

EINLADUNG

SIMON WIESENTHAL LECTURE

JEFFREY C. ALEXANDER
CULTURE, TRAUMA, MORALITY AND
SOLIDARITY: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF
»HOLOCAUST« AND OTHER MASS MURDERS

Donnerstag, 13. März 2014, 18.30 Uhr
Dachfoyer des Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchivs
1010 Wien, Minoritenplatz 1

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GEFÖRDERT VON:



Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways. While this new scientific concept clarifies causal relationships between previously unrelated events, structures, perceptions, and actions, it also illuminates a neglected domain of social responsibility and political action. By constructing cultural traumas, social groups, national societies, and sometimes even entire civilizations, not only cognitively identify the existence and source of human suffering, but may also take on board some significant moral responsibility for it. Insofar as they identify the cause of trauma in a manner that assumes such moral responsibility, members of collectivities define their solidary relationships that allow them to share the suffering of others. Is the suffering of others also our own? In thinking that it might in fact be, societies expand the circle of the “we” and create the possibility for repairing societies to prevent the trauma from happening again. By the same token, social groups can, and often do, refuse to recognize the existence of others’ suffering, or place the responsibility for it on people other than themselves.

Jeffrey C. Alexander is the Lillian Chavenson Saden Professor of Sociology and founding Director of the *Center for Cultural Sociology at Yale University*. He works in the areas of social theory, culture, and politics. Among his recent publications are *Performance and Power* (2011), *Trauma: A Social Theory* (2012), *The Dark Side of Modernity* (2013), and *Obama Power* (forthcoming in May). His essay *On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: The ‘Holocaust’ from Mass Murder to Trauma-Drama* (2002) was the topic of *Remembering the Holocaust: A Debate* (Oxford 2009).

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