

Speech on Bioethics by Dr. Mirjam Stolz:

If there should be any ethics that you might call bioethics, their core has to be the imperative of population reduction. But meaning population reduction as its core, the word might make sense. Forget cloning hysteria! We need not worry: there are enough twins in the world (some armadillos [*Dasypus novemcinctus*] are even habitually cloning themselves not as twins but even as quadruplets; not simple siblings, but true clones). Looking at our planet some other topic seems far more urgent to me: **the destruction of our material resources and of nature alike by overpopulation**. In fact this is not something imminent but has already been working quite substantially as a destructive force for a considerable time.

Take a look at Bialowieza National Park, for instance, where bison live again in quite a stable population today - but no bears. Not a long time ago, between the two world wars, Polish lords used to hunt bears in this region. But don't get me wrong: not the hunting was the reason why the bears vanished! Bears stand at the top of a food pyramid, they are a so-called umbrella species, which means that their existence and survival includes and requires the existence of countless other and less spectacular species. The reason for their disappearance is simply the destruction of their habitat by taking more and more space for human settlement and, what is worse, for fields for crops and similar stuff. Even if the next 10 billion people had nothing better to do in their short and miserable lives than sorting their garbage and being vegan, the bears would not come back. We simply took too much space!

**The most destructive weapon of mankind is not the nuclear bomb – it is the uterus bomb!**

I want to give you one more example that explains just the same fact: you might have heard about the recent reports on the declining number of Europe's birds since 1980: they are now counting 400 million (20%) less than in 1980. The remarkable detail in this development is that the birds vanishing are actually members of the most common species, as the house sparrow and the common starling, whereas many rarer or endangered species (including marsh harriers and white storks) are lately even increasing in number, certainly because these birds have been protected with high effort by conservation measures. But the loss of common birds illustrates quite clearly that nature on the whole is on the losing side. All species together have to share the available biomass, and it is just one species that is depriving all the others of their possible share, tending to monopoly. By civilisation or even earlier our species left the regulating mechanisms of population density that are balancing the population numbers of all the species, be they animals, plants, or fungi. As an inevitable result this has led to the progressive decline of the number of all other species that can be compared only with the great geological extinction events, a fact that consequently led the great contemporary biologist Edward O. Wilson aptly call our geological age the Eremozoic era. (You can translate this the Age of Loneliness.) More and more people need more and more space and every human – just as any animal – is, unavoidably, also a consumer and a polluter. As the planet is not inflatable, the calculation is most simple, so simple that every school child of 8 years is able to make it: **Dividend divided by Divisor equals Quotient** – this is called division concerning resources, or (the inverse operation) multiplication concerning pollution and wastes.

It is our sheer number that makes the difference, not our special behaviour or lifestyle, Christians and pseudo-atheists may yearn and cry for asceticism and restrictions as much as they want! Suffering want of space, restriction of car driving, want of medical treatment, of meat, of toilet paper, **suffering want of all sorts of comfort, that's green ideology**, and suffering want was the favourite occupation of early Christians. Just read the Early Fathers: saving water they even preferred to stink! They were the green ideologists of late antiquity and Early Middle Ages. But in one respect, mankind had a better stand in these dark ages than today: they were less! Suffering from want at that time was a result of poor technology and, of course, of political reasons, but not of lack of resources, not of having ruined the planetary resources by sheer number.

**Again: the most destructive weapon of mankind is not the nuclear bomb – it is the uterus bomb!**

So if you strive for Bioethics, in which, by the way, I personally would prefer a rational reflection in terms of reckoning/calculation rather than a moral/ethical one - but either way: if you really want to save the natural environment or, to be more precise, the little that is left of it today, the first and most urgent demand must be **birth control, a strict one-child policy worldwide** for at least six generations. Anything else is coward and rather useless.

And this would not even be difficult to be put into practice: the Europeans and also some other nations were already about realising it, without any program and compulsion, they intuitively set the stage for it, namely to shrink a little. This started in the years from about 1965 to 1975 (we call this time according to Dr. Kerstin Steinbach, who was speaking to you here last year, the “Better Time”). The reasons (there are three) for this effect you will find excellently explained and documented in her book “There Once has been a Better Time ... 1965–75 – The Hated Pictures and their Repressed Message”, luckily also available in Polish. But once the European birth rate had declined and dropped below the replacement rate, the ones in power started to spread birth propaganda (paid by our tax money, of course) that screamed, and relentlessly screams until this very day, the Europeans would die out, and demanded that we immediately ought to produce more children, for otherwise soon there would not be enough productive workers of our race left to pay for the many old-age pensioners. Why such otherwise outlawed racism just in that very matter? Are there not enough coloured workers in the world, if necessary or needed for productive work? Are there even not enough ethnic European unemployed people for that purpose? O hypocrisy! But with birth control, which is, of course, only efficient if encouraged worldwide exactly in the way as non-smoking is, just to give an example, our wages would increase and housing would become cheaper, nature accessible again and without fees and wardens, even recovering. Any further questions, why this, according to the ones who live from paying low wages and taking high rents, should be the worst imaginable thing?

The question should not be how to literally fill up this planet and stuff ever more and more people onto it, tossing each other and more and more tightening their belts, and tightening their belts again and again. We demand to **shrink the world population** (and not the standard of living) to a number that suits the planetary resources. This optimum may be around **300 million people**. Compare this figure to the figures of our closest relatives, the Big Apes: about 10.000 chimpanzees and less than 400 bonobos! 300.000.000 specimens of Homo sapiens should be plenty. And the planetary resources are not only food, raw materials and energy, it's also space, space for unembarrassed observation of nature, for visual and sensual experience, **space instead of crampedness and social pressure**.

There is also an important psychological aspect of the topic: What are the consequences of loss of flora and fauna for the individual? These are first of all, that there will nothing exist independently from mankind any more. All environment will be formed and made by people. I have recently experienced a very sad example for this in a museum of natural history, where I met an about 5-year-old girl attentively watching the swimming dwellers of an aquarium. After a while she called out: “They **look like** fish!” This little girl was a veritable platonist, in whose opinion the viewable and living fish are only the proximate images of the idea “fish”, that exists in some sort of heavenly hyperspace – for this child probably “on television”. Nature however you can either destroy or watch, observe. It is not accessible to conformity, you cannot force it into line, nature is independent of lie and indoctrination. In a word: You can't baptize it! If you want to understand it, you need calmness and concentration. By precise observation and the use of reason it is possible to acquire insights which don't follow any ideology and, therefore, can set a basis against conformity. It is not by coincidence that the **Enlightenment** historically originated from **nature observation**, which, by scientific insights about undeniable, verifiable and unchangeable facts, **put religion in its place** for the first time ever. The best example is Galileo Galilei. Any further questions why the Church always hated nature and substantial knowledge and understanding of nature? Our planet that is meanwhile deprived of most of its biodiversity by overpopulation will supply the humans overcrowding it with only poor visual and sensual experience of nature, a deprivation that might result in a global comeback of religion (or some more directly state-based substitute of it). This is not surprising. Find some place in the Islamic world where nature is not spoiled by overpopulation and then guess why obscurantism in those countries and the heads of the people populating them is so fierce and strong!

So let me sum up: we don't want more and more people vegetating a miserable existence in a poor and depleted environment. We want **less people**, and for them we want: **wealth, plenty and space as well as the possibility of visual and sensual experience**. Do you consider this such a bad program?

Nowadays, the religious preachers of asceticism have suffered a certain setback. I do hope very much that there will no want-loving atheists, no “make-humans-cheaper” secularists emerge to take their place!