Toleration and Mutual Recognition in Hybrid Globalization

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Abstract

We are witnessing a new phase of globalization that can be characterized as hybrid. This conceptualization follows the concept of hybrid warfare and essentially encompasses the tense process of ongoing globalization and simultaneous local and regional resistance to it. As a result, identities worldwide are becoming uncertain, fluid (Zygmunt Bauman), or even dissolved. This process of dissolution leads to fragmented identities, held together with difficulty by age-old ideologies - or by violence. An alternative way of securing identity in this process of dissolution is the mutual recognition of the world's civilizations, which tolerance necessarily presupposes. Tolerance, however, also implies drawing the line at what is not to be tolerated. It is precisely in a process of mutual recognition that differences must not be overlooked. For example, tolerance is understood as a right in the liberal understanding, but as a task and duty in Islamic thinking. But we must not stop at the differences. In this respect, a perspective of tolerance as a process is developed here and clarified with the concept of an ascending cycle. The concept of Mulla Sadra, the important Islamic philosopher, contains the seeds of a concept of tolerance that is indispensable for intercultural dialogue and preserving identity.

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"According to Mulla Sadra, tolerance is the end of practical wisdom while light is the end of theoretical wisdom and a divine philosopher and a man of wisdom are the ones who have these two together" (Rahmati and Osooli, 2019: 25)

Introduction ‑ The Challenges of Hybrid Globalization

We are living in a new phase of globalization that we can understand as hybrid (Herberg‑Rothe/Foerstle 2020, Bauman 2000). It is characterized by the simultaneous rise of the Other (Zakaria 2008) and the decline of the Other (Herberg‑Rothe/Foerstle 2020). Many formerly colonized states and civilizations have become newly industrialized nations, especially in Southeast Asia, while others, especially in Africa, have declined despite the promises of decolonization. If the 20th century was largely defined by the states on the shores of the North Atlantic, the 21st century will be defined by those on the shores of the North Pacific. In the 21st century we are likely to see two political centers in the world ‑ the states on the shores of the North Atlantic and those on the shores of the North Pacific/Indian Ocean. Moreover, the contrast between rich and poor countries is no longer simply one between the global North and the global South. Rather, this contrast is reproduced in the emerging countries of the former Global South. This means that India, for example, has become a leading industrial nation, but at the same time there are large areas of abject poverty ‑ the contrast between the global North and the global South is manifested in these countries themselves, as well as in parts of the US.

The states that lie between these two centers of power, i.e. much of Central and West Asia, will have to try to find a balance between them. Most of these states belong to the sphere of Muslim civilization, which could lead to the reemergence of the status of this civilization as it was before European expansionism. Hybrid globalization involves the contradictory, tense process of ongoing globalization, especially through new information technologies, and

local and regional resistance to this current development. On the other hand, it is linked to the global questioning, liquefaction, and often dissolution of communal and individual identities (Acharya 2000, Appiah 2018). Insofar as it dissolves oppressive and static identities, it is a welcome process. What is problematic, however, is that as a counter-reaction, age-old fixed identities are revived - be it racism, nationalism, Salafism, or forms of tribal identity - "us against the others", whoever the others may be. Identity is now often seemingly guaranteed only by enemy declarations (Fukuyama 2018) as a counter-reaction to hybrid globalization, as Samuel Huntington postulated: "We know who we are when we know who we are against" (Huntington 1996). Examples include Trump's "Make America great again", the rise of the New Right in Europe, Putin and Dugin's "New Russia", Hindu nationalism, Salafism, or even Xi Yinping's "Chinese Dream". Alexander Dugin's concept, in particular, can hardly hide the fact that it is directly linked to a new white Russian racism (Herberg-Rothe 2022). Rigid and inflexible declarations of the other as the enemy may at best stabilize an identity in the short term, but in the medium and long term they destroy the identity that is actually being defended, because in a progressive process everyone and everything is declared the enemy. A particularly clear example of this is German National Socialism, which declared Jews, communists, democracies, etc. to be enemies, and as a result perished within a few years.

Tolerance and mutual recognition (Daase 2015, Honneth 1992) of the world's civilizations is therefore not just a matter of good will, but an absolute necessity for long-term stability and self-awareness. Both are existential to meet the challenges of hybrid globalization. They allow for a balanced identity in perspective, whereas a concept that focuses on the idea of identity as an unchanging core would only lead to ever new conflicts within and between societies and, as can be seen with the Nazis, to self-destruction. If we misunderstand identity as a core, we destroy in the medium and long term what

we are trying to preserve. In an understanding of identity as balancing (Izenberg 2016) the contrasting and different experiences of our lives, civilizational traditions play a central role. Despite all the problems of a Eurocentric misunderstanding, I refer here to the concept of civilization because it includes the other, whereas religions, by their positive reference to a transcendence, exclude the "non-believers". This is not a criticism of religion, but an expression of the limits of interreligious dialogue. It necessarily remains an abstract and minimalist approach because it tries to find what is common to all religions. In doing so, it abstracts directly from the concrete religions, as can also be seen in minimal ethics. The decisive perspective of the dialogue of world civilizations, on the other hand, is to gain benefits for all. Since I'm neither a Muslim nor an expert in Islamic philosophy, I'm just trying to outline how mutual recognition (Daase 2015) and tolerance can benefit the different civilizations in the new phase of globalization that we're experiencing.

Of course, such a perspective must be able to distinguish itself from Huntington's "clash of civilizations". For all the necessary criticism of his approach, two essential points are often overlooked (Huntington 1996). The first is that he describes the mechanisms of a "clash of civilizations" mainly in order to avoid it. And second, that this perspective contains an entirely new point of view. For his liberal Western critics argued above all that there could be no "clash of civilizations" because, in their view, there was only one civilization, the Western one. The "others" were religions or cultures, not civilizations. While the "clash of civilizations" is obviously to be avoided, Huntington's perspective implicitly includes a recognition of the world's other civilizations, a recognition that there are civilizations other than the Western one (Katzenstein 2009, Jaspers 1949, Eisenstadt 1992, Zhang 2012).

The world's civilizations are not fixed identities; they overlap and refer to different religions and ways of life. Sometimes they are so opposed to each other

that they have been at war with each other for centuries ‑ but at the same time they have always influenced each other. As Peter Katzenstein has pointed out, civilizations are different but not homogeneous (Katzenstein 2009). Civilizations have always been based on the attempt to find answers to two questions. One is how an ever‑increasing number of people can live together peacefully in an ever‑shrinking space. This concept of civilization is therefore concerned with the norms, customs, rules, etc. that are supposed to make this coexistence possible. It is no coincidence that the term civilization is derived from the Latin civis, the citizen of a city, and that civilization has been associated with the development of cities for thousands of years. The second concept of civilization, as I see it, refers in the broadest sense to dealing with the liminal questions of human life, especially death and birth, in general liminal questions at the beginning and end of life, questions about the nature of life, the relationship between transcendence and immanence, the individual and the community, and so on. Even in the most diverse religions we have found different answers, but to the same questions of our human civilizations: What is man, what is humanity? Although we live in a time of progressive globalization, we are still asking the same questions about the nature of our civilizations that were asked by the Axis civilizations between the 7th and 3rd centuries B.C., but we are confronted with different answers. There are two different approaches to solving this problem. One is to insist on the age‑old answers, despite all the changes and learning processes, as propagated, for example, by Salafism and Daesh. The other option, which is equally problematic, would mean a complete relativization of one's own identity, an adaptation to Western modernity at its core and an apparent preservation of identity only in its outward forms. Between the purely monistic and the purely diverse solutions, however, there is a third possibility: limited pluralism.

The paradoxical result is that in an age of hybrid globalization, all of the world's civilizations can only maintain their own identity and tradition if they are

in balance with those of others. In this essay, I first address problems of tolerance and its perspectives, highlight the consequences of hybrid globalization for the identity of civilizations, and conclude with the concept of virtues circles.

1- Problems and Perspectives of Tolerance

Probably everyone would say that they are more or less tolerant, especially in the Western hemisphere - and the "but" follows immediately. But this is where the problems with tolerance begin, because tolerance obviously has two different limits. One is determined by the fact that we can only tolerate what is more or less like us. But can we also tolerate what we ourselves would consider to be truly different, wrong, or even evil? Of course, there is a second limit to tolerance, which is what should not be tolerated: pedophilia, torture, violence against women and children, specifically, for example, the sex slavery of IS. But even here there is a danger that we use too narrow a concept of tolerance and do not tolerate everything that is just different from our way of life? Can the privileged in this world perhaps be tolerant, while the underprivileged, the marginalized and the oppressed must be intolerant because they are fighting against their oppression and marginalization? The problem is that these oppressed and marginalized people are often fighting against other oppressed and marginalized people who have an even lower quality of life than they do. In the countless slums of this world we find little solidarity, but often naked violence against even weaker people. The question remains: we demand tolerance for ourselves, but are we tolerant of others? Can the colonized be tolerant of the colonialists? Or are they mutually exclusive? Shouldn't we all be far more intolerant of hatred, injustice, violence, and poverty?

This brief discussion leads us to a systematic distinction of two limits to the concept of tolerance. The assassinated Israeli leader Yitzhak Rabin, despite all his problems, had summed it up in the phrase: "You do not make peace with

friends, you make peace with enemies" (quoted in Herberg-Rothe 2017). There is no need to make peace with friends because you are not at war with them. In terms of tolerance, this means that we do not have to tolerate what is more or less like us, but what is truly "different". And the second limit concerns the unanswerable question: where does tolerance necessarily stop, where are the limits of what can be tolerated? Hannah Arendt's distinction can help here. Even with regard to Nazi criminals, she insisted on the distinction between deed and perpetrator. The crimes of the Nazis could not and must not be tolerated, any more than the crimes against humanity being committed today. But even in this case, the perpetrator can in principle be forgiven because he may have acted out of a lack of insight, an inhuman ideology, etc. It is also often the case that people act violently because they have been victims of violence. Tolerance does not mean not to fight violence, crimes against humanity, injustice - but it does mean that we human beings can change and that this possibility of change is kept open.

Both boundaries are necessarily historically, socially, and culturally determined, but unlike post-structuralism as advocated by Lyotard, Derrida, and Foucault, I assume that this boundary is always drawn, even if in our subconscious. The concrete drawing of the boundary is thus contingent, but it must always be drawn. Tolerance, then, lies in the space between these two boundaries. Plato, Hannah Arendt, and Eric Voegelin made this "in-between" space the basis of their reflections, and we find it in all three monotheistic religions - we are animated by God, we live on earth and return to God, we actually always live in the twilight. Tolerance is therefore not an absolutely fixed concept, and above all it cannot be forced into a binary opposition, but must be understood as a process. The Plato Stanford Encyclopedia does not use the term tolerance, but toleration. However, the entry suffers from an absolutely incomprehensible Western-Christian one-sidedness (Forst 2017). Against this background, however, it can be explained that in this entry a distinction is made

only with regard to the intensity of toleration and that what is to be tolerated is only determined as wrong.

Here, on the other hand, a fivefold distinction is made, which is to be located in the intermediate area between the two boundaries mentioned above.

1. Tolerance of what at first seems incomprehensible to us. Here communication in general and intercultural communication in particular can facilitate mutual understanding and tolerance.

2. Tolerance of a different approach to the same questions we all have as human beings: questions of birth and death, of our finiteness and our longing for infinity. These questions concern the limits of human life. Here we realize that our answers may themselves be uncertain, not absolute truths, because as finite beings we refer to the Absolute but do not have absolute truth. We can recognize the absolute (God, Yahweh, Allah) in the approaches of all three monotheistic religions, but not absolutely and completely, because otherwise we would put ourselves in God's place (Herberg-Rothe 2019). Acknowledging one's limitations includes openness and tolerance for other answers. Replacing God with finite knowledge inevitably leads only to rigid dogmatism and substitute religions, be it Western consumerism, Stalinism, or the leader Adolf Hitler. Acknowledging our own limitations with respect to any form of transcendence is the basis for practicing tolerance.

3. We become aware that we ourselves are different from others, as are our ways of life, our values, and our desires. Ultimately, we want to be tolerated by others, and we must recognize that this is only possible if we tolerate others. This is true from the perspective of minorities as well as majorities (Mojahedi makes a similar distinction, but does not sufficiently distinguish between mere multiplicity and plurality; Mojahedi 2026). The desire to be tolerated by others opens up the realm of mutual respect and tolerance.

4. A particularly difficult problem arises, however, when we ask whether we can, and perhaps must, tolerate what is considered wrong. Rainer Forst focuses exclusively on this question, although he takes into account different degrees of intensity of wrongdoing. Although he comes close to Mulla Sadra's concept of degrees of intensity, he fails to distinguish between what is different, which can be tolerated, and what is really wrong, which in my view cannot be tolerated. In contrast to Forst, the Islamic understanding of tolerance apparently distinguishes between the other, which can be tolerated, and the wrong, which cannot be tolerated (Nafisi 2018). This significant difference may indicate that in Western discourse it is a task to tolerate even the wrong because one is certain of one's own apparent absolute rightness, whereas in Islamic thought, because of one's own questioning in the wake of the triumph of European colonialism and US hegemony, the other can be tolerated but not the wrong.

While Mulla Sadra makes a gradation of degrees of intensity of closeness to God, Forst concentrates on a gradation of wrongness, the intensity of evil. Toleration of wrong and evil can really only be for one reason - when we realize that the absolute struggle against wrong and evil can itself produce even more wrong and evil. The Nazis and the Communists under Stalin wanted to create a pure, peaceful community, to eradicate all evil - and thus became the epitome of evil themselves. The Christian Inquisition also wanted to purge religion of all infidels and evil - and committed millions of murders in the persecution of alleged witches, not even shying away from inhuman torture (Herberg-Rothe 2017). The inhumane acts of Daesh are another example of how the fight against what they see as evil has itself led to evil, inhumane acts. This means that, on the one hand, we must fight wrong and evil, but an extremely difficult boundary is not to become evil ourselves in this fight. A simple example is that every society must tolerate a certain amount of crime, because the absolute elimination of all crime would require an absolute surveillance state, which would itself open the

door to evil. So the implication for practical philosophy is that we must fight wrong and evil on moral grounds, but at the same time draw a line where we would become evil ourselves. This line implies a limited space in which we must tolerate evil, lest we become evil ourselves. This is hard to bear for those who suffer from crime, but the benefit is that society as a whole does not become evil in an effort to eradicate every conceivable evil.

5. A final point concerns the distinction between the deed and the perpetrator, as Hannah Arendt emphasized in relation to individual Nazis. Crimes against humanity, such as terror, starvation, sexual slavery, torture, and the degradation of human dignity, cannot be tolerated and must be fought unreservedly. Perhaps we need to be far more intolerant of crimes against humanity, but even here we need to distinguish between the acts and the perpetrators. The critical rationalist Karl Popper spoke of the paradox of tolerance. To maintain tolerance, he argued, we must be intolerant of the enemies of tolerance. For him, unlimited tolerance inevitably leads to the disappearance of tolerance. For if we extend unlimited tolerance even to the intolerant, if we are not prepared to defend a tolerant social order against the onslaught of intolerance, then the tolerant will be destroyed and tolerance with them. Obviously, he does not distinguish between acts and perpetrators (Popper 1984). Especially in the monotheistic religions there is the possibility that we can change, that we can find our way back to God. Here, too, the transgressor is punished for his deed, but the possibility of change is left open. Tolerance, then, involves drawing as clear a line as possible between what is tolerated and what is not, while keeping open the possibility of change. Ultimately, tolerance is a process, not a binary opposition. We must therefore always draw a line between what we can and cannot tolerate, while allowing for a zone in between where tolerance allows for change for the better.

Tolerance is thus always implicitly linked to what is not to be tolerated. Since tolerance refers to something that is "other," different, or wrong, but is

nevertheless to be tolerated, tolerance must be understood as a process. Toleration in this sense is also a two-way process - in the case of undecidable questions (Heinz von Foerster 1998), we can ultimately only believe, not know, and we must always question our answers, admit that we cannot know the answers, but despite this uncertainty we must decide, act, and ultimately take responsibility for our actions. Even in the religions of revelation, we can recognize God, but not absolutely. Otherwise we would be putting ourselves in God's place. These doubts and questions create a space for tolerance. Moreover, we do not only tolerate others, we also want to be tolerated ourselves; our particularity and distinctiveness should be respected by others. It is in this reciprocal process that a possible space for tolerance is created. Finally, we must also remain tolerant to a certain extent of what is wrong, because otherwise we run the risk of doing wrong ourselves, and even of becoming evil if we wanted to destroy all that is wrong and evil. Finally, tolerance is necessarily a process aimed at building a more just society and a means of learning from one another, ultimately for one's own development and improvement. Knowing where to draw the line between what can be tolerated and what can't is essential for any society to progress. The abolition of tolerance as such would only lead to societal stagnation and eventual self-destruction, while the whole world around you progresses.

2- Re-Invention of Cultural Differences in Liquid Globalization versus Dialogue of Civilizations

The Western world is not only in relative decline, it is also facing the inevitable "rise of the rest" (Zakaria 2008) and the decline of the other (Herberg-Rothe). Both developments are accompanied by increasing instability and unruliness in many parts of the world. Although there has been a great deal of research in postcolonial studies and intercultural philosophy (Mall 2000, Mall

2014), the binary code between the imagined West and the multiplicity of non-Western approaches has not yet been resolved. Given the relative decline of the West, the dissolution of identities around the world, and the rise of the newly industrialized nations, there is an urgent need to address and overcome this binary code, as it is not only situated in discourses, but also manifests itself in all of our environments and within ourselves. My approach is based on the assumption that both the West and the non-Western world have their share of dark sides in history. In the Western world, we cannot deny brutal colonialism, religious wars, two world wars, Auschwitz, and the sheer good fortune of avoiding a nuclear world war that would have destroyed all living things. On the other hand, in the non-Western world, there is often an unbearable level of intra-societal violence - people in many countries are facing a living hell. For them, hell is not in the afterlife. They experience it in their own lives.

As we all live on an increasingly interconnected planet, we are becoming increasingly aware that there can no longer be islands of prosperity, peace, and well-being in a sea of violence, hatred, extreme poverty, and the unraveling of the fabric of societies. In some parts of the world, we are experiencing something very close to Hobbes's war of all against all, or Carl Schmitt's never-ending civil wars between communities. In order to cope with these developments, a dialogue about the civilizational foundations of our world society is needed. I use the concept of civilization explicitly, following Karl Jaspers, Shmuel Eisenstadt, and Peter J. Katzenstein, because civilizations are much more inclusive than religions. This is especially clear in the case of civilizations that are descended from religions. In my view, the contrast is based on the model of the Western billiard game versus the model of concentric circles. Of course, we can easily distinguish between these models. For example, in the billiard game, if the balls attract each other, we are in the theoretical realm of idealism and cooperation; if they push each other away, we are in the realm of competition, conflict, and war,

a discourse called realism. And of course, if the spheres cooperate, we are in the realm of all kinds of institutionalism. But the main concept in this model is the importance of rules and methods. The model of concentric circles on the other hand can be distinguished by the relationship of center, semi-center, semi-periphery and periphery (my slight modification of proximity and distance to the center). When we have a transfer of goods, people, ideas, raw materials from the periphery to the center, we call it imperialism; the other way around, from the center to the periphery, I'm tempted to call it a form of civilization.

What distinguishes my approach from the attempts of poststructuralism, and why is there a new need for intercultural dialogue?

On the one hand, these earlier concepts were able to criticize Euro-American Eurocentrism and hegemony, but had serious problems in drawing a line against cultural relativism. This is particularly evident in another area of research, a global IRT, International Relations Theory, most prominently developed by Amitav Acharya (Acharya 2014). His approach not only runs the risk of romanticizing non-Western approaches. But as I have experienced myself at various conferences, the concept of IRT as such is increasingly dissolving in terms of its basic understanding, because if you deconstruct every concept, you end up with no concept at all. Despite his Eurocentrism, we have to go back to Hegel, because he already claimed that all philosophical concepts are composed as a unity of opposites - although I agree with his basic statement, I would argue that there is no primacy of unity over opposites, but also no primacy of difference over unity, as Niklas Luhman, a prominent German sociologist, has argued. I define justice, for example, as a floating balance between freedom and equality (Herberg-Rothe 2021). The need for such a balance becomes obvious when one considers that Thomas Hobbes already pointed out that unrestricted freedom leads to civil wars, while absolute equality contributes to totalitarian movements, as Hannah Arendt argued. My own model is that of a progressive balance

between freedom and equality, following the seeds as outlined by Clausewitz, Hegel, Confucius and Mulla Sadra. So I'm trying to develop a different methodology based on the dialectics of Clausewitz's concept of war as a floating and evolving balance of polar opposites (Clausewitz 2004, Herberg-Rothe 2007), which has similarities and solid foundations, but also differences, with Hegel's dialectics and Confucius's concept of harmony (Li 2006). It could simply be illustrated by a wave or a sine curve built up on a rising x-axis. In short, I'm trying to think in terms of waves rather than particles and their generalization, which characterizes Western linear thinking (Herberg-Rothe 2023, Herberg-Rothe and Son 2018).

The second reason why it is necessary to have an intercultural dialogue about the philosophical foundations of our thinking (Flavel/Robbiano 2023) is the dramatic social transformation that we are witnessing on a global scale, which could be described as the rise and simultaneous decline of the Other. We are currently experiencing that the global village is accompanied by the mentality of the villager - who does not understand the global transformation, but has only a local horizon and fights against globalization. Contrary to the concept of glocalization, which is essentially the adaptation of the local to global developments, we are witnessing local resistance to globalization. The social transformation of the whole world is leading to the dissolution of identities worldwide - and people are trying to cope with this dissolution by reinventing ancient, seemingly fixed identities that are supposed to outlive even this accelerated transformation. For example, a fundamentalist understanding of religion, ethnicity, and race seems to outlast this transformation because they don't seem to be subject to change - that is, because you can't change the color of your skin. The dialogue of the world's civilizations and an intercivilizational philosophy (Baggini 2018) might offer a different kind of identity, one that is not static or fixed, but constructs identity as a kind of balance.

We can visualize these developments through the following diagrams: Traditional forms of societies can be explained by overlapping circles of politics, social relations, economy, ideas, ecology, and environment:
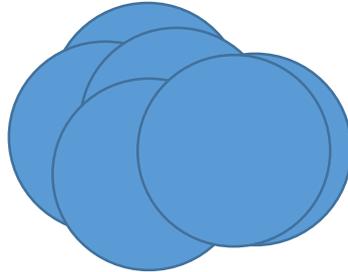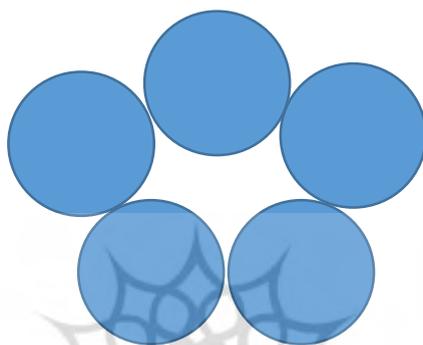

Shape No. 1
(Author, 2023)

In such a traditional society, there is a great correspondence and overlapping of the different spheres - identity is based on an apparent core and seems to be related to culturally determined values handed down from generation to generation. A "modern" society (first modernity, Ulrich Beck), on the other hand, can be characterized by the assumption that the different circles are much less overlapping, they form different spheres which have their own laws and logics - we can call this a kind of functional differentiation (Niklas Luhmann) and it could be characterized either by the interaction and different functions of the organs of a body or by the Olympic rings.
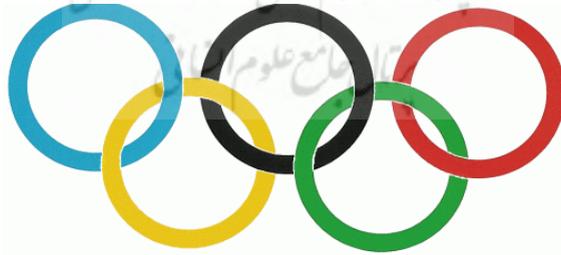
Shape No. 2
(Author, 2023)

The spheres in which these rings overlap are the institutions of modern societies, such as the state, the political system, law and justice, the church as an institution, trade unions, and civil society.

In hybrid globalization and as a result of military interventions, civil wars, these rings of political, social, economic, cultural and security spheres are separated from each other and could no longer be held together by a core identity.

Shape No. 3
(Author, 2023)

Within this model there is a sphere that remains empty and could be characterized as a kind of emptiness. In such an understanding, the social fabric is increasingly unraveled and the younger generation in particular is freed from all social norms. This concept is able to overcome the binary alternative that characterizes the discussion about the causes of terrorism, whether these actions are related to an aggressive ideology or to the social disintegration in societies and failed states, as in the ring of fire around Europe, mainly in the Arab-Islamic states, but also in Africa as a whole. It also explains why identity and recognition are so important in many conflicts around the world (Herberg-Rothe/Foerstle 2020).

On the basis of this concept, it becomes clear that this void can be filled with various contents, such as radical ideologies, private enrichment, trafficking in

drugs, weapons, and human beings, but also with the recourse to ethnic and even tribal identities, masculinity and patriarchy, and finally with violence itself, which gives the excluded, superfluous (population growth), and uprooted young generation in these countries and regions the feeling of not being absolutely powerless, but of being omnipotent.

The alternative to such a violent filling of the void caused by hybrid globalization is the mutual recognition of the civilizations of the earth. The rise of others in a globalized world is inevitable (Zakaria) - our task is to develop forms of recognition based on the civilizational foundations of Islam, Buddhism/Taoism, Confucianism, Christianity and Hinduism, as well as African forms of solidarity.

Assuming that we all already live in such spheres that do not overlap and produce a kind of emptiness, the two different solutions could be to solve this problem by constructing a core as identity, which leads to thinking in categories of us against the rest of the far right. While another attempt would be to develop a discourse in which identity is constructed as a kind of floating (Clausewitz) and progressive (Hegel) balance or harmony (Confucius), understood as unity with difference and difference with unity (Herberg-Rothe/Son 2018).

3- Karl Jaspers' Concept of Axis Civilizations

The mutual toleration of world civilizations in an era of hybrid globalization presupposes commonalities that are discussed here with reference to Karl Jaspers' concept of axis civilizations (see Jaspers 1949, Eisenstadt 1992). An early attempt to deal with the problems of Western modernity in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War was Karl Jaspers''s concept of axis civilizations. With regard to this world war, he claimed that the pride of the Europeans had disappeared and their self-confidence, which had led them to understand the history of the West as world history, was gone. In place of such

European hubris, he argued, a common understanding of civilization emerged in the Axis, and the kind of man was born with whom we live to this day. How did Jaspers outline this axis of world history? For Christians, the appearance of Jesus and his understanding as Christ is the decisive turning point in world history - until today we divide time into the years before and after Christ, and of course Muslims distinguish world history before and after Muhammad, and according to Jewish chronology we already live somewhere around the year 6000.

For Jaspers, the turning point, the axis of world history, was the period between the 7th and 3rd centuries B.C. Indications for Jaspers were the appearance of a whole series of founders of religions and systems of thought. Zoroaster in Persia, the biblical prophets, Lao-Tse and Confucius in China, Buddha and the Upanishads in India, Akosha, the famous king of the Mauryan Empire, Homer, Plato and Aristotle in ancient Greece. In his view, Christianity and Islam are latecomers to these developments, building on the same foundations but completing them. According to Jaspers, three or four civilizations emerged from these movements: Chinese civilization (Zhang 2012, Yan 2011), Indian civilization, and, of course, Western or Oriental civilization (it is disputed whether both are really different or whether there are more similarities in contrast to Chinese and Indian philosophy).

The common feature was that population density reached such a peak that many cities were well connected, at least much better than we might think. The exchange of techniques and information, the growth and exchange of production led to a development in which parts of the population didn't have to fight for mere survival, but were free for education, science and philosophy. In fierce struggles, sometimes even of life and death (see the forced suicide of Socrates), a fundamental change in thinking was established: 1. the struggle of Logos, of rationality, against thinking in myths, and 2. the transcendence of the one and

only God against demons and magicians, and finally 3. the struggle against the false embodiments of gods out of ethical indignation.

What was really new? Of course, there were god-like beings before the Axial Age. But in Jaspers' view, they were metaphors for human archetypes - the gods behaved like humans did at that time, for example, the moon and the sun were worshipped, but they were given human characteristics - they were born, died, struggled and fought against each other, were punished, and so on. And in Axis times? The simple difference, but the installation of a different worldview, was that from now on transcendence was a kind of absolute good, most visible in the three monotheistic religions: God is seen as all-powerful, absolute good, and finally we as humans can understand him because he has revealed himself forever in the holy books.

The consequence was the birth of ethics. Sociologically speaking, transcendence was not a kind of mirroring of us humans as we are (only more powerful), but a demand for how we should be. The immediate consequence was also the attempt to construct society according to this kind of good order.

But there were also setbacks: According to Jaspers and Toynbee (Toynbee 1969), the sermons and lectures were highly valued, but the highest possibilities of thought and practice did not become common practice for all. They lacked the material and political conditions to become common to all, and ordinary people were even overburdened. Freedom became anarchy.

Perhaps a paradoxical development took place. Although the new ideas could only develop in the absence of great empires, to survive they needed a new form of empire, one based on the new ideas. The desire for stability prevailed, and through violent conquest three omnipotent empires emerged between the third and first centuries B.C.: Tsin Schi huang-ti in China, the Mauryan dynasty in India, the Hellenic empires after Alexander the Great, and the later Roman Empire. According to Jaspers, the lack of creativity after the first prophets and

philosophers was followed in all three civilizations by an attempt to fix and equalize. Ideas became traditions and models for education. The Han dynasty constituted Confucianism, Asoka Buddhism, and the era of Augustus Greek-Roman education.

Toynbee argued that, on the one hand, the high religions have liberated us human beings from the social and natural prison of our ancestors, and therefore religious liberation is for him the first form of freedom. But on the other hand, he argues that these high religions have always been tempted, and therefore in danger, of constructing new social prisons. I think Toynbee is right about religions, but I think it was precisely the codification of the religious impulse for the establishment of empire that transformed and generalized ethical transcendence into secular immanence and social order. In short, the religious-ethical impulse became a civilization.

What ideas were developed? According to Jaspers, humanity recognized the terrible pain of violence, cruelty, suffering, and death, and its own powerlessness in the face of these problems. The crucial point is: Living, dying, and suffering were no longer seen as natural, but as part of a higher concept that gave meaning to even the most terrible suffering. The goddess of antiquity was transformed into an ethical and absolute good. In Islam we find this transformation in the hundred names of Allah, in Christianity in the form of the traveling prophet Jesus, who, according to his disciples, preached righteous love for one another (whether Christianity lived by his teachings or not). The result is the same: God, Allah, Jahwe, Nirvana, all are a kind of transcendence that is simply the absolute good. The transformation of the warring gods into the ethical good has been the axis of world civilization. In many cases, our particular way of thinking is related to the political, social, and economic conditions of our societies, as Ibn Chaldūn has argued. But in times of rapid and accelerated transformation of these social and economic conditions, the dissolution of identities previously based on these

conditions, discourse can change even these basic conditions. My thesis is that we are also witnessing such a transformation, leading to the dissolution of identities throughout the world.

4- The Critique of Jaspers

Finally, let's discuss the criticism of Jaspers that was most prominently voiced in Germany by the couple Jan and Aleida Assmann. Jan Assmann criticized Jaspers for excluding the much older civilization of Egypt as well as the much later civilizations of Christianity and Islam. If we were to argue that these also belong to the axis, this would include almost three thousand years of development, and we would lose any concrete characterization. Jan Assmann has recently abandoned his criticism of Jaspers' concept, arguing that his opponent's time frame may be too short, but accepting his analysis (Assmann 2018).

Aleida Assmann's criticism is more serious. While she agrees that it is right to abandon the conceptualization of German or European history as "world history," she argues that this understanding of the concept of civilization not only excludes others as if they had no history at all (all of Africa and both Americas before colonization). But she goes further, arguing that Jaspers ultimately introduced a new kind of Eurocentrism in the form of Western modernity, of which even Confucianism and Hinduism were only harbingers. Although Jaspers could include Hinduism and Confucianism in the concept of civilization, and not just Western civilization, he claimed that Hinduism and Confucianism would eventually lead to a kind of Western modernity.

Aleida Assmann characterizes Jasper's concept by three main aspects: Reflection - I think about myself, distinction if not separation of immanence and transcendence, separation of truth, justice, order and harmony. Assmann's counter-concepts are analogy instead of reflexive thinking, homology, continuity of heaven and earth instead of separation of immanence and transcendence, and

finally dense concepts that encompass truth, justice, order, and harmony at the same time instead of their separation.

Examples of such dense concepts could be Maat in Egypt at the time of the Pharaohs, Dharma in India, Dao in Chinese thought before Confucius, Justice in Islam.

We therefore need a floating (Clausewitz) and developing (Hegel) balance or harmony (Confucius) of the great civilizations of the world, which is neither a mere coexistence nor the universalization of only one civilization, but one in which we balance such concepts as the individual and the community, rationality and intuition, the part and the whole, and freedom and equality. This single word "and" is the crucial problem, but we find in Daoism the concept of "as well as" and in Hinduism that of "neither nor" - the unity of these opposites and their conflict can be exemplified by a magnet, which is inseparable and at the same time based on an irreconcilable opposition. Clausewitz and Hegel, Confucius and Hannah Arendt, Asoka and Molla Sadra, and Ibn Chaldūn (Yousefi 2016) have laid the foundations of such a perspective, which needs to be elaborated and adapted to a globalized world.

5- Virtue Circles and Mulla Sadra's Perspective

Starting from the premise that Western thinking is shaped by the billiard model of international relations and that of all other civilizations by concentric circles and cycles (Herberg-Rothe/Son 2018), the aim is to work out to what extent both models determine our thinking in the respective cultural sphere in order to develop a perspective that incorporates both approaches. In doing so, I do not assume one-dimensional causes of violent action, but neither do I assume pure diversity without any explanation of causes. Instead, I work from the perspective of virtuous and vicious circles - in which there are a limited number of causes, but they are not unconnected, but integrated into a cycle. In my view,

virtuous and vicious cycles are a combination of linear and nonlinear thinking. So far, this methodological approach has probably been applied mainly to the Sahel Syndrome. The methodological approach would be to try to break vicious circles and transform them into virtuous circles - this is where I would locate the starting point of a new approach to tolerance and mutual recognition of the civilizations of the earth.

Ideally, a virtuous circle perspective would look like this:

1. Understanding discourses of how conflicts with cultural/religious differences are justified/articulated.

2. Attributing these differences to different conceptions of civilization.

3. Mutual recognition of the same issues in different ways of thinking.

4. Self-consciousness not only as a religion or culture, but as a civilization (Eisenstadt 1992).

5. self-commitment to one's own civilizational standards, norms (Jaspers 1949 and Katzenstein 2009), etc., which can also contribute to the management of intra-societal and international conflicts.

At the infinite end of this process would be a kind of mutual recognition of the world's civilizations, accompanied by their self-commitment to their own civilizational norms. With this model of ascending and descending cycles/circles we can also explain Molla Sadra's position quoted at the beginning (Rahmati and Osooli 2019). The cycle he explains in the four journeys goes from God to man and back again. However, it is not a repetitive or unchanging cycle, but an evolutionary one. This cycle is thus comparable to that of Hegel, who begins with God in his "great logic", which, according to his self-assessment, includes the thoughts of God before the creation of the world, then the subsequent creation of the world and man, and finally the evolution of the absolute spirit (Herberg-Rothe 2011).

Sadra's conception is tied to the idea that man perfects himself in this cycle. It is therefore problematic, in my opinion, that Rizvi sees him only as a theoretical philosopher when he argues that Sadra made no political statements (Rizvi). This is certainly true, but like probably all Muslim philosophers, he is not only an abstract thinker, but also a practical philosopher. Yes, man's task is the perfection of his own self and that of the community, which also corresponds to an essential difference between the liberal Western and Islamic understanding of tolerance. We have already discussed the problematic reduction of the concept of tolerance in the Stanford Encyclopedia to a Western construction. This not only overlooks the fact that Western modernity is associated not only with human rights, democracy, and tolerance, but also with the Inquisition, witch hunts, colonization, two world wars, and even Auschwitz (Herberg-Rothe 2019). The defenders of Western modernity always argue that they are sorry for this, but that it has nothing to do with the essence of Western modernity. The critics of the West, on the other hand, argue that the discourses on human rights are just Sunday sermons, while the essence of Western modernity is characterized by destruction, brutal violence, and annihilation. Even the liberal godfathers like John Locke, John Stuart Mill and Kant had a dark side that we seem to have forgotten today, to our detriment (Mojahedi 2016). In my view, we must not make an either/or assessment of Western modernity in the sense that one side is wrong and the other is right. But both are equally right, and therefore both are wrong in their one-sidedness. This contradictory tension has implications for different conceptualizations of tolerance. For tolerance is understood as a right in the liberal understanding, but as a task and duty in the Islamic understanding (Iqtidar 2021).

Sadra's substantive movement is one of the two foundations of Sadra's conception. It is not a movement on immutable substances, as it was still assumed by Aristotle, with whom Sadra dealt extensively. Perhaps it is best

understood as an inner movement and development that is not purely abstract, but real - hence Sadra's call it a substantial movement. An essential feature of his philosophy is the correspondence, the complementarity, of outer and inner development. This has often led to him being understood as a mystic, like Rumi (e.g. (Klooshki et al., 2021). This is certainly partly true, but Sadra cannot be reduced to the spiritual Sufi aspect of his philosophy.

The substantial movement in Sadra's conception is also particularly important because it relativizes, or more precisely balances, the second pillar of his philosophy. This is characterized by the assumption that reality and we human beings are characterized by gradations of intensity of closeness or distance to God. If we do not understand this gradation of intensity as part of human development, this differentiation becomes an unchangeable inequality and thus indirectly legitimizes oppression and an absolute state.

We find such an understanding of the concept of intensity already in the work of the most important constitutional lawyer of the Weimar Republic, Carl Schmitt. In the 1930s, he no longer understood politics as a special sphere of society, but understood every conflict that exceeded a certain limit of intensity as political, even the most private. This position led him not only to the concept of the total state, but also to a frightening closeness to the Nazis. In my view, Schmitt should be balanced by the work of Hannah Arendt (Herberg-Rothe/Son 2018).

This comparison is not to say that Sadra's concept of intensity is problematic, but only that it must be considered within the second pillar of his philosophy, the substantial movement. A similar problem arises in relation to the Indian caste system. Here, too, an initially pure differentiation was transformed (by the British colonial masters) into unchangeable differences, thus legitimizing oppression and domination (Herberg-Rothe 2023 a). Sadra's substantial movement as an ascending cycle is the basis of his implicit understanding of

tolerance, because in this conception every human being as well as every community has the possibility to develop, to reach a greater degree of intensity of closeness to God. I even suspect that the dark sides of Western liberalism (Mojadi 2016, Iqtidar 2021) are caused by the fact that only what is equal to one was tolerated ‐ and all others were denied their own development. In contrast, Mulla Sadra's conception of the substantial movement excludes such reductionism. There is an irrevocable complementarity. The Substantial Movement as an ascending cycle requires a practical philosophy of tolerance, and tolerance as a task and duty (which includes setting limits) is the essential fuel of this cycle. Ultimately, we need to find a floating and progressive balance (Clausewitz, Hegel, Mulla Sadra and Confucius, Herberg‐Rothe/Son 2018) between a liberal and an Islamic understanding of tolerance. As my colleague Peng Lu of Shanghai University put it: In the 19th century, Europeans conquered or shaped almost the entire world. In the 20th century, the defeated civilizations had to learn to live and develop with the victorious West. In the 21st century, the world's civilizations must finally learn to live together. This is the task of our century.

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