

A Losing Battle?

“Islamwissenschaft” in the Times of Neoliberalism, IS, PEGIDA... and Trump

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Abstract

Deutsch: Der vorliegende Beitrag versucht die Herausforderungen zu beschreiben, denen sich die Islamwissenschaft in Zeiten wachsender Islamangst und -feindlichkeit sowie einer Reaktualisierung (neo)orientalistischer Deutungsmuster, ausgelöst durch weltweiten Terror im Namen des Islam und die massive Zuwanderung ‘orientalischer’ Flüchtlinge, gegenübersteht. Er versucht sodann die Möglichkeiten auszuloten, die dem Fach unter Rahmenbedingungen, die von einer Durchökonomisierung des Wissenschaftsbetriebs, einem mediendominierten öffentlichen Diskurs, der Fragmentierung westlicher Gesellschaften und den Zwängen einer hegemonialen marktorientierten neoliberalen Ideologie geprägt sind, zur Verfügung stehen.

English: This contribution is an attempt to describe the challenges *Islamwissenschaft* has to face in a time of increased Islamophobia and (neo)Orientalism, triggered by worldwide Islamist terrorism and large-scale immigration of ‘Oriental’ refugees; and to fathom the possibilities the discipline has to react to these challenges in a setting characterised by corporatised academia, media-dominated public discourse, the fragmentation of Western societies, and the constraints of a hegemonic neoliberal market ideology.

Keywords: Islamophobia, (neo)Orientalism, neoliberalism, corporate universities, *Islamwissenschaft* and the media, the ‘expert’

The setting and the problem

Increased violence in the Middle East after the toppling of Saddam Hussein in Iraq and the removal, in the course of the ‘Arab Spring’, of a number of old regimes in other countries (Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen), as well as the collapse of Syria as we knew it before 2011; the rise of the so-called Islamic State;¹ the unbearable political and economic situation in these (but also many African) countries—all this has triggered massive emigration, unprecedented in its scale, resulting in a corresponding influx of refugees from the Mid-East and Africa into the ‘Fortress Europe’.

The deep irritation, feeling of insecurity, fears and diffuse anxieties evoked in larger sectors of the local population by the sudden arrival of thousands of mainly Muslim refugees, but also the increased social unrest among ‘traditional’ immigrants in countries like France; incidents like the sexual assaults on local women by young Muslim refugees in Cologne on New Year’s Eve 2015/16;² almost daily news about IS cruelties (beheadings) and the numerous terror acts committed in the

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1 Short for *Islamic State in Iraq and Syria* (ISIS) or *...in Iraq and the Levant* (ISIL), Arabic *al-Dawlah al-islāmiyyah fi ‘l-‘Irāq wa’l-Shām* (DĀ‘ĪŠ).

2 For a rather comprehensive overview in English cf., e.g., <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Year's_Eve_sexual_assaults_in_Germany> (last accessed 25 Nov. 2016).

name of Islam,³ in some cases by assassins who entered the country as refugees—these are probably the main factors that have further nourished an already widespread Islamophobia⁴ and supplied highly flammable fuel to the rhetoric of outright anti-Islamic movements like the German PEGIDA⁵ and AFD⁶ or the French Front National, to name only a few. In the US, the success of Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential elections owes itself to a large degree to the support he gained from those who liked his anti-Islam pronouncements.

A sweepingly generalizing, intransigent and unamenable anti-Islamic attitude is particularly found among those—steadily growing—parts of society that no longer feel themselves represented by the sitting governments, excluded from the ‘games’ of ‘the top brass’ as well as traditional society as a whole and who therefore have begun to ‘step out’, no longer recognizing the legitimacy of democratically elected governments nor central institutions of civil society like the mainstream media (accusing, for instance, the press as “Lügenpresse”⁷).

Academics from the field of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, too, have increasingly come under attack as part, or at least sympathisers, of the elite-establishment and their assumed pro-Islamic leanings. Colleagues in Germany, for instance, who, after the Cologne incidents, had expressed in public their deep concern about an *in toto* criminalisation of Islam and instead called for a non-religious interpretation of the assaults, told me that they had received ‘shit storms’ on Facebook, were reviled for being handymen of the Evil, Moslems’ bitches, scorned as blithering idiots or, at best, naïve do-gooders or ‘Islamophilic’ elitist babblers without any idea about the situation in the world.

The doubt in the specialist’s expertise is however not limited to the lumpen corners of society from where the comments just quoted obviously stem. A distant relative of mine, for example, a retired bank director (and otherwise a very nice person) whom I had sent a short report about my impressions from a trip to Egypt in January 2016 (in which the word “Islam” was not mentioned even once!) wrote to me: I understand of course that your job requires you to travel to Arab countries; but, without wanting to offend you, I have to tell you: “I detest Islam because I believe it is a

3 Among the most prominent attacks for which IS has claimed responsibility were (in chronological order): 2014 Brussels (May: Jewish Museum); 2015 Copenhagen (Feb.), Tunis (March: Bardo), Sousse (June), Egypt/Russia (Oct.: Metrojet flight), Beirut (Nov.: Burj al-Barajneh), Paris (Nov.: Bataclan); 2016: Istanbul (Jan., March, June: Atatürk Airport), Brussels (March: Airport), Ansbach (July) – <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_terrorist_incidents_linked_to_ISIL>. – Islamist terrorism as such is of course a much older phenomenon, cf. Lockman, *Contending Visions*, 226, describing how corresponding “terrorology” was “the burgeoning field” already by the 1980s. The most important event since then has certainly been the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York on Sept. 11, 2001.

4 A French colleague (Yves Gonzalez-Quijano) reported that Islamophobia in France has reached a stage where people on public transport anxiously begin to look for the emergency exit as soon as a person sitting opposite them opens an Arabic newspaper – Personal communication, Nov. 2015.

5 *Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes* (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident), founded in Dresden in October 2014. – For a collection of essays that attempt at an analysis of the movement, cf. Rehberg (et al., eds.), *PEGIDA*.

6 *Alternative für Deutschland* (Alternative for Germany), founded Feb. 2013.

7 The term came into wider use particularly during WWI to express the German-Austrian perspective on the enemy’s press, then during the Nazi era where the regime’s propaganda exploited it in its rhetoric against NS-critical journalism, allegedly plotted by a conspiracy of worldwide communism and Judaism. – A group of critical linguists chose it as the “Unwort ” (un-word, or non-word) of the year 2014, cf. <[https:// de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unwort_des_Jahres_\(Deutschland\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unwort_des_Jahres_(Deutschland))>.

heresy and because Christendom is the antithesis of the fanaticism of these people. [...] I feel sorry [!] for all those who, despite everything, still seek a dialogue with the Moslem world".⁸

Talking to 'enlightened' intellectuals from the media is often in no way easier. Any 'expert' who is unable to reduce his/her explanations or criticism to simple concise statements, intelligible to all, tends to be stigmatised as a wisenheimer, especially so when s/he does not produce knowledge that confirms public opinion.⁹

Learned the lesson?

Could *Islamwissenschaft* (or any of the Middle East-related sister disciplines, esp. Middle East Studies) have foreseen the dramatic growth of Islamophobia? Could it perhaps have prevented the emergence, or at least helped to contain the far-reaching spread, of the now ubiquitous 'neo-Orientalism'¹⁰ and its essentialist reduction of an allegedly 'Other', *the Muslim, the Oriental*? Or has academia perhaps even contributed to create the current situation?

Academia has changed profoundly since the days when the dogged hairsplitting disputes of learned *magistri et professores* still could inspire German composer Richard Strauss to render their combats, smirkingly, as a malicious fugato in his famous tone poem *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1896),¹¹ or when writer Arno Schmidt in his *Gelehrtenrepublik* (1957) imagined their future (in 2008) on an island, isolated from the rest of the world, with the big geniuses still quarrelling and eventually destroying their own refugium.¹² The anti-authoritarian movement of the 1960/70s that attacked the "fust of 1000 years under the [academics'] robes",¹³ has done away with this world.

As a result of this and other factors, in particular also the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), academic approaches to the Middle East, too, changed considerably; we may speak of a generational shift, both in a biological and epistemological sense. Teachers and students of the Middle East and Islam became conscious of Orientalist discourse, "and the rejection of cultural essentialism and of the radical dichotomisation of East and West [...] is now] taken as plain common sense by many in the field."¹⁴ Additionally triggered by the oil crisis of the 1970s and the rise of

8 'Uncle' N.N., email March 30, 2016.

9 No wonder then that Reinhard Schulze started a presentation he gave to a non-academic public with a preliminary remark: "I am speaking to you as an academic, I am not a journalist. That is, I will try to translate academic knowledge into public knowledge, which is not always an easy job to do." – "Die arabischen Revolten und die Zukunft der Moderne", presentation given on Jan. 25, 2014, in the framework of a series of lectures entitled *Bedrohte Werte? Europa und der Nahe Osten unter Globalisierungsdruck*, arranged by Forum für Universität und Gesellschaft, University of Bern / CH; available on <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oy5Lhmzr6RI>> (last accessed 27 Nov. 2016).

10 'Neo-Orientalism' is termed a perspective that "recapitulate[s] key elements of Orientalism in a contemporary setting" – Lockman, *Contending Visions*, 219.

11 *Also sprach Zarathustra*, op. 30, 6th section "Von der Wissenschaft" (Of Science and Learning).

12 Quite significantly, Schmidt contrasted, already then, the snotty-brash tone of the American journalist-narrator with the style of the pettifogging footnote-remarks added by his fictional translator, a retired school principal.

13 The original German text ("Unter den Talaren – Muff von 1000 Jahren") was on a banner unfolded by revolting students at Hamburg University on November 09, 1967 – <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unter_den_Talaren_-_Muff_von_1000_Jahren>.

14 Lockman, *Contending Visions*, 215.

Islamism,¹⁵ scholars began to leave their ‘ivory towers’, opened up to the contemporary Middle East, learned to *speak* Arabic, and travelled regularly. A previously often exoticising and/or essentialist treatment of the ‘Orient’ was replaced by historical approaches and Middle East area studies showing a high degree of theoretical reflection and methodological awareness. Many academics no longer shied away from contact with the media; there has even developed a whole branch of disciplines and (not seldom quasi-autonomous) institutions¹⁶ as well as many academically-trained ‘Islam and Middle East experts’ who are regularly in the media and who are also heard and invited by political decision-makers.¹⁷

Thanks to these changes, *Islamwissenschaft* was able to react adequately when the old Orientalist rhetoric began to flare up again in public during the (2nd) Gulf War; when the allies’ invasion into Iraq was legitimised with reference to Samuel P. Huntington’s doctrine of a “clash of civilisations”;¹⁸ and when there were tendencies to ‘co-opt’ Middle East area studies and turn them into mere caterers of policy makers¹⁹ or intelligence services. In Germany, two colleagues even managed to silence *the* two big media stars of the time who until then had had a considerable share in buttressing old Orientalist stereotypes in German-speaking countries.²⁰

Positive developments and successes of this kind notwithstanding, Orientalist discourse could never be completely eradicated in a world where terror in the name of Islam has become a familiar item in the daily news. No wonder then that Huntington’s ideas shoot up again and again under certain constellations,²¹ both among the educated and in more ‘lumpenised’ versions.²² But is in-

15 “Whole forests were sacrificed for the paper needed to produce the hundreds of books and thousands of articles and conference papers that were produced on Islam and Islamism from the 1970s onward, amidst ongoing debates about how to interpret and explain this phenomenon” – Lockman, *Contending Visions*, 216.

16 Reflected, for example, in the foundation, in 1993, of DAVO (Deutsche Arbeitsgemeinschaft Vorderer Orient = German Middle East Studies Association for Contemporary Research and Documentation) as a ‘separatist’ movement, trying to create an alternative to the time-honoured DMG (Deutsche Morgenländische [!] Gesellschaft, a foundation of 1845). – In many places, an all-round ‘demonisation’ of old-fashioned Islamic studies has even led to the quasi-extinction of earlier key areas of research: “En effet”, writes L. Dakhli, describing the situation in France today, “l’islamologie en tant que telle—à savoir l’étude de l’islam comme religion et système de pensée—est une discipline universitaire quasi moribonde [!]” – Dakhli, “L’islamologie”, 6.

17 Cf., e.g., Dakhli, “L’islamologie”, 11, reporting that after the Paris attacks, the French Assemblée nationale and the Senate had hearings with a number of researchers.

18 Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?”, *Foreign Affairs*, 72/3 (1993), 22-49. – On the debate and consequences of this article cf. Lockman, *Contending Visions*, 233-36.

19 Middle East “area studies proved more resilient than some had expected early in the 1990s,” as Lockman, *Contending Visions*, 238 has it.

20 Gernot Rotter (1992) proved ‘expert’ Gerhard Konzelmann to be a plagiarist. Verena Klemm and Karin Hörner (eds., 1992) demonstrated that Peter Scholl-Latour’s approach was thoroughly essentialist-colonialist, a remnant reminiscent of the time this ‘expert’ had served in the French Foreign Legion.

21 Cf. Lockman, *Contending Visions*, 218, where the author aptly describes how an article by B. Lewis of 1990 (pre-dating Huntington but very much in the same vein) “—published just as the military forces of the United States and its allies were massing for the campaign that would expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait—offered Americans an accessible and satisfying explanation [... about an allegedly] profound defect in Islamic civilization.”

22 Cf., e.g., the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ)’s 2006 election slogan “Daham statt Islam” (roughly: we want to feel *daham*, Austrian German for ‘at home’, not like *in Islam*); the Swiss People’s Party (SVP)’s (anti-) “minaret initiative” (2008) or their slogan “Maria statt Scharia” (Mary instead of Shari’ah; on an election poster 2009, showing “Maria”, a smiling blond—assume: Swiss—woman on the left, as opposed to, on the right hand side, two eyes behind bars, surrounded by a burqa); the slogan was later copied by the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD) in their 2013 election campaign.

creased terrorism sufficient to explain neo-Orientalism and the appeal an essentialist reduction of the facts exercises on larger sectors of Western societies? Why does 'Islam' show such a persistence as a universal explanatory category, to the extent that it will be on the lips of your interlocutor even when you have talked a long time to him/her and presented convincing arguments that 'all that' doesn't have anything to do with the religion itself?²³ – In my opinion, the phenomenon can be better understood by looking at two things: (a) the function of the 'Orient' and Islam as the West's 'garbage dump', and (b) the pervasion of the media as well as academia by a neoliberal market mentality. I tend to ascribe to these two a higher degree of responsibility precisely because they owe their power mainly to their (quasi-) invisibility in public.²⁴

The 'Orient' as the West's garbage dump

Since E. Said's *Orientalism* we know that a discursive construction of the 'Orient' as the exotic Other, a realm of sensual pleasures, but also of oppression, despotism and barbarous cruelty, is a way in which Western societies tend to dispose of all the lasciviousness, repression, cruelty, and lack of freedom that is found in their own cultures. "The various stereotypes," writes P. Verhaeghe about classifying patterns like 'indigenous population vs. ethnic minorities', "'our' Judaeo-Christian culture vs. "backward" Islam', or 'hard-working middle classes vs. scroungers', "have one thing in common: they serve to make us feel superior. *We* are more civilised, more intelligent, work harder,"²⁵ the West is "the bearer of individualism, liberalism, democracy, free markets and the like" while the non-Western, incl. Islam, is "none of the above."²⁶

Such patterns remain appealing, or become all the more appealing again, in societies that, like our contemporary Western societies, feel weak and vulnerable (threatened by terror, the "waves" of refugees and "creeping Islamisation") and where we in addition find larger groups of previously politically inactive "losers' who feel, often correctly, they have no voice or role to play in the political establishment. When political debate no longer speaks to us, people become responsive instead to slogans, symbols and sensation. To the admirers of Trump, for example, facts and arguments appear irrelevant."²⁷

23 Cf. the e-mail exchange with 'Uncle N.N.', referred to in [fn. 8](#).

24 Cf. Monbiot, "Neoliberalism", who sees the "anonymity" of neoliberalism as "both a symptom and cause of its power". – By 'quasi-' invisibility I mean the fact that although information on, and criticism of, both neo-Orientalism and the neoliberal media are widely available and not difficult to access, they do not, as part of a 'highbrow' elite culture, really surface nor become part of a wider public opinion.

25 Verhaeghe, *What About Me?*, (Ch. 1: Identity).

26 Lockman, *Contending Visions*, 236, quoting from R. Mottahedeh, "The Clash of Civilizations: An Islamicist's Critique," *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review*, 2 (1996), 1-26.

27 Monbiot, "Neoliberalism", quoting journalist Chris Hedges. – I tend to agree with Hegel and Bourdieu (as summarized by Eriksen & Vetlesen, "Nyliberalismens ektefødte barn"; my translation from Norwegian, S.G.): "Those who fall outside the job market and other forms of organized communities, get marginalized to such an extent that they end up being invisible. According to Hegel, the loss of access to arenas from which they could derive recognition and self-esteem gives rise to a 'lumpen mentality' in the form of 'an internal revolt against the rich, against society, against the government.' Envy and hatred take root in those who drop out and are directed at those who have the most. Hegel pointed to England as the most developed industrial nation in its time, where great wealth existed side by side with the worst poverty and the most alienated mob. The more society is characterized by what Hegel called the atomistic spirit of self-sufficient individualism, the more the social and moral ties between individuals—and classes—deteriorate. In this case there is an increased risk that those who drop out resort to violence, out of an experience of being without real opportunities and rights. They have little to lose. Violence

The rise of neo-Orientalist reductionism, Islamophobia and Islam hate has thus less to do with the rise of jihadi terrorism than with the ‘garbage dump’ function Islam and ‘the Orient’ fulfil in our own contemporary societies. But while ‘Islam’, ‘Islamism’, ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ etc. are omnipresent as standard attributes in reports about terrorist attacks or assaults on women, and while war and violence are the predominating topics in news coverage of the Middle East, the garbage dump function that this discourse has for us, and its importance for the formation of our ‘Western’ identity²⁸ and a (re)affirmation of ‘our’ sense of self-worth²⁹ are rarely on the agenda, they remain almost invisible. Instead, it feels natural that the Middle East hardly appears in the media as anything else than as a site of violence, and that assassins are qualified as ‘Muslim’ as if by default.

Neoliberalism in media and academia

The media, on the other hand, would find it hard *not* to report about acts of violence in the Middle East or the ‘Muslim’ identity of an assassin; they regard it as their duty, and a mandate from the public, to report about what society at large is interested in. But they also are neoliberal economic enterprises. In these, public mandate and the demand of ‘the market’ tend to fuse. You cannot survive unless you offer products that sell. Although neoliberalism and the ‘logic of the market’ have been widely criticised by many and although most people are aware of its mechanisms and constraints, it is rarely ever actively worked against—its laws are internalised and regarded as if they were laws of nature,³⁰ “like gravity or atmospheric pressure”,³¹ and/or common sense. And it also tolerates a lot of critique because, after all, also ‘niche products’ have a market and the tolerance of critique only serves as a confirmation of the moral legitimacy of the ‘free’ and ‘democratic’ system; as the opinion of a tiny elite it does not really matter.

Neoliberal economy and society’s need for a ‘garbage dump’ taken together, we get a very powerful, quasi self-stabilising system: the media report on *Islamist* terrorism, *Islamic* State violence, and *Muslim* assassins (and in this way tag the corresponding acts as ‘Islamic’, classifiable with the analytic category ‘Islam’), arguing that they have to report on such issues in the way they do because it is their duty as organs of civil society (while at the same time each news item is also a product they sell); society at large readily accepts (= buys) this kind of daily news because it con-

forces society who has no use for them, to see them, if only to knock them down. [...] Where Hegel two hundred years ago warned against the danger of violence from people excluded both materially and spiritually, Bourdieu [...] warned that the rise of the ‘flexible workforce’ [...] would result in more subtle forms of exploitation of those who are still in employment. Self-exploitation, imposed from outside (but eventually internalized), makes the individual regard him/herself as a commodity for the market value of which s/he alone bears responsibility. Critique is redefined and no longer directed against class and the system’s structure; instead it becomes imperative to manage one’s own responsibility and be a winner. Weakness is synonymous with self-contempt and the danger of becoming exploited by the others. Since this is hard to acknowledge openly, weakness must be located in others and attacked there, a strategy that promises to experience strength and justified dominance.”

28 In many respects, Islamism also “replaced communism as the gravest threat facing the West (and Israel)”, especially since the 1990s, when the Soviet Union ceased to exist and “the specter of Soviet-sponsored ‘international terrorism’ gave way to the specter of ‘Islamic terrorism’”—Lockman, *Contending Visions*, 221 and 230, respectively.

29 Cf. Donald Trump’s promise to make America “great *again*.” The slogan was first used, already in 1980, by Ronald Reagan, cf. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Make_America_Great_Again>.

30 Cf. Monbiot’s intro paragraph to his article (2016) about neoliberalism: “Imagine if the people of the Soviet Union had never heard of communism. The ideology that dominates our lives has, for most of us, no name. Mention it [sc. neoliberalism] in conversation and you’ll be rewarded with a shrug.”

31 Monbiot, “Neoliberalism”.

firms their view of ‘the Other’, which makes them feel superior and, if things don’t happen at home, also at ease—a psychological benefit that already J. W. von Goethe aptly highlighted in his famous *Faust* (1808), where he let an average citizen pronounce:

On holidays there’s nothing I like better
 Than talking about war and war’s display,
 When in Turkey³² far away,
 People one another batter.
 You sit by the window: have a glass:
 See the bright boats glide down the river,
 Then you walk back home and bless
 Its peacefulness, and peace, forever.

And another citizen agrees:

Neighbour, yes! I like that too:
 Let them go and break their heads,
 Make the mess they often do:
 So long as we’re safe in our beds.³³

The media, in turn, feel confirmed because an overwhelmingly neo-Orientalist selection of topics (war, violence, cruelty, oppression, etc.) sells well, and good sales serve as proof that they fulfil their public mandate, and so on. Clichés and the stereotypical categories under which the Middle East and ‘the Oriental/Muslim’ have traditionally been perceived are thus reproduced and further ‘hammered in’, obeying the ‘laws of the market’.³⁴

The book market is no exception here either. In order for a manuscript to be published it has to pass a publisher’s sales department. The latter makes its calculations according to the expected demand of ‘the market’, which, as we saw, is mainly governed by public discourse, which in turn is to a large extent dependent on the media, who in turn produce what they think sells best on the market ...

Academia, too, forms in many respects part of this self-stabilising circle, in this way contributing to making it into a hegemonic ideology. Let us ‘zoom in’ from above.

Corresponding to the citizens’ neoliberal definition as “consumers, whose democratic choices are best exercised by buying and selling,”³⁵ students are defined, since the late 1990s, less as youth

32 I.e., the Ottoman Empire.

33 Goethe, *Faust*, I, “In Front of the City-Gate”, verses 860 ff. – German original: “(Andrer Bürger:) Nichts Bessers weiß ich mir an Sonn- und Feiertagen / Als ein Gespräch von Krieg und Kriegsgeschrei, / Wenn hinten, weit, in der Türkei, / Die Völker auf einander schlagen. / Man steht am Fenster, trinkt sein Gläschen aus / Und sieht den Fluß hinab die bunten Schiffe gleiten; / Dann kehrt man Abends froh nach Haus, / Und segnet Fried’ und Friedenszeiten. / (Dritter Bürger:) Herr Nachbar, ja! so lass’ ich’s auch geschehn: / Sie mögen sich die Köpfe spalten, / Mag alles durch einander gehn; / Doch nur zu Hause bleib’s beim Alten.” – The English translation given above is by A. S. Kline, available at <<http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/German/FaustIScenesItoIII.htm>>.

34 Mystery and exoticism has, to a large extent, disappeared from contemporary reports on the Middle East. These categories continue, however, to live a marginalised life in history programs on TV or touristic advertising for ‘safe’ countries from the region, like Dubai, or Morocco.

35 Monbiot, “Neoliberalism”.

who should get an opportunity for self-formation (Humboldt'ian *Bildung*³⁶) than as consumers of a commodity (competence-oriented learning, vocational training) that increases their own value (*as commodities* themselves) on the job market.³⁷ It has become common to describe learning in economic terms: knowledge is “human capital”, skills are a “capital that young people must learn to maintain and develop”, and studying is a “long-term investment”.³⁸

Corresponding to the equation of universities with economic enterprises (\approx ‘factories’), high quantities of applicants (\approx ‘acquired raw material’) ensure university departments a higher share in allocations from the state, and a student who graduates (= leaves the ‘assembly-line’ as a marketable ‘product’) in standardised time equals a number of bonus points awarded to the departments.³⁹ Because *en masse* production of graduates is what matters, academia, like “public services of every kind,” has to measure productivity. To this end, it has introduced rigid regulation and control systems, which have necessitated more bureaucracy, which in turn made it “subject to a pettifogging, stifling regime of assessment and monitoring,”⁴⁰ which in turn has typically resulted—on both the researcher-teachers’ and the students’ side—in a destruction of intrinsic motivation.⁴¹

For the Humanities, the situation is even tougher than for the ‘hard’ sciences. Given that they usually do not produce much of a high market value—‘only’ words, ideas, opinions—the neoliberal state is reluctant to invest in ‘philosophers’ and instead refers researchers to (the neoliberal method of financing:) external funding. It goes almost without saying that the latter, too, is hardly ever granted unless a project conforms to the laws of the market, so you should make it as ‘sexy’ as possible.⁴²

In academic publishing, too, “measuring and measurability determine what quality is,”⁴³ “anything that falls outside the measuring system doesn’t count anymore, and is deemed unproduc-

36 “intended as a process of education and maturation, in which an optimally rich culture guarantees a rich palette of potential identification”, Verhaeghe, *What About Me?*, 152. – On Humboldt’s idea, cf., e.g., Fohrmann, *Im Spiegel des Geldes*, Ch. 1.

37 Cf. Kümmel, “Unsere vorgegaukelte Freiheit”, who formulates (in my translation from German): “The freedom to form/create oneself [sich selbst zu erschaffen] has given way to the necessity of permanent self-optimization”.

38 Cf. Bombardelli, review of Verhaeghe, *What About Me?*, 88. – Cf. also Berg & Seeber, *The Slow Professor*, 63, describing the corresponding corporate university’s output-oriented language of “new new findings, technology transfer, knowledge economy, grant generation, frontier research, efficiency, and accountability” as “*prodspeak*”, suggesting a parallel to the “*newspeak*” of G. Orwell’s dystopian 1984.

39 Formerly a common (and sometimes even praiseworthy) phenomenon, the 15-and-more terms long-time student has become the bugbear of university managers, and the nightmare of those who are supposed to get a student through in a default ‘production period’ of 3 (BA) or 5 (MA) years.

40 Monbiot, “Neoliberalism”.

41 What Verhaeghe says about the motivation of employees applies, to a large degree, also to academic staff: “Autonomy and individual control vanish, to be replaced by quantitative evaluation, performance interviews, and audits. Deprived of a say over their work, employees become less committed (“They don’t listen anyway”), and their sense of responsibility diminishes (“As long as I do things by the book, they can’t touch me”)” – as summarized in Bombardelli, review Verhaeghe, 88. – Cf. also science journalist Harald Lesch’s description of the regular German school system: “Die Schüler, die da rein müssen, haben den Hals dick; die Eltern, die ihre Kinder da reinschicken, haben den Hals dick; die Lehrer, die morgens da rein müssen, weil die Schüler schon da sind, haben den Hals dick”, in: “Unser Schulsystem ist Mist!”, contribution to *Terra X – Lesch & Co*, ZDF, Sept. 21, 2016, <<https://www.zdf.de/dokumentation/terra-x/unser-schulsystem-ist-mist-102.html>>, also at several locations in YouTube, e.g., <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-q0Sm8Kldn0>> (last retrieved 27 Nov. 2016).

42 often necessitating a considerable degree of dissimulation and cheating, not to say: hypocrisy.

43 Kümmel, “Unsere vorgegaukelte Freiheit”, summarising Verhaeghe 2014.

tive.”⁴⁴ Whatever you publish is valued according to citation indices, and rigid rating-systems hierarchise your ‘publication outlets’ according to their ‘branding’ (= market value).⁴⁵ Big names dominate the publishing ‘industry’, and the language of the global markets, English, is prioritised to the extent that non-English publications count little, if anything,⁴⁶ and run the risk of being overlooked or outright ignored.⁴⁷

The necessity to adapt to the seemingly nature-given ‘laws of the market’ also forces departments to ‘slim down’; in order to remain ‘robust’ and ‘sustainable’ they have to throw over board all apparently ‘irrelevant ballast’, esp. sub-disciplines dealing with cultural issues, and instead focus on what is considered ‘of relevance for society’. For *Islamwissenschaft* and related disciplines this means that it is always under a certain pressure to focus on topics that are (or have a chance to become) somehow prominent (= selling well) in public discourse about the so-called ‘Islamic’ world. Public discourse, however, is, as we saw above, mainly mass media discourse, and mass media discourse is governed by the ‘laws of the market’.

In this logic, it does not sound as a reasonable objection that insisting on a restriction of Middle East-related research and teaching to socially relevant, ‘buzzing’ topics is like “insisting that Italian historians work only on the Cosa Nostra.”⁴⁸ On the contrary, a first ‘natural’ step of adaptation to the market in Middle East-related disciplines was a denigration of philological and/or cultural approaches, accompanied by a “dissipation of the intellectual coherence which had characterised the field”,⁴⁹ then often also the outright abolishment of philologies and their transformation into, or absorption by, Middle East *area studies*, mostly understood as political-sociological studies.⁵⁰

44 Bombardelli, review of Verhaeghe, *What About Me?*, 88.

45 In a recent annual performance review (one-on-one meeting between employer and employee—another instrument of neoliberal provenance), I was confronted with a list showing meagre 3 publications during the last 3 years. I had in fact published 7 full-length articles as well as 1 longer review; but 5 out of these publications did not count because they had appeared with publishers that were not on the list of the ‘good ones’ (among the excluded, ‘mortified’ channels: Dr. L. Reichert Vlg., Wiesbaden; *Folia Orientalia*, Cracow; *The Encyclopædia of Islam Three*, incriminated as “only” an encyclopedia!; and J.B. Metzler, Weimar).

46 As a note on the margin: the reason why the present contribution is in English rather than in German although I could have produced it in a much shorter time and it would, with all probability, have been of a better quality, is just because a German version would have ‘earned me’ less credits from my employer—and it would pass completely unnoticed outside the steadily shrinking Germanophonic circles.

47 Cf. Arno Schmidt’s utopian *Gelehrtenrepublik* (see above, fn. 12) where the author, writing in the mid-1950s, imagined German as a meanwhile (2008) extinct language. Schmidt’s vision was rather clear-sighted. Whenever I sit together with French, German, Italian, Polish, and other non-Anglophone colleagues, we discover that we share a similar experience: on international conferences, you often listen to lectures by (mostly young American) colleagues who proudly present as new findings ideas that you yourself have written about quite extensively 20-30 years ago, in your native language. Mentioning this to the young colleagues they express polite regret but else do not feel a need to apologize for not crediting the ‘new’ ideas to you—it’s *your own* fault not to have made your research available in English; perhaps you did not “even” upload it to <academia.edu>.

48 Lockman, *Contending Visions*, 265, quoting Juan R. I. Cole, “Why Are Arch-Conservatives Ganging Up on the Middle East Studies Association?,” *History News Network*, January 20, 2003, available at <<http://hnn.us/articles/1218.html>> (accessed 27 Nov. 2016).

49 Lockman, *Contending Visions*, 239.

50 Cf. Jacquemond’s description of the situation in France: “L’approche par le culturel est relativement marginale dans le champ orientaliste en général et en particulier dans le champ orientaliste français, de plus en plus dominé, pour ce qui concerne les études contemporaines, par l’approche politique et donc les politologues. Les processus engagés depuis la fin de l’année 2010 ont évidemment conforté cette domination nourrie à la fois par la demande d’expertise en provenance du champ politico-médiatique et par la configuration particulière du champ universi-

Again, as with bakeries or butcher shops that are either squeezed out of the market or swallowed by the big supermarket chains, or with rare species that become extinct due to neoliberal exploitation of nature, or with the languages of learning that are marginalised, long traditions of scholarship were irrevocably cut and replaced with streamlined forms—“Trashing treasures? Well, what can we do? They aren’t ‘robust’ enough!” And, after all, hadn’t E. Said shown that philology was *the* core discipline of Orientalism? – The argumentation that in this way often also played the moral card remained of course silent about (or was unaware of?) the fact that in the very process of streamlining the discipline(s) a new form of Orientalism was created...

But this was not easy to recognise since Middle East area studies themselves came under pressure, partly because many proponents have become highly critical of military intervention or their governments’ Middle East politics in general and distanced themselves from official state politics⁵¹ (here, the new disciplines don’t sell any longer on the market for which they had prinked/dressed themselves up), partly because, due to their assimilation to political studies, they found it hard to compete with ‘traditional’ political studies.⁵²

No question, these developments could not remain without consequences ...

Consequences

As an observer from within the field, I tend to diagnose, and be concerned about, particularly three developments:

First, an overall loss of breadth and depth, and perhaps also of quality. The imperative to follow ‘the market’ and concentrate exclusively on the consumers’ (society’s, politics’, security agencies’, the media’s) demand tends to create monocultures, and the diversity that used to characterise our disciplines—a diversity that is a necessary basis for *holistic* approaches that look at things from *various* angles and at a culture *as a whole*—is in danger of disappearing.⁵³ The gradual diminution, in particular, of *cultural* perspectives has a high potential to produce lopsided and, hence: crooked, pictures of reality in which essential aspects are not taken into account.⁵⁴

taire français”; “La multidisciplinarité des études arabes contemporaines, sur le monde arabe comme sur la Turquie, est en réalité réduite à trois ou quatre disciplines considérées comme majeures (histoire, anthropologie, sociologie, science politique), sans jamais inclure philosophie, littérature, linguistique – ingénument oubliées par une écrasante majorité de collègues dès que l’on dresse un tableau disciplinaire” (Jacquemond, “Un mail 68 arabe?”, 134/§5 and 140/§14, respectively, the latter quoting from *GIS Moyen-Orient et mondes musulmans*, 2014, Livre blanc des études françaises sur le Moyen-Orient et le monde musulman: 42).

51 Lockman, *Contending Visions*, 239.

52 The struggle for survival and corresponding ‘strategic’ discussions are still ongoing, cf., e.g., the roundtable discussion about “The Middle East Area Studies Controversy in Context: Discussing different cultural institutional perspectives,” arranged by the organizers of the 10th meeting of the Nordic Society for Middle Eastern Studies, Sept. 2016, in Odense (DK).

53 For an examination of the forces of homogenisation inherent in neoliberal economy, cf. Bourdieu, *Firing Back*.

54 Cf., in this context, my former PhD student Teresa Pepe’s report about a conversation she had with William Germano, author of *Getting It Published: A Guide for Scholars and Anyone Else Serious about Serious Books* (University of Chicago Press, 3rd ed. 2016). During a ‘From Thesis to Book’ workshop she had asked Germano his opinion regarding the publication of her dissertation, *Fictionalized Identities in the Egyptian Blogosphere* (2014). Considering the future book’s marketability, the expert on academic publishing advised her to focus on the *political* side of blogging and to leave out the *literary* aspects. Had Pepe followed this advice, however well-intentioned it undoubtedly was, and given in to the logic of the market, the main concern and findings of her thesis—the aesthetic quality of the blogs she had studied and the importance of the interrelation between creativity and identity for-

In addition, the imperative to produce employable graduates within a standard period of three / five years (BA / MA, respectively), in which also at least one difficult non-European language has to be taught/learned, leaves little room, besides language instruction, for the many other subjects that students of another culture ideally and sensibly should know about. Forced to find a compromise, most study program designers set up a *basic* overview and *basic* competence as well as *soft skills* as the contents of the ‘service package’ with which a student can expect to leave university for the job market. A *deepened* engagement with the foreign cultures is hardly achievable—unless at the expense of language acquisition, which, however, is undesirable, given that language skills are a key criterion of distinction on a market where Middle East area studies has to remain competitive with, say, political science or sociology.

Second, there seems to be an almost ‘tragic’ impasse, or ‘irony’: However Islamic and/or Middle East studies reacts to the manifold challenges, neoliberal creeds are still likely to be reproduced. If we, on the one hand, reject becoming part of the game, the discipline is in danger of being forgotten, neglected, obliterated, starved; and if we do not claim expertise in the media, others are waiting in the wings to take our part.⁵⁵ If we, on the other hand, adapt to the logic of the market, focus in teaching and research on the issues that are most prominent in public discourse, and transform ourselves into ‘Islam experts’, we run the risk of willy-nilly contributing to the stabilisation and perpetuation of public discourse and the market’s neo-Orientalist leanings, even if we make great efforts to prove current discourses wrong: the mere fact that we will be *talking about* “Islamisation”, despotism, religiously-motivated fanatic violence and the absence of “Western values”, etc., although perhaps trying to correct certain premises and quasi-self-evident assumptions, we will in so doing nevertheless have repeated the keywords and thereby contributed to ‘hammering them in’.

The notorious lack of time, addressed above, is all the more deplorable since *Islamwissenschaft* is now faced with a twofold challenge: Its representatives have to be trained, within the norm period, not only in *Islamwissenschaft* proper but also in the art of being an ‘expert’ in public, which mostly means to ‘disappoint’⁵⁶ the latter and prove neo-Orientalist categories of perception wrong—a task that is getting increasingly difficult as neo-Orientalism and neoliberalism are, as we saw above, stabilising each other, and “facts and arguments appear irrelevant” to those who want to feel superior.⁵⁷

mation—would have been lost. One more streamlined book would have been put on sale on the market; but ‘society’, the public, would have lost what it actually needed more than yet another book on politics, and a whole complex of aspects that are key for our understanding of a central activity of a major group of agents of the Egyptian ‘Arab Spring’ would have gone unnoticed.

55 Cf. Lockman, *Contending Visions*, 248-9: “It is striking that the great bulk of the ‘talking heads’ who appeared on television to offer their opinions on the 1990–91 Gulf crisis, on the 2003 Iraq war and on other issues relating to the Middle East and US policy toward it seemed to come not from academia but from among professional pundits, from people associated with think tanks or with one of the public policy schools, and from retired military personnel. Whatever their knowledge (or lack thereof) of the languages, politics, histories and cultures of the Middle East, these people spoke the language and shared the mindset of the Washington foreign policy world in a way few university-based scholars did.”

56 Cf. Schulze, “Geisteswissenschaften und die Medien”, 206, where the author calls the act of disappointing (*Enttäuschung*) a “basic concern” (*Grundanliegen*) of an expert’s discourse.

57 Cf. fn. 27, above.

Third, as an event like the organisation of a whole conference on *Orientalism* by a Saudi Arabian university shows,⁵⁸ neo-Orientalist tendencies in the West have not passed unnoticed in the Arab World.⁵⁹ In countries that, like post-revolutionary Egypt, find themselves in an extremely precarious, vulnerable situation, struggling to regain stability, the fear from interference of ‘foreign agents’ can reach the stage of quasi-paranoia, as the Regeni incident demonstrated clearly.⁶⁰ As a consequence, traveling to the Middle East has become more risky, and a number of institutions have stopped sending their students to language courses in the region—at a time when *direct* contacts and the possibility to meet ‘the Other’ outside an often neo-Orientalism biased home seems to be needed more than ever.

Conclusion

We can now answer the questions I asked in the beginning and draw some further conclusions.

Could *Islamwissenschaft* or Middle East Studies have foreseen the dramatic growth of Islamophobia? – No, we are trained to study a foreign culture, not our own, and the rise of Islamophobia has less to do with Islam itself than with developments in our own societies.⁶¹

Could *Islamwissenschaft* or Middle East Studies have prevented the emergence, or helped to contain the spread, of neo-Orientalism? – Yes *and* no. Although the possibilities of breaking with a self-stabilising hegemonic discourse have always been limited, and are so still, the field has on

58 *al-Istishrāq: mā la-hū wa-mā ‘alay-hi* (Orientalism: Pros and Cons), arranged by the College of Sciences and Arts (Kulliyat al-‘ulūm wa-l-‘ādāb), University of al-Qaṣim (in al-Rass), 14-16 Dec 2016 (15-17 III 1438 H.).

59 Cf. the Call for Papers, which starts as follows: “Orientalist studies (*al-dīrāsāt al-istishrāqīyyah*) are a reality represented at western universities by their departments for Oriental Studies. Every year thousands of graduates are pushed to study Islamic thought in all its aspects”, and this is why it is the organizers’ “duty” (*wājib*) and “mission” (*risālah*) to put these studies “under neutral scientific scrutiny” (*taḥt mijhar al-baḥth al-‘ilmī al-muḥāyid*), which, among other things, also implies “to study to which extent Orientalist writings ... influence western public opinion about Islam and the Muslims, negatively or positively,” and what is expected to be “the future of Orientalist studies: will they remain and continue, or shrink and come to an end?”

60 Giulio Regeni, an Italian graduate of Cambridge University, had been on field work in Cairo in connection with his PhD thesis (about Egypt’s independent trade unions). He was found dead, evidently gruesomely tortured, on February 3, 2016. We may safely assume that he was suspected of being a foreign agent. – A fortnight later, my former PhD student, Teresa Pepe, attended the Cairo Literature Festival (Mahrajān al-Qāhirah al-‘adabī) and, asking in a Q&A session a question about a possible *nahḍah thaḳāfiyyah*, was accused by an Egyptian poet of being a representative of the colonialist Other (personal communication T. Pepe, Feb/Mar 2016). Having given a lecture myself (in Arabic), in Dec. 2014, at Cairo University about “Comparative Cultural Studies—How the West Reads the East” (*‘Ilm al-thaḳāfāt al-muqārīn: kayfa yaqra’ al-gharb al-sharq?*), I had received similar comments. – As an colleague (Egyptian native) told me on her return from a trip to Cairo earlier in November this year (2016), it is still common to suspect any foreigner to be an agent whose task it is to spread destabilising ideologies; thus, passing in taxi by a café, the driver spotted a European man sitting together with some locals, and remarked to her: “Look, here they are again, those foreigners, implanting revolutionary ideas in the brains of our Egyptian youth” (personal communication, Nov. 2016).

61 According to Verhaeghe, the reasons why larger sectors of neoliberal societies “look for satisfying and durable identities in, for example, nostalgic, reactionary, nationalist, or fundamentalist ideas and movements” lies in their disorientation, which in turn results from a feeling of alienation and estrangement, of non-belonging and being on the side of the losers in the neoliberal competitive system; there is a widespread “sense of humiliation and hopelessness” that “can lead to despair, more aggression, less confidence, more fear and less participation in community life, revenge and violence stems.” “More commonly,” however, people “seek solace in consumerism, increased consumption as a road to happiness” (but often end in “depressive hedonia”) – Verhaeghe, as summarized in Bombardelli, review, 88.

many occasions proven to be capable of initiating counter-discourses. But wherever academia decided all too readily to float with the tide and yield to the ‘demands of the market’ (often communicated hierarchically, as a directive from the top echelons of university or state administration), structures and study programs have been created that, in complying with the market’s ‘default settings’ instead of denying its hermeneutic categories, implicitly contribute to cementing its premises.

From the above, we may deduce the following ‘guiding principles’: If we want to maintain the goal of contributing with what we do “to make the world a better place”,⁶² then our main task in public is to create counter-discourses.

For academia, this means that *Islamwissenschaft* as well as Middle East area studies should try to resist the neoliberal maelstrom of adapting study programs to what is buzzing in public discourse. Instead, the aim should be to remain as broad as possible and maintain the traditional (though always theory-informed) holistic approach.⁶³

The main pillar upon which any such approach should rest is a sound knowledge of the relevant languages. It is this knowledge and that of the cultural background that gives our disciplines their real competitive value and actually makes them ‘harder’ than the often theory-overloaded ‘hard’ sciences.

As the sub-discipline at the very heart of any language-based approach that analyses and interprets ‘texts’ (in the widest sense, i.e., all kinds of expressions) from another culture, philology is key—neither, however, in its old-fashioned form (as criticised by E. Said), nor its aloof variety propagated by Sheldon Pollock,⁶⁴ but rather as a method that teaches us to practise a careful ‘close reading’,⁶⁵ trains students in *con-textualising* techniques, and at the same time highlights the ‘surplus value’ of culture-informed approaches.⁶⁶

In the same degree as students have to be trained in theory, the history of the discipline and in identifying and criticising neo-/Orientalist discourses, they also should receive instruction in how to meet the world outside academia, and especially also the media (see below), as critical voices remain relatively ineffective unless they appear in the media-dominated public sphere.

For all this, time is needed. In the interest of society, and *true* sustainability, our disciplines should therefore let inspire themselves by the Slow Movement (cf. Slow food, Slow reading, Slow

62 N.N., letter of motivation, in N.N.’s application (2016) for the position of Assistant Professor of Arabic at my Department (IKOS, Oslo).

63 The way things are done in Bern, where I have had the pleasure to be part of the team for 11 years, is still one of the best I can imagine. The courses students can take there cover four main fields: (1) History of Islamic Religion and Learning/Sciences, (2) History (incl. Cultural History) of the Islamic(ate) World, (3) Social Sciences (incl. Anthropology), (4) Languages and Literatures – cf. <http://www.islamwissenschaft.unibe.ch/stadium/studienprogramme/schwerpunkte/index_ger.html> (as of 27 Nov. 2016).

64 Pollock, “Future Philology”.

65 Cf. Berg & Seeber, *The Slow Professor*, 69.

66 Cf., e.g., Jacquemond’s brilliant analysis of the Egyptian ‘Arab Spring’ (Jacquemond 2015) which shows how important it is to supplement ‘hardcore’ political-sociological studies with data drawn from an analytical monitoring of the music scene, of cinema, fiction, poetry, street art, intellectual history, etc., to produce a deeper understanding of the processes at work in the contemporary Middle East. – For similarly enlightening approaches by the one honoured by the present festschrift, see Schulze, “Die Passage” (2012), “Vom Anfang und Ende der Revolution” (2013), “*Irhal* – ‘Hau ab’” (2013), “Die arabischen Revolten und die Zukunft der Moderne” (2014), “Die arabischen Revolten 2011/2”.

education, etc.),⁶⁷ reduce speed, give more room to curiosity-driven research⁶⁸ as well as contemplation⁶⁹ as necessary complements to the mere acquisition of ‘skills’, and in this way return to the roots of university education—the idea of *Bildung*.⁷⁰

Outside academia, contributing to the creation of a counter-discourse in public and the media often means, in a way, ‘howling with the wolves’ while at the same time trying to redirect them onto the right track. The risk of being devoured yourself, or at least drawn into the vicious circle where you don’t get out of the preset analytical categories and in this way contribute to the perpetuation of the hegemonic discourse yourself, is very high. Therefore, we should train our students, and ourselves, in techniques of

- (as Schulze described it) ‘translating academic knowledge into public knowledge’,⁷¹ behaving in public as ‘experts’ rather than as academics;⁷²
- denouncing (neo)Orientalist distortions, which often means “disappointing”⁷³ the interlocutor, deconstructing ‘religion’ or ‘Oriental’ as the main hermeneutic categories of explanation, and instead reframing the questions under discussion—which often implies, on the one hand,
- pointing to the ‘garbage dump’ function of ‘Islam’ and ‘Oriental’ in neo-Orientalist discourse and to the media’s own role as ‘sorcerer’s apprentices’ who, after ‘calling the spirits’ they found useful, may discover that they have forgotten the magic formula that would stop them.⁷⁴ Reframing such questions as ‘expert’ may, however, also mean, on the other hand,
- introducing other, ‘unexpected’, *apolitical* categories into the hermeneutical process—Schulze holds that academic knowledge has no chance of being seriously considered in the shaping of public political discourse unless ‘experts’ will be recognised as bearers of an autonomous, discrete, *apolitical* opinion.⁷⁵ – But nevertheless, would such a strategy be useful in reaching also

67 Cf. Berg & Seeber, *The Slow Professor*; on sustainability, see esp. p. 57.

68 Berg & Seeber, *op.cit.*, 51, compare the re-encouraging of curiosity in academia to a defence of the “pleasures of food under the threat from standardisation... and fast food”; cf. also *ibid.*, 68f.

69 *Op.cit.*, 57.

70 See above, **fn. 36**. – Bourdieu sees a universal ethical merit even in “the ‘purest,’ most disinterested, most ‘formal’” products of culture; in his opinion, their producers are, “often unwittingly, at the forefront of the struggle for the defense of the highest values of humanity. By defending their singularity, they are defending the most universal values of all” – Bourdieu, “Culture is in Danger”, 81.

71 Cf. above, **fn. 9**.

72 Cf. Schulze, “Geisteswissenschaften und die Medien”, 205-206.

73 *Ibid.*: 206.

74 I am alluding here to J. W. von Goethe’s famous ballad “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice” (*Der Zauberlehrling*, 1797) in which the unexperienced apprentice has to confess to his returning master (in E. Zeydel’s translation, 1955): “Sir, my need is sore. / Spirits that I’ve cited / My commands ignore” (German original: “Herr, die Noth ist groß, / Die ich rief die Geister / Werd ich nun nicht los”), quoted from <http://germanstories.vcu.edu/Goethe/zauber_dual.html> (accessed 27 Nov. 2016).

75 “Erst wenn sich das Expertentum eine eigenständige, apolitische Geltung verschafft, kann es auch Wissen so diffundieren, dass es in die politisch-öffentliche Urteilsbildung erfolgreich einfließt” – Schulze, “Geisteswissenschaften und die Medien”, 206. – As examples of such a reframing, Schulze mentions the discussion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank as a problem of landscape architecture; of the situation of Palestinian refugees as a problem of integration (rather than of citizenship etc.); of the city of Jerusalem as an issue of the preservation of ancient monuments (rather than as a political dilemma).

those who, like PEGIDA or the admirers of Trump, still don't recognise but rather despise 'experts'? Therefore, shouldn't students also be trained in

- talking to "the people"? How? Perhaps by entering into *their* discourse on Facebook, Twitter, etc., and testing one's stamina in trying to redirect a 'shit storm'?

Of course, we cannot hope to be able to counter the "kind of neoliberal international" described by D. Stedman Jones in *Masters of the Universe*,⁷⁶ and we have to be aware that even old stagers, experienced in the "martial arts"⁷⁷ of being experts on Islam and the Middle East, often feel like "callers in the desert", despite their presence in public discourse.⁷⁸

Yet, a slow but steady limitation of its impact as well as small-scale 'victories' in the daily combat are still something one could be proud of...

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⁷⁶ Monbiot, "Neoliberalism", referring to Daniel Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics*, new ed., Princeton UP, 2014.

⁷⁷ As Leyla Dakhli calls it: "L'islamologie est un sport de combat", title of Dakhli 2016, a study about the star "experts de l'islam" in French media, François Burgat, Gilles Kepel, Olivier Roy, and Jean-Pierre Filiu.

⁷⁸ Dakhli, "L'islamologie", 17; G. Kepel, for instance, deplored that an evaluation he had written for the Prime Minister about the situation in the Islamic World "a été enterré par ses conseillers".

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