

suddenly Hartheim became a synonym for the Here and Now, the timeless, the receptivity of our society and also its brutalization of human dignity.

And at this point it is important I add something on the beginning of life. (...) Peter Mallmann, head of the gynaecological clinic in Cologne, said "Our professional task as doctors is to save the parents from the burden of a handicapped child." The doctors now have a juridical problem: parents abort a child when it is already viable and alive. If the doctors kill the baby now it is murder and they are punishable. Outside of the womb taking of life is not licit. But if the child survives an abortion, then the parents may come and demand alimony because the surgery was not performed professionally. (...) This shows what absurd dimensions we have already reached in our society. Abortion of handicapped children to Mallmann is a necessity in terms of health economy and cost reduction of the health care system. Health economy is now the term used. This means we have come back to using euphemisms. We hide terrible things behind a nice term.

But we cannot simply blame doctors and scientists. There has to be a social acceptance as well that takes up these nicely phrased excesses and executes them. How can this slowly growing brutalization become the common mindset in this so-called enlightened society? How does a climate develop that suddenly allows the idea of euthanasia and not even stumbles at it? How does something like this become socially acceptable? Contrary to Hartheim 60 years ago when this was embedded into an ideological system, this change today appears much more blurred, like a blurred thoughtlessness. There is no fanaticism anymore, no pseudo religious racial mania. A doctor from Germany wrote in the early 1920's, "It turns out that the average expense per capita per year for the care of the idiots until now was 1300 reichsmark. The question whether this is a justified expense for these ballast existences was not urgent in the former times of wealth. But now things have changed." Now, this argument is familiar to us.

The pendant term of what used to be called "social hygiene" is today called - I exaggerate - "health economy". The 'wealth society' no longer exists, therefore the acceptance for these kinds of arguments is growing. The fear is there! The moral indifference and the convenience are present - and this is a breeding ground. As long as people are embedded in a Christian humanism, there should be no need to discuss the worth of a human life, of neither an elderly person nor a handicapped one. There is no need for justification or explanation. But now we seem to have reached this necessitation. (...)

We have the impression that today philosophical ethics are sought and delivered after a process has already fully started. Whoever questions the right to life at one moment (that is, at the beginning) will end up questioning it at the end as well. (...)

It is the norm that worries me. One has to be young, sporty and beautiful. How can we explain to the next generation that it enriches a society to have space for the non-normal, the withering, and the dying. It is simply part of it. (...)

We consider our European nation a place of culture and are very proud of this. Everything our culture stands for and stands out against the smooth, the hygienic, is not the norm. There is no standardized art, no hygienic art. I don't know of a single dramatic scene which is symmetrical. Nobody would watch a piece of theatre where beautiful people look at each other beautifully and say beautiful things. (...)

Once a pragmatism detached from humanism becomes the leitmotiv, then it will soon be the case that one has to justify oneself for giving birth to a handicapped child or caring for a senile, elderly person. Then this care will be a private pleasure or a hobby.

Tobias Moretti was born in Tirol/Austria and studied Music in Vienna. He had engagements at the state theatre in Hannover, the residence theater in Munich, the Josefstadt in Vienna, the Vienna Burgtheater, the Vienna Volksoper and the theatre in Bochum. He has won many prizes and received many awards, such as: Best Actor of 1987, Bavarian Movie Award (1995), Golden Lion (1996), Silver Tulip (1997), the Italian Telegatto, the Bavarian TV Award (1999), the Grimme Prize (2000, 2002), several Romys (in 2001 for most popular actor). Some of his movies include: Kommissar Rex, Andreas Hofer, Speer und Er, Workaholic etc.

Further Reading:

- On Hartheim: www.schloss-hartheim.at
- Find the full German version of Moretti's speech here: <http://www.schloss-hartheim.at/index.asp?Seite=559#moretti>