowship and equality in relation to the respect due, and thus transcends the *de facto* inequality between the one who suffers and the one who does not.

If we speak of empathy, we are also speaking of convictions which go with the sensitivity involved. We are also saying that these convictions, which cannot be detached from feelings but are interwoven with them, are of central importance for personal identity. In Charles Taylor's terminology, they are therefore strong valuations. This almost automatically gives rise to the fourth constitutive element of empathy mentioned by Blum, namely *duration and intensity*. A feeling which is based on convictions of central relevance cannot be completely abrupt and immediate. Thus duration and intensity are good criteria for the seriousness of a feeling. It need only be mentioned in passing that duration and intensity can suffer as a result of the modern media. It is not the attitude itself but the 'objects', the persons whose suffering we attempt to empathize with, that change so quickly that the quality of experience in compassion threatens to become shallow. Thus the greater nearness to the sufferers which is produced in the course of 'globalization' cannot lead to a blunting of the sense which is the reflex action when too much is asked of them.

We can now understand the spontaneous and reflective attitude of empathy more precisely as an attitude of perception, concerned attention and identification achieved in an imaginative way towards someone whose physical or psychological integrity is threatened, concern for the well-being

of the other and the realization of a fundamental commonality which creates fellowship. Who would not recognize here the goodness which the Old and New Testament define as the ethical content of compassion, and in addition, in the concept of mercy, as a property of God which as such is reflected on in the theology of memory?<sup>21</sup> But in that case cannot the biblical tradition also be a medium of the specific religious and ethical experience of responsibility and concern, a reflective experience which emphasizes the central significance of compassion for action and also for faith? If empathy at least in part rests on a 'strong valuation', a conviction about the good which another lacks, then wherever possible it leads to an action which involves concern and resistance against this lack. Believers know that they are reinforced in this ethical attitude by a religious experience which is the historically mediated experience of the saving action of God, at least of his justice and mercy. The religious experience adds nothing to the ethical experience as such, but for the identity of the person who accepts this experience it is a conviction which then becomes inseparable from the ethical experience.

However, not only the content of the concept of compassion but also its normative status must be clarified. In essence, the question here is whether compassion itself is normative or whether it is an addition to what is normally called for. Our conceptual analysis has indicated that compassion and empathy are an altruistic feeling, a feeling which reacts to the suffering of another person with a desire for his or her well-being. This feeling is backed by the conviction that the state of a suffering person or a suffering collective must if at all possible be remedied. Because and in so far as compassion builds a bridge between me and the other, and also between my identity and what should be, compassion may mediate between what one wills and what should be.<sup>22</sup> Compassion is therefore a central ingredient of a person's moral identity; indeed I would go so far as to say that in this mediating function it is indispensable for morality. For the moral principles of respect and taking heed of persons have the same goal as compassion. In other words, the cognitive content of compassion converges with the normative demand and from the perspective of the compassionate is to be regarded as a normative demand. However spontaneous empathy may seem to be, it is therefore one of the most important sources, perhaps the most important source, of the insight why there are normative obligations for me and why I should act morally at all. Moreover, in so far as the bad state of a sufferer can be improved by action, empathy is also a motivation towards action on behalf of the other,<sup>23</sup> in close conjunction with the insight, which is and can be grounded in a normative way, that the sufferer has a right to this action. Thus in fact it is the case that here the verdict of reason and the

verdict of feeling meet.<sup>24</sup> But because empathy has not only a reflective but also a 'spontaneous' side which is given an emotional label through the suffering of another, both modes of judgment have the function of controlling each other: reason controls universal justice, feeling its specific form.

However, empathy is not restricted, like normative morality, to the level of action but also continues to keep on guard where violations and integrities cannot either rest on human action or be removed by action. There can be and is empathy precisely when action comes up against its limits. Empathy may have to tread a tightrope in giving others their due in their suffering. But that tightrope indicates all the more the need for a reflective treatment of empathy.

### 3. *Contempt of the other?*

But does this conception really stand up to the charge of contempt of the other? I think that it does. For, first, the imagination of the change of perspective is not thought of naively as empathy or paternalistic identification, but must maintain a distance. Secondly, the other must himself or herself give the guidelines for determining the well-being on which the compassion is focussed. Thirdly, the reference to a common 'shared humanity' is a criterion which safeguards the preservation of the respect that is based on the normative equality of all. However, the closer definition of this sharing leaves much scope and is therefore also prone to paternalistic and ideological definitions. That makes it all the more important to link empathy up with a theory of rights which forms a basis for the normative claims of others and which for example also attempts to qualify the question of those addressed, the extent of the responsibility, the calculation of benefits and the right balance between different benefits.

With the normative theory of rights we transcend the personal relations in which empathy has its roots and without which it cannot become effective. The question now is whether empathy can be made fruitful for a theory of justice, and if so, to what extent. I want at least to mention two points which can give us a direction. The basis of justice is the universal equality of moral subjects, which is set down in the convergence of rights and responsibilities. Justice perceives the other in the mode of normative equality understood in this way, and thus as the 'generalized other'.<sup>25</sup> But in order to be able to take account of the individual and social inequality which is in fact to be perceived, and in order to be able to perceive persons behind the structures of injustice, the other has to be regarded as a concrete other.<sup>26</sup> Empathy reacts to this equality by way of a spontaneous concern which has a reflective back-

ing. Empathy with a structural focus recognizes the asymmetry between those who suffer and those who do not, which leads to an inequality in respect of the distribution of responsibilities and rights. So here, too, the cognitive content of the verdict of the feelings coincides with the normative verdict of justice. Empathy does not transcend justice; empathy is not grace which proceeds from grace. Rather, empathy is a function, a specific dimension of justice itself; one can perhaps say that it is the 'other of justice' which itself appears in justice.

This form of justice sees that the other is special and reflects on the relevance of this special character for norms. Paradoxical though it may seem, it makes the asymmetry the starting point of the concrete recognition and respect which is called on to preserve the right praxis, including theoretical reflection on it in a theory of justice. But over and above this, empathy points to a sense of solidarity which is grounded in the benevolence of the other. To assume responsibility for the sufferer cannot therefore stop at establishing the rules of behaviour. Nor can it stop at a definition of the rights of self-defence, or make its correctness dependent on a consensus. Responsibility, which Metz's 'authority of the sufferers' recognizes as a normative point of reference, can only be formulated in a theory of justice which encounters structural injustice both individually and politically. To use a familiar image: for those lying on the ground, anyone who encounters them is infinitely far above them. Empathy which takes heed of others and recognizes their fundamental normative equality, in other words empathy appropriate to the other, strives to synchronize the movements of concern and raising up. Concern is the personal, emotional side of empathy. But 'raising up' is the practical side, the justice which produces equality where it does not exist. This is the point of the parable of the Good Samaritan, the New Testament model for the appropriate emotional empathy with the sufferer which governs action. And once again we can – and must – say that the ethical dimension of this view of ethical responsibility within a theological definition of justice can easily be communicated. That the theological concept of justice points beyond the ethical dimension to the eschatological dimension makes ethics a goad which remains until all injustice has been transformed into justice. It is not ethics but religion (the Christian religion) which gives ground for hoping that this goad is not God's last statement on suffering. However, theology must not fall in with this hope but must challenge God to a conversation; it must put the question of suffering and confront it with the 'landscape of screams', as God challenges human beings in their injustice.

## Conclusion

So if compassion is to be a programme for Christianity, first a 'systematic cover' needs to be incorporated into this programme which clarifies its content and status in dialogue with the tradition of moral philosophy and moral philosophy. Here 'attentive and perceptive recognition of participation in the suffering of the other' proves to be the partial element in the more general structure of care, an attitude of concern which itself calls for training and practice.<sup>27</sup> It has the status of a mediating principle between what one wills and what should be. But this 'should' has to be given a basis and justified in a separate step, because involvement neither gives the basis for the moral 'should' nor can it guarantee that it is understood in universal terms. Margalit puts this sharply: 'We need morality precisely where we take no part.'<sup>28</sup> So if compassion is to be understood as a value programme of Christianity, then it must be understood as complementary to an ethic of human dignity which spells itself out as an ethic of human rights. This too cannot be based on a consensus nor can it issue in a procedural ethic. Nevertheless Metz puts his finger on the sore spot which Margalit identifies. Certainly morality is challenged in the face of emotional indifference. But how can indifference be overcome, if not by involvement, by compassion? And how else can moral action be motivated, if not by involvement, which also includes indignation about injustice and pain about the suffering of the sufferer?

*Translated by John Bowden*

## Notes

1. Cf. J. B. Metz, 'Compassion. Zu einem Weltprogramm des Christentums im Zeitalter des Pluralismus der Religionen und Kulturen' in Johann Baptist Metz, Lothar Kuld and Adolf Weisbrod, *Compassion. Weltprogramm des Christentums. Soziale Verantwortung lernen*, Freiburg im Breisgau 2000, pp.9-20; id., 'Das Christentum im Pluralismus der Religionen und Kulturen', *Luzerner Universitätsreden* 14, 2001, pp.3-14.
2. H. Küng, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*, London and New York 1997. For a discussion with the various sciences see H. Küng and K.-J. Kuschel, *Wissenschaft und Ethos*, Munich 1998.
3. The substantive problem consists above all in the fact that human rights automatically entail human responsibilities. But since the Declaration is not congruent with the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, problems arise in respect both of the contents and also of the connection with universal human rights. For a critique of the Declaration cf. T. Hoppe, 'Weltinnenpolitik durch Weltethos? Rückfragen an das Projekt von Hans Küng', *Herder*

- Korrespondenz* 8, 1997, pp.410-14; id., 'Priorität der Menschenrechte', *Herder Korrespondenz* 6, 1998, pp.293-8.
4. Metz, 'Christentum' (n.1), p.3.
  5. *Ibid.*, pp.7f.
  6. *Ibid.*, p.9.
  7. For more recent literature see above all S. Dybowski, *Barmherzigkeit im Neuen Testament – Ein Grundmotiv caritativen Handelns*, Freiburg im Breisgau 1992; also M. Zehetbauer, *Die Polarität von Gerechtigkeit und Barmherzigkeit. Ihre Wurzeln im Alten Testament, im Frühjudentum sowie in der Botschaft Jesu. Konsequenzen für die Ethik*, Studien zur Geschichte der katholischen Moralthologie 35, Regensburg 1999.
  8. J. Habermas, 'Israel und Athen oder: Wem gehört die anamnetische Vernunft? Zur Einheit der multikulturellen Vielfalt' in Johann Baptist Metz et al., *Diagnosen zur Zeit*, Düsseldorf 1994, p.56.
  9. J. B. Metz, *Zum Begriff der neuen Politischen Theologie*, Mainz 1998, pp.200f.
  10. It is interesting that in his 'Ethics of Memory' Avishai Margalit also starts from a triangular relationship: 'One side of the triangle links memory with participation, the second side participation with ethics; only after that can one also localize the relationship between memory and ethics', A. Margalit, *Ethik der Erinnerung*, Max Horkheimer lectures, Frankfurt am Main 2000, p.17. And like Metz, Margalit too posits participation as the attention to the other which precedes morality.
  11. Cf. e.g. J. B. Metz, *Christlicher Glaube in Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, Mainz 1977; D. Mieth, *Moral und Erfahrung I. Grundlagen einer theologisch-ethischen Hermeneutik*, Fribourg, Ch/Freiburg im Breisgau 1999; id., *Moral und Erfahrung II*, Studien zur Theologischen Ethik 76, Fribourg, Ch/Freiburg im Breisgau 1998.
  12. J. B. Metz, 'Im Eingedenken fremden Leids. Zu einer Basiskategorie christlicher Gottesrede' in Johann Baptist Metz, Johann Reikerstorfer and Jürgen Werbick, *Gottesrede*, Münster 1996, pp.3-20:12. It is not Metz but Jon Sobrino who gives this universal suffering more precise contours, contours which become the focus for ethical action: it is suffering in itself, the suffering of others, the suffering of individuals or the suffering of groups; it may be spiritual, psychological suffering or bodily, historical suffering, or a metaphysical suffering over existence. Cf. also S. Weil, *Waiting on God*, London and New York 1951.
  13. J. Sobrino, 'Theology in a Suffering World: Theology as *intellectus amoris*' in Paul Knitter and Raimundo Panikkar, *Pluralism and Oppression. Theology in World Perspective*, The Annual Publication of the College Theology Society 34, Lanham 1991, pp.153-77: 155f.
  14. Here Metz shows himself to be strongly influenced by Walter Benjamin's philosophy of history, which itself is in part rooted in the Jewish messianic hope and the apocalypse.

15. Sobrino, 'Theology in a Suffering World' (n.13), p.165.
16. Cf. especially A. Schopenhauer, *Über die Grundlage der Moral* (1841), Zurich edition 6, Zurich 1977; M. Scheler, *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie* (1912), Bonn 1985. W. Marx, *Ethos und Lebenswelt: Mitleidenkönnen als Mass*, Hamburg 1986, is worth investigating.
17. Cf. the polemic against the morality of compassion above all in Nietzsche's *The Dawn, Zarathustra and Genealogy of Morality*.
18. Cf. M. Nussbaum, 'Gefühle und Fähigkeit von Frauen' in ead., *Gerechtigkeit oder das gute Leben*, Frankfurt am Main 1999, pp.131-75; A. Leist, 'Mitleid und universelle Ethik' in Hinrich Fink-Eitel (ed), *Zur Philosophie der Gefühle*, Frankfurt am Main 1993, pp.157-87.
19. Cf. *Summa Theologiae* II/II, Qu.30.
20. L. Blum, 'Compassion' in Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, *Explaining Emotions*, Berkeley 1980, pp.507-17.
21. See S. Dybowski, *Barmherzigkeit im Neuen Testament – Ein Grundmotiv caritativen Handelns*, Freiburg im Breisgau 1992; M. Zehetbauer, *Die Polarität von Gerechtigkeit und Barmherzigkeit. Ihre Wurzeln im Alten Testament, im Frühjudentum sowie in der Botschaft Jesu. Konsequenzen für die Ethik*, Studien zur Geschichte der katholischen Moraltheologie 35, Regensburg 1999; Ruth Scoralick (ed), *Das Drama der Barmherzigkeit Gottes. Studien zur biblischen Gottesrede und ihrer Wirkungsgeschichte in Judentum und Christentum*, Stuttgart 2000; B. Janowski, 'Der barmherzige Richter. Zur Einheit von Gerechtigkeit im Gottesbild des Alten Orients und des Alten Testament', *ibid.*, pp.33-91.
22. On this point I can agree with U. Wolf, who argues in the same direction. Cf. U. Wolf, 'Haben wir moralischen Verpflichtungen gegen Tiere' in Angelika Krebs, *Naturethik: Grundtexte der gegenwärtigen tier- und ökoethischen Diskussion*, Frankfurt am Main 1997, pp.47-75; ead., 'Gefühle im Leben und in der Philosophie' in Hinrich Fink-Eitel and Bernd Lohmann, *Zur Philosophie der Gefühle*, Frankfurt am Main 1993, pp.112-35.
23. Cf. P. Stemmer, *Handeln zugunsten anderer. Eine moralphilosophische Untersuchung*, Berlin 2000.
24. 'There is no knowledge without feeling, no action without feeling, no perception without feeling, no memory without feeling – but every human feeling already either entails as feeling the moment of cognition or is at least associated with the cognition, with the aims and situations' . . . 'cognition does not stand over against emotion, but the higher forms of emotion and cognition mutually condition one another', A. Heller, *Theorie der Gefühle*, Hamburg 1980.
25. 'Justice – located on the cognitive level – is the symmetrical principle of responsibility which names the rights and responsibilities that I have towards all other persons. The other encounters me here in the role of the universalized other and shares the same responsibility which time and again is assured procedurally. Comparability, definition, calculability are characteristic of this responsibility, so all in all this is a "system of regulated, entered, codified pre-



- cepts" (J. Derrida). The other level of responsibility which grows out of compassion, the affective level, is constituted by the asymmetrical principle of responsibility and is first the basis of the principle of equality. It refers to an irreplaceable individual towards whom only the I addressed has a responsibility. Incalculability, infinity, refractoriness, strangeness and heteronymity are the characteristics of this responsibility. It is what first gives rise to a moral sense.' J. Manemann, 'Kritik als zentrales Moment des Glaubens. Zur gesellschaftskritischen Dimension der Fundamentaltheologie' in Klaus Müller, *Fundamentaltheologie*, Regensburg 1998, pp.217-41: 237.
26. S. Benhabib in *Situating the Self*, 1995. Cf. also M. Nussbaum, 'Gefühle und Fähigkeiten von Frauen' in *Gerechtigkeit oder das gute Leben*, Frankfurt am Main 1999, pp.131-75. D. Sölle's concern to see an appropriate understanding of suffering which is expressed in the statement 'there is no alien suffering, there is no alien resurrection' is also to be seen against this background. See her *Suffering*, London 1975.
27. See P. Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, Chicago 1992.
28. A. Margalit, *Ethik der Erinnerung* (n.10), p.22.