

# The Different Faces of Poverty

Ingeborg Gabriel

Amartya Sen, Indian Nobel Prize winner for Economic Sciences and Professor in Cambridge, introduces his book *Development as Freedom* with an Upaniṣadic narrative from the 8th century BC. A married couple discuss which would be the best way to become rich. They consider various strategies. Then however the wife asks her husband, "In which way will property and wealth get us closer to immortality?" Whereupon the husband answers, "Property can help us to lead the life of rich people, but it will help us in no way to attain immortality." Then the wife answers, "But what am I to do with it when it does not help me to reach immortality?"<sup>1</sup>

By this introduction in a book that deals with strategies in fighting against poverty, the author shows in a subtle way the limits of the Economic Sciences and of a purely material approach, which are usually at first associated with the term poverty. This is not intended to relativize misery and destitution, which material poverty causes all over the world. In the same way, particularly also in interreligious dialogue, we should avoid a narrow and purely economic approach.

At the beginning of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle writes, "[...] and wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking; for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else."<sup>2</sup> Fighting against material poverty as a central goal is undisputed. But material goods are a means to reach other goals. The life of humans is an entity in itself. In such an integral perspective, poverty exists wherever human beings can satisfy neither their material, nor their non-material fundamental needs and can therefore not develop in freedom.

For living a fulfilled and happy life, human beings depend on certain goods that are needed to attend to universal human wants.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A. K. Sen, *Development as Freedom*. Oxford, 1999, pp. 13 f.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Book I. 1096 a9.

<sup>3</sup> The teleological ethics of Thomas Aquinas, which he took over from Aristotle, begins with "natural inclinations" (*inclinationes naturales*), which may be found with every human being, and from which follows the ethical duty to develop them, cf. *Summa theol.* I/II q. 9 a. 94, 2. On this topic we should also consult: W. Korff, "Zugänge zum Naturbegriff", in: id., *Wie kann der Mensch glücken. Perspektiven der Ethik* (Serie Piper; 394). München, 1985, pp. 33–47. A new interpretation of Aristotelian philosophy and ethics is presented by Martha Nussbaum,

First, they depend on satisfying their fundamental material needs in order to survive and – what is more – to lead a good and dignified human life. They are food, clothes and shelter, but also basic health care in the case of illness. Human beings depend on education and cultivation of the mind in order to be able to understand the world, and they need adequate training in order to be gainfully employed and to provide for themselves and their family and thus to be able to make their contribution to social welfare.

Second, however, human beings depend on having rights in their political community and social recognition. To have no political rights, an inferior legal status, or to suffer discrimination obviously is a serious form of poverty. In order to develop, human beings need recognition and positive perception of others. Life means giving and receiving in a social context. According to modern understanding, social needs also include the possibility to participate in political and social life, which means to have rights for political participation.

And: third, human beings live their lives in cultural structures, which give to the individual a place where he/she feels at home, identity and moral orientation. In general religions form the basis of these cultural structures and their values. Moreover, man as a transcendental being holds the belief in something to which it is worth dedicating himself and which therewith ranks above material as well as non-material needs.

When there is a lack of the goods that are central for these three fields, life cannot develop, it suffers damage and, depending on how serious the shortage is, it can sink to a level that is below human dignity. This applies to material as well as to social goods, cultural order and religion.<sup>4</sup> At the same time there are manifold mutual influences between the different forms of poverty, which mutually reinforce each other: in general social poverty also follows in the wake of material and educational poverty. The former is, on the other hand, frequently linked with cultural poverty or with a culture of poverty.<sup>5</sup>

In the following I would like to outline in brief the three kinds of poverty in the present situation of the world.

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social ethicist, cf. for instance M. Nussbaum, *Sex & Social Justice*. New York, 1999. She begins with human wants. The term is more appropriate than that of inclinations, since according to our usage they also include negative inclinations, like for instance aggression.

<sup>4</sup> Thus it is said in the Encyclical *Populorum progressio* of 1967: "The development we speak of here cannot be restricted to economic growth alone. To be authentic, it must be well rounded; it must foster the development of each man and of the whole man." (no. 14).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. the classic sociological study of O. Lewis, *La vida. A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty*. London, 1967.

## 1. Material poverty: lacking satisfaction of basic needs

The amount of goods that are available worldwide has multiplied in the last 50 years. Although the world population has tripled since 1950, the average per capita income of every inhabitant of the world today is also three times as high. Yet, these figures obviously say little. For during the same period of time the gap between the poor and the rich has widened to a frightening degree. This is true between countries as well as within the individual countries.<sup>6</sup> Thus the difference in income between the richest and the poorest fifth of the world population was in 1997 about 74:1 – in the meantime it has probably continued to rise – whereas in 1990 it was still 60:1 and in 1950 even 35:1 only. The richest 20 % of the world population control 86 % of the gross national product worldwide, the poorest 20 % however little more than 1 %. If we begin with the top of the affluence pyramid, then, according to the UNDP report, the property of the 200 richest persons is above the total income of 41 % of the world population.<sup>7</sup>

In 1999, 1.2 billion of 6 billion people lived on an income of less than a dollar per day and 2.8 billion – hence almost half the world population – on less than two dollars per day. Even though the number of people living in extreme poverty decreased between 1990 and 1999 from 29 % to 23 %, in absolute figures it stayed practically the same<sup>8</sup>, which means that humanity did not make any remarkable progress in overcoming the scourge of hunger, misery and need. The data, which could be augmented at one's discretion, also signalize that material need is not in the first place a global problem of production, but a global problem of distribution.

However, this has profound effects on the consciousness of people. For, whereas over long periods of history, hunger and want were caused by the insufficient production of goods, this is different today. Humiliation and hopelessness of the poor are all the more bitter, the more their justified expectations to participate in the increasing global abundance of goods are disappointed. It is this tension between possibility and reality, between

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. the detailed data with J. J. Llach, "Gaps and Poverty in the long run", in: The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences (ed.), *Globalisation and Inequalities. Proceedings of the Colloquium 8/9 April 2002*. Vatican City, 2002, pp. 43–66.

<sup>7</sup> We should also consult the *Human Development Report 1999. Globalization with a Human Face*, ed. by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), p. 44.

<sup>8</sup> *Op. cit.* (fn. 7) p. 3 and the *Human Development Report 2002. Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World*, ed. by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), p. 21.

hopes and the lack of their fulfilment, which makes the present situation so scandalous and also politically so explosive and prone to violence.<sup>9</sup>

Whereas in the 1980s and the 1990s – different from the 1960s and 1970s – the problems of fighting poverty were hardly thematized in general consciousness and in international institutions, during recent years a certain positive change has taken place. The “Millennium Development Goals”, which were approved by the United Nations in September 2000 and are called the Charter for the 21st century, mention the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger as the first goal and call for halving the number of people whose income is less than one dollar per day by 2015. Further targets, which should contribute to the fight against poverty, are the achievement of universal primary education, promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women, securing environmental sustainability, improvement of health in various fields, and the progressive advance of a global partnership for development. Such targets and the obligatory monitoring linked with them can strengthen the awareness of the problem and favour political accents and measures.<sup>10</sup> To make them work, however, a framework of complex national and international conditions is required, for the extreme forms of poverty are the hardest to overcome. A first step in this direction was made in March 2002 at the “International Conference on Financing for Development” in Monterrey, N. L., Mexico, where the means to fight poverty were significantly increased. But from a global perspective the real reason for the lack of progress made in overcoming poverty lies in the commercial policy of the industrialized countries and in the indebtedness of many poorer countries. A policy of forced liberalization, which increases the differences in income and proneness to economic crisis particularly in economically weak countries, comes along with the protectionist attitude of the industrialized countries, which are not ready to open their markets to the products of the developing countries and in addition subsidize above all their agricultural products.<sup>11</sup> The necessary repayment of credits under

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. a study by Th. Gurr, *Why Revolutions are Made*. Princeton, 1970, which examined the causes of political violence in 12 countries. This showed that in general the extent and intensity of violence are correlated with the difference between the actual and expected provision with goods. Therewith he demonstrated that disappointed expectations contribute to a greater extent to the arising of violence than the real provision with goods.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. UNDP 2002, *op. cit.* (fn. 8) pp. 19 ff.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. also J. E. Stiglitz, *Die Roaring Nineties. Der entzauberte Boom*. Berlin, 2004, especially chapt. 9: “Gewinner und Verlierer der Globalisierung” (Engl. ed.: *The Roaring Nineties. A New History of the World’s Most Prosperous Decade*. New York, 2003).

unfavourable conditions reduces national budgets and thereby the scope for fighting national poverty in many countries, as do imposed structural adjustment and the lack of capacity (or readiness) to levy higher taxes. Above all, nationally as well as internationally, there is a lack of political will to reduce disparities of income and property effectively and thus establish more social justice.

The lack of basic goods is exacerbated by a lack of education. The importance of knowledge and education increases in view of the growing complexity of the world and on account of technology and globalization. Understanding the world, participating in political life as well as doing qualified professional work needs above all adequate education and training. In the field of literacy, data have improved more substantially than in other fields, in 1998 the quota of schoolchildren was 84 %. Yet, this still leaves 113 million children worldwide without primary education. The number of illiterates is estimated to be 854 million people, 554 million of them women, i. e., 65 %.<sup>12</sup> Since education is not only a basic precondition for a better income, but also for self-determination in private and public life, this form of poverty is particularly serious. It may be surprising, yet, in the OECD countries also there is a functional illiteracy of about 20 %, which is also linked with material poverty. Although the issue here is not absolute poverty, it is nevertheless a relative poverty compared with the rest of the population.

In brief: "Never has the human race enjoyed such an abundance of wealth, resources, and economic power. Yet a huge proportion of the world's citizens is still tormented by hunger and poverty, while countless numbers suffer from total illiteracy."<sup>13</sup> This was written in 1965, but the situation has not changed; as figures show, today the distribution of goods is even less equal than 40 years ago.

More and more voices now speak in favour of reforming an economic order that increases inequalities to this extent, which may be taken as a sign of hope. This becomes obvious at the World Social Fora, which have taken place annually since 2001, the last time in January 2004 in Mumbai, India.

Those religions for which justice is a central ethical concern, are particularly called upon to speak on the national and international levels. This

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<sup>12</sup> UNDP 2002, *op. cit.* (fn. 8) p. 26.

<sup>13</sup> *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World "Gaudium et spes"*, art. 4.

applies to the activities and structuring of international and national institutions, but also – particularly in the industrialized countries – to encouraging a materially more modest lifestyle. For two reasons the present situation is a blind alley: first, more growth of global economy alone does not lead towards a more just distribution. Second: the possibilities of growth are globally limited by natural resources. This means that the supply of goods, which is general in the USA and Europe, cannot be achieved worldwide and is therefore not just either.

## 2. Social poverty: lacking rights and social recognition

Having no rights or being socially discriminated against is another form of poverty. When people have no civil rights anywhere, have no citizenship or when their civil rights and liberties are restricted, then this is a serious form of poverty.<sup>14</sup> According to H. Arendt, a German-Jewish philosopher who was compelled to flee from the National Socialist regime to the United States, the most important right is the right to have rights at all. First, this applies to the millions of refugees worldwide, whose legal status is limited. The same applies, even though to a lesser degree, to ethnic and religious minorities, but also to women, who are denied full civil rights or whose rights are not effectively enforced by their native State.

A lack of rights is linked with the absence of social respect and mostly also with material poverty. An extreme and terrifying example: in totalitarian North Korea an estimated 2 million people have starved to death since 1995. This above all because of a total lack of rights.

But social poverty can also take the form of the lack of social recognition or discrimination. This applies above all to those groups of the population who are not gainfully employed, such as the aged, the sick, the disabled, but also the jobless and people of alien ethnicity, religion or nationality. Since social and family relations become more unstable in the wake of increasing mobility, the growing pressure of work and individualization, social loneliness and isolation of old and sick people are a frequent form of poverty in our societies.

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<sup>14</sup> H. Arendt, "Es gibt nur ein Menschenrecht", in: *Die Wandlung* 4 (1949) pp. 754–770.

### 3. Cultural and religious poverty: lack of identity and orientation

Globalization, the breakdown of communism and the disappointed hopes to participate in the economic affluence are mostly quoted as reasons for the fact that cultural identity since the 1980s has become more and more politically relevant. In this context it is frequently ignored that the erosion of cultural and religious traditions is a real danger to people and societies. This applies to all cultures. But whereas in Europe, despite all discontinuities, the present global culture is joined to previously existing developments, this does not apply to non-European cultures. There, as Habermas said in his famous speech when he was awarded the 'Friedenspreis des deutschen Buchhandels', "suffering felt about the disintegration of traditional forms of life [...] is neither balanced by material recompensation nor by experiencing the creative element inherent in destruction of what has been traditionally accepted."<sup>15</sup>

The concept of cultural identity is equivocal. It includes everything that constitutes a culture, especially its values. This thesis, which is to be found in philosophy with P. Ricoeur, corresponds to the self-understanding of monotheistic religions. At the centre of religious identity are the commandments, values, norms and models, which are to guide actions and to which a central position is due in the life of the individual and of society. "If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all." (Is 7:9). This is the core of the message of all the prophets. Here, taking one's stand means professing God as well as the moral practice that corresponds to revelation, and thus acting according to His commandments.

When these values and moral persuasions are crumbling and lose their power of orientation, then a vacuum develops, which is experienced by the individual as deficiency and inward need and has destructive consequences for society as a whole.<sup>16</sup>

Contact with other cultures and religions as well as fast social and technical changes often lead today to moral disorientation and to ethical relativism. The norms and customs handed-down are no longer taken for granted

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<sup>15</sup> J. Habermas, "Glaube und Wissen" [Faith and Knowledge], in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (2001–10–15) p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> R. Pfau, a Catholic nun and physician, who has been working in Pakistan for 40 years, reports that she has been asked more and more often, "Is there actually a difference between *ḥarām* (mortal sin) and *ḥalāl* (a conduct that pleases God)?" When somebody asks in this way – Pfau continues – this manifests a total lack of orientation and, resulting from it, great inner distress. R. Pfau, *Das Herz hat seine Gründe. Mein Weg*. Freiburg etc., 2003, p. 22.

without ever being called into question and thereby lose their binding strength. However, without moral norms that are acknowledged by all, the quality of living together changes: it becomes more inhumane and violent. This does not exclude there being norms in every society that need to be improved or which should be abolished. But on the whole the erosion of moral persuasion has negative effects on the individual as well above all as on the weaker members of society, and on society as a whole.

Therefore the difficult question arises, what would be an adequate response to this dismemberment of moral traditions.<sup>17</sup> Cutting ourselves off on principle and radically preaching our own values is in the long term not successful in a globalized world. Safeguarding our own cultural, religious and moral identity therefore demands an education that teaches our own system of values and simultaneously respect for other cultures and religions. This can only be done by means of good reasoning and reflection. Proof has to be offered that one's own norms promote life, are a 'path towards life', that they are appropriate for man and do him good. A merely voluntaristic reasoning, according to which the commandments have to be followed because they are decreed by God, does not suffice. Norms have to be followed because they are good, not first and foremost because God decreed them. Hence it follows that others have to be allowed as well to follow the norms they have recognized as being good. In an interdependent world this acknowledging the other and being tolerant towards him is indispensable. All the more so since, giving the other as God's creature the "good eye" (M. Walzer), is in keeping with the innermost nature of these religions.

Apart from a lack of values and norms as moral poverty, there is also a lack of ultimate purposes in life. Generally religions answer comprehensive questions concerned with where we come from and where we are going, the meaning of suffering and of evil, as well as that of our own life and its activities.

They give us a comprehensive view of the world and convey to us the knowledge of the value and dignity we have despite our finite nature. They allow us to see the world as meaningful and ordered and make it possible for us to experience ourselves as transcendental in encountering God or the divine. Within us there is an existential longing to give ourselves and to be

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<sup>17</sup> In the 5th century BC, this relativization of norms by cultural contacts was a reason why Greek philosophical ethics developed. Socratic-Platonic pedagogics as well as Aristotelian ethics are the answer to human identity and social co-existence being endangered by the loss of binding norms.



one with ourselves. When this is not fulfilled by religious faith, a vacuum develops, which is filled with other contents. The secular ideologies of the 19th and 20th centuries have shown that this longing for transcendence also exists in atheist States and can take on a destructive shape, when it is not rightly guided. As history also shows, religions as well are not impervious to fostering wrong forms of dedication. For this very reason reflecting in detail about religious values is so important. But despite all abuses, man needs the hope that grows from believing in what transcends him. Or as it is said in the Bible, “[...] that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.” (Dt 8:3).

#### 4. Conclusions

We live in a world which, the longer the more, is endangered by inward contradictions. It merges into one through the new means of communication. By technical and economic globalization states, cultures and individual persons are more and more mutually netted and thereby also dependent on each other. This growing interdependence exists in all fields of life: in the economy and environment as well as in ideas, values, forms of cultural expression and religions. There are no longer any closed fields. What concerns one part of humanity, has definitive effects on all others. This applies to what is wholesome and to what is evil, to global goods and to global troubles and problems. Fragmentation of the world by the extremely unequal distribution of opportunities in life, but also by cultural and religious contrasts is opposed to this oneness and leads to increasingly stronger tensions, which break forth in conflicts. In face of the many wrong developments, missed chances and increasing polarizations, it often seems to be utopian, when one wants to point out alternatives. Nevertheless, this is the task of religions and their followers, above all of Muslims and Christians. They are not only the largest religious communities, but are particularly challenged by the present situation to find common strategies to overcome poverty.

There are three thoughts which I would like to put for discussion:

As I tried to show in my lecture, there is first the need of an integral perception of man, thematizing and taking seriously all the needs of each individual and of all human beings. These needs are of a material and of a non-material nature. This requires a struggle against poverty, the lack

of rights and the decomposition of social structures, but also overcoming absolute partitions between cultures and religions by dialogue and mutual esteem.

Second, such a comprehensive view of poverty should lead towards a new world view and towards a new lifestyle of the rich, above all in the rich countries. In the Christian tradition, the concept of poverty is used not only negatively, but also positively. The aim of self-chosen poverty as a reduction of wants is that inner freedom, which makes man more capable of a relationship with God and his/her human fellows. This is based on the insight that too much of material goods obstructs the perception of what is essential and can hinder man in his/her human development. Accordingly, there is not only material underdevelopment, but also excessive developments that are detrimental. In the industrialized countries this can often be found today. Beyond that, one may ask whether the various forms of poverty are not linked worldwide: is it not unavoidable that deficiencies of meaning emerge in a world where goods are distributed so unequally and where the knowledge gets lost that the value of material goods for human life is limited?

A third point: it needs a culture of solidarity, including an option for the poor. This applies to individual attitudes as well as to national and international institutions. The Biblical message is that God takes particular care of the poor and the rightless. Therefore, this view of the world in the perspective of those whose position is marginal must also be the view of the faithful. Worldwide there is an awareness that determined steps to change the global order are necessary, if anarchic conditions are to be avoided in the long run. It is the task of Christians and Christian Churches to support these endeavours in every possible way. It would be interesting to hear about the relevant attitude of Islam.

The *Pastoral Constitution "Gaudium et spes"* of Vatican II says, "God, who has fatherly concern for everyone, has willed that all men should constitute one family and treat one another in a spirit of brotherhood" (art. 24). The challenge, based on the moral responsibility of our individual faiths, is to make a strong effort to ensure that this hope is not extinguished.

## Questions and Interventions

globalization has legal and cultural dimensions too

**OTT** I think we may welcome the extension of the concept of globalization and its negative consequences to the cultural and legal aspects. Do any landmark documents, ideas or strategies exist that demonstrate how to develop the concept of globalization along the lines of Professor Gabriel's paper?

**GABRIEL** The aforementioned aspects are frequently seen isolated from one another. There are, however, also valuable documents – in particular, I am thinking of the UN “Millennium Development Goals” (MDGs) and the “Progress Reports” that are part of it – that deal with the material aspect of the struggle against poverty and point at the same time to this interrelationship especially between the issue of poverty and the legal aspect. Amartya Sen has also shown remarkable approaches towards the intertwining between the realm of law and material poverty. In a similar way even to include the level of cultural and religious values, is a difficult job. In this context, however, the forum of our Round Table could help preparing the ground and developing from Christian and Muslim perspectives approaches that continue these perspectives beyond the political and economic levels and deal with certain cultural values.

**POTZ** A paper of the International Labour Organization (ILO), to which I am going to refer extensively in my own presentation [s. below pp. 73–81], tries to deal with this subject matter, perhaps not so much from the cultural but from the social aspect of the globalization process.

... and a religious dimension

**KHODR** When we read the titles of the papers that are presented in this conference and reflect on what we heard this morning, I get the impression that our conference could also take place in one of the UN organizations. Everything sounds humanistic, good and profitable, but still humanistic. And yet, are there not a lot of things to be said in this context from a religious, and more closely from a common Islamic and Christian view point? Can we easily think of another subject in which Christianity and Islam are so much in agreement as regarding the issues of poverty and injustice, discussed here in our conference?

God's option for the poor

**GABRIEL** Naturally, I could have given to my paper a clear Biblical and theological orientation. What we nowadays happen to summarize in our Christian tra-

dition in the concept of the “option for the poor” is like a central thread that goes through the Old and New Testament. No doubt, with a view to the Bible we have to speak of God’s option for the poor. The said option concerns both the perspective of election – if only we think of David, the youngest son, or of Mary, a woman, being elected, and if we think of what is said in Deuteronomy about the Israelites that they are elected by God not because they are a big people, but a small one – as well as the perspective of solidarity with the poor: whether we think of the oppressed Israelites in Egypt who are freed in the Exodus (the true central idea in the Old Testament), or of the liberation of the poor through Jesus Christ (the central idea in his proclamation, see Lk 4:17 f.) and in the Sermon on the Mount, where it says, “Blessed are you who are poor [...]” (see Lk 6:20–26).

**BSTEH** In the course of our meeting we will still have ample opportunity to deal with the various aspects of the complex subject matter of poverty and injustice and to convey something like a general view on it.

**KHOURY** Two small comments on ‘illiteracy’. Which are the criteria? The conventional criterion is seen in the ability or inability to read and write. But should we not speak of a partial literacy nowadays with regard to the fact that the TV, to a certain degree, is in a position to replace the book? And concerning the issue of illiteracy and culture: Louis Gardet, the great orientalist, once said with reference to some parts of the Muslim world – and I think it was rightly said – that a most remarkable understanding and culture may be found in illiterates. Dealing with the phenomenon, we should take this into consideration and see illiteracy in a more differentiated manner.

is humanity mature for a humane globalization? Finally, a question with reference to the positive and negative aspects of globalization: is present humanity mature for a humane globalization? Or does this irreversible process of globalization rather plunge humanity into some kind of adventure that expects too much of us? If this is a reasonable objection, how do we then become ripe for a humane globalization? Not only theoretically, but practically – how do we get there?

**GABRIEL** When speaking of 20 % functional illiteracy in our societies, I was referring to people who are incapable, for example, of reading instructions for equipment that is needed, and similar things. As far as the relationship between illiteracy and culture is concerned, undoubtedly, among illiterates too understanding and culture may be found. Yet in our globalized world, people who are generally incapable of partaking in discourses are

necessarily marginalized. In our world, all cultural traditions get caught up in the maelstrom of trends and developments, in which they must be able to maintain their position – and this can only happen on grounds of literate culture. Illiterate cultures, however, run into the danger of finding themselves, as it were, all of a sudden in reservations; they are necessarily the weaker ones, and this is a type of poverty.

The question, to what extent people cannot cope with globalization, certainly is the central question. Vatican II affirms that to socialization, in other words, to globalization a certain degree of personalization must correspond. So, also for me, the big question is, whether this ongoing process as a whole and in all detail is hopelessly too much for us.

**BSTEH** In the context of our dialogue initiatives, once our societies need prophetic criticism I was asked what we need most in our age. I answered: “prophets.” And I added that, for me, these are not people who compete with the great historical prophets, but people who dare to stand up in their societies and criticize them – whether religious societies in the narrower sense or cultural and political societies on national and international levels. Of whom would I be thinking here? I mentioned the name of Andrej Sacharov. Personalities like that we would need in the same way as structural changes. Whether in our own Church, in other religious communities, in politics, wherever and any time.

**BELARBI** According to Hannah Arendt, the most important right is the right to have rights at all. Her statement, cited in the previous lecture, makes me think about the world-wide predicament of migrants of the migrants’ situation worldwide, for there are more than 150 million migrants in our world, and they have no rights. There is the UN “International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families” (1990), but this Convention was only ratified by the countries of origin, not by the receiving ones in Europe, by the USA, the Gulf States, etc. This implies a heavy responsibility of the community of States and the UN as well.

**MARBOE** In the framework of his previously published basic work on the international protection of human rights, Professor Manfred Nowak was recently ranking the aforementioned UN Convention among the seven central international conventions on human rights<sup>1</sup>, although we have to admit that it was not yet ratified by the recipient countries.

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<sup>1</sup> M. Nowak, *Introduction to the International Human Rights Regime*. Leiden, 2003, p. 94.

humanistic  
foundation and  
specific religious  
approaches

**GABRIEL** With reference to the intervention of Msgr. Khodr, on the one hand I would like to stress the fact that precisely from the perspective of our religions this humanistic foundation is of decisive significance, which we must not repudiate again; on the other hand, the specific approach of each and every religion last but not least with regard to the big problem areas of poverty and injustice must always be taken seriously. For that reason I would be interested in a reaction from the Muslim side to the Biblical statements about poverty the way I have mentioned them very briefly in my presentation.