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Is Multiculturalism (Multi-Culti) at an End? The Lack of an Alternative to the Discussion of Values



Hope for Europe

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Prof. Dr. Christine Schirrmacher

“Multi-culti” – a catchword we all know. A concept that today is looked at rather critically but, in past decades, was to a large extent a guideline for the shared life of Christians and Muslims in Europe, even if by far not everyone was aware of this premise. Multi-culti – a result of an historical development into which we have stumbled rather than consciously planned and controlled. A development that, in addition, resulted from the false intellectual premises that accompanied the contemplation of the migration of Muslim workers to Germany, as well as from indifference and ignorance.

Stumbling into History

The history of Islam in Germany begins in the year 1961 – if we disregard the recruitment of twenty Turkish soldiers as “Lange Kerls” for the army of Friedrich Wilhelm I in 1731. In 1961, the Federal Republic of Germany concluded the first recruitment contracts with workers from Turkey. The majority of those who were fathers of families originated from Anatolia. More important than educational

and vocational qualifications was the test of physical health – including an examination of the teeth – that had to be passed before entry into Germany was granted. Many came as unskilled workers and participated in furthering the tremendous economic growth in post-war Germany, for which, in a period of full employment, no further reserves of labor could be mobilized within European borders. Many men came without their families, as “guest workers”, with the declared goal of returning to their home country after a few years and after achieving some affluence.

But, the economic and, in part, the political situation in Turkey did not appear to be very promising and when, in 1973, the Federal Republic ordered an end to the recruitment, but continued to facilitate the immigration of the workers’ families, the return of the immigrants to their home countries did not take place. On the contrary, many wives and children followed their husbands and fathers and joined them in Germany. Thus, a second generation of Muslim immigrants grew up in Germany. By virtue of a birth rate higher in com-

parison with that in the German population, streams of refugees from different Islamic countries (above all, Balkan countries, Iran, and some Arab countries), and asylum-seekers and economic refugees, the number of Muslims in Germany grew to today's total of ca. 3.2 million people.

Thus, the history of Islam in Germany does not begin on September 11, 2001, but rather nearly 45 years ago – a fact of which not everyone really is aware. In these years, a number of clearly enunciated guidelines for shared life became established, but there were all the more unspoken ones, too.

False Premises Have Been Brought Along

Contributing to the present problematic situation is the fact that the first phase of shared life beginning in 1961 was accompanied by many false intellectual premises, such as, for example, the assumption in the first two decades that the Muslim “guest workers” soon would return to their home countries. This assumption proved to be completely false, but this fact was acknowledged only very hesitantly. Later, in the 1980s, it was quietly assumed that the integration of those who remained would come to pass more or less by itself – again a false assumption. Indeed, even as late as the 1990s, responsible politicians supported the thesis, sometimes quite

aggressively, that the immigrants from a Muslim culture would have “assimilated” themselves to such an extent (according to an original quotation from an interview partner from that time) that their Turkish or Arab background would no longer matter, and that their origin very soon would no longer be recognizable. This, too, was a false assumption, as is all too obvious today.

The second or, at least, the third generation would speak the German language fluently and as a matter of course; special language instruction would not be necessary – once again, a false assumption. And, finally, it was more or less presumed officially that Islam as a religion, and the cultural values founded upon it, would no longer play an appreciable role in the integration of the immigrants and in the shared life of Christians and Muslims, and indeed that the religion of Islam soon would be just as “enlightened” and would lead just as peripheral an existence as Christianity in western societies. – Even to question these intellectual premises was considered in the best case as politically incorrect, and in the worst case as xenophobic.

Indifference and Ignorance Were Cultivated

Added to this uncontrolled development and the false intellectual premises were indifference and ignorance,

and this on the political as well as the personal level. An occupation with the developing problems that arose through the permanent residence of the immigrants, the further influx of more immigrants, and the fact that the Muslim communities were left to themselves, for a long time did not take place. If, however, the subject was taken up, then in most cases this was done only hesitantly and half-heartedly. In these first twenty or thirty years, it was not recognized that the second and third generations of working immigrants might need special support programs, but also, on the other side, it was not seen that, in many locations, mosque-centered cultures and political networks had arisen that in many respects vehemently placed the foundations of western society in question. But, since no one saw either religious-legal or cultural-social differences in comparison with the majority society, any special need for action, of course, was not conceded.

It was for this reason, too, that the task of integration was delegated almost without a murmur to the schools, where it was intended that this integration of the working immigrants was to take place without any fuss. Teachers – in most cases without additional budgeted time and without any teaching aids and necessary training – were supposed to compensate, in a certain sense incidentally, for the deficits of Muslim children in integration, culture, and language, and to raise these children

to the level of knowledge possessed by the rest of their classmates. While in many locations this may have been managed in the case of individual children by the virtue of a great deal of dedication, this model had to fail when no longer one or two, but rather fifteen or twenty or twenty-five children without German language skills came together in an average school class. For much too long a time it was expected that these extra efforts in German instruction “on the side” would become superfluous, when the grandchildren of the first immigrants finally would speak German well “by themselves”. Only today has it been recognized completely that this never will be the case without additional support programs.

But also, apart from grand politics, on a quite personal level, there was hardly any different attitude to be recorded. Muslim immigrants, even in the third generation, remained “strangers” in this country, “foreigners” or “the Turks” who frequently were addressed with the question: “But you speak German really well. When are you going to go back home?” and who then with irritation could ask in return: “Back to where? I was born in Germany and have a German passport.” In addition to the lack of any willingness for encounter among the people of such different worlds on both sides, there were false notions, or none at all, about Islamic religion, tradition, educational values, and culture.

Today, the problems that have grown out of this situation are only all too obvious. Much is sufficiently known:

- *The language problem has not taken care of itself. On the contrary, Muslim migrant children of the third generation to a large extent speak German more poorly than do their parents and grandparents.*
- *The integration of the immigrants, as well, has not taken place by itself. Even those migrants naturalized in Germany have remained in many respects “foreigners” in the consciousness of the majority population to the present day. They never have been welcomed, never accepted as neighbors and friends. They see themselves as despised and pushed to the margins of society. Transplanted to Germany through a decision made by their parents or grandparents, they to the present day have not yet arrived emotionally in Germany. Many of them today do not desire to undertake any more efforts in this direction.*
- *Instead of integration making any progress among them, a large portion of the Muslim migrant community has concentrated itself increasingly in its own urban neighborhoods and has retreated to the mosques and its own linguistic and cultural sphere.*

Non-Integration Has Been Reaped

The consequences of an integration that, seen as a whole, has not taken place emerge openly today in many places:

Among Women...

Thus, for example, gender problems concerning girls and women, as well as in regard to young men, have become more critical. For young women not only in so far as the number of headscarves among female Muslim migrants clearly has increased, but also by virtue of the fact that they are worn at a far earlier age, indeed often even earlier than in the Islamic countries of origin, where the headscarf worn before puberty is unusual. Social workers and teachers in Berlin especially – but also in other urban centers – increasingly observe that girls from six to eight years of age already are beginning to wear the veil, to be taken out of physical education classes, to be withdrawn from class trips, to be denied permission to ride bicycles, and also to be hindered in their movements in public.

Also, the number of those who, under pressure from Muslim political groups, feel themselves forced to wear the headscarf is increasing. Girls without a head covering are, in some cases, scorned, regulated, and threatened, or openly cursed as “whores” by other Muslims in their neighborhoods. Islamic dress regulations and,

along with them, the moral doctrine connected with them are gaining ground – right in the middle of Germany.

Forced marriages also are no exception among those of the third generation. “Imported brides” are brought to Germany in part from rural areas of Turkey, in order to procure from among family relations a “clean” and compliant young woman for a son. Conservative husbands often grant especially these third-generation women fewer personal freedoms and rights than those enjoyed by their mothers and grandmothers, who not infrequently were gainfully employed. Their children, again, will be torn between two very different worlds, since they are reared by their mothers from rural Turkey according to Turkish educational ideals and exclusively in the Turkish language and, on their very first day at school, again will not speak a word of German.

And the subject of honor murders also is, sadly, a matter of present relevance. Unfortunately, we are not speaking here about a long outmoded custom from a thousand years ago, but rather about a practice carried out in the midst of the major cities of Germany. The last victim, Hatun Sürücü, was shot in broad daylight in February, 2005, in Berlin by her brothers because she “lived like a German” and was “a slut” that “didn’t deserve any better” (original quote from several youths from the Turkish community). The number of honor murders

in the third generation appears rather to be increasing, and this today when Muslim women who have grown up between two worlds dare, for example, to oppose the marriage plans of their families.

The injured honor of the world Muslim community, which the Koran characterizes as “the best community that ever came into being among human beings” (Sura 3, 110), is also at the core of many conflicts between the Islamic and western worlds, in part also in the conflicts in regard to the cartoons first published in September, 2005, in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands Posten*. But, honor also plays a role in the torture scandal at the prison of Abu Ghraib in Irak, for humiliation and the loss of face before the entire world weigh more heavily than everything else. And Osama bin Laden enjoys the sympathy of so many Muslims of the most varied origin and point of view because, in the eyes of many, he has restored the trampled upon honor of the Islamic world by rebelling against the continued oppression and the shame inflicted upon the Muslim world and by defying the western superpower of the USA.

... and Men

But, young men also have fallen by the wayside as a result of the integration that has not begun in earnest: Many studies describe them, above all, as the real losers of immigration. Many too many of them feel them-

selves accepted neither in Germany nor in the land of their parents and grandparents. Often coddled and neglected at the same time in their own families, they are affected by educational failure especially frequently at school. This is also because most of them receive little support and encouragement from the home – especially the PISA studies have made clear how decisive the “educational climate” in the family really is for a child’s success in learning and at school. Much too often, migrant children leave high school without a diploma (in many Berlin neighborhoods, as many as 70%) or, because they too frequently must repeat individual classes, even must transfer to a special school. The family as shelter and refuge stands over against the lack of success in school and profession: the family cares for them, provides them with excuses, and frequently defends them when they are on trial in court, and thereby is often of no help to them in the process of confronting openly the realities of life and their future in Germany, a land in which educational and professional training – not family members and relationships – are among the basic prerequisites for advancement and promotion.

Without a school diploma, no professional training: It is no wonder that it is precisely young men who are affected by a high rate of unemployment. According to statistics, 65% of migrant families live under or barely

above the poverty level. Thus, the social progression of the unskilled workers of the first generation of recruits up to the third generation has not yet taken place. Of course, it has been clear for a long time even in regard to the German society, that low income, a weak educational background, and the permanent receipt of public assistance will be passed on with high probability to the next generation. Also within the migrant community at the present time, there seem to be no signs of social progress, a situation that naturally is not improved by the present situation on the labor market.

Whoever whiles away the time without hope of a job; whoever is denied recognition and a place in society, perhaps will think he can make a quick fortune with drugs or as a pimp, will join a gang, or engage in street fights with others. Unfortunately, making a show of physical strength and exercising violence with the use of weapons or fists is a much more frequent part of daily life in migrant families than in comparison with the hereditary German population; sometimes there are fistfights even in the Koran schools. Violence and power are marks of the patriarchal society, and are the evidence here for self-assurance and the power of self-assertion.

The most recent studies show also that, in regard to violence against one’s own mother and sister, the number of those who have taken part in such violence is, among migrant chil-

dren, many times higher than in families without a migrant background. In the process, of course, a certain view of women also is imparted to the young people involved, and the daily contempt and disdain for the woman as an independent personality is internalized. Violence, thus, is experienced as a legitimate method of conflict resolution.

More and more frequently, young men feel themselves rejected, disadvantaged, and discriminated against as Muslims and Turks and react, for their part, with a fundamental rejection of this society, which they ever more vehemently judge as racist. The number of those who consider the Koran and democracy as incompatible with each other is increasing, as well as is the influence of Islamist groups who reach young people through the mosques and the leisure-time activities offered there. When, in this situation, Turkish nationalism, Islam as the religion superior to all others, and the image of the West as godless and corrupt are imparted to them as young people, then more and more frequently a process of radicalization begins that makes all the efforts on behalf of these young people in schools, social projects, or public youth work appear almost hopeless.

These young people have grown up in a purely Turkish or Arabic family and living environment. No one ever has imparted to them the standards and values of this society, let alone the philosophical foundations of this

culture and its history. This development must give cause for a great deal of concern since, after all, the number of ca. 800,000 young people with a Muslim background is much too high to permit us to continue to neglect the present symptoms as peripheral phenomena.

Today: the Pursuit of Research into Causes

The situation already described must give lasting pause for serious thought. It will not resolve itself, and the problems will not be solvable without the massive efforts of us all. It is good that a more open discussion of the present situation finally has begun, for only a sound, objective discussion that is as free as possible from any intellectual blinders will be able to bring objective solutions to light.

The discussion, though, about present difficulties— as important as it is as a first step -- alone will not be enough. We will have to bore a level deeper and also speak about the underlying causes for the present problematic situation: about the foundations of western culture and civilization, as well as about the Near Eastern culture and social order, but also about the foundations of the Islamic religion, not without taking into consideration in the process the fact that religion, tradition, and culture cannot always be separated clearly from each other.

Only well-grounded research into causes will open up paths for constructive integration: Whoever cannot define the supporting, absolutely essential foundations of one's own culture and community of values inevitably must remain uncertain about what he can demand from immigrant society, and about the point where he can begin to enjoy cultural diversity as an enrichment of his own horizons.

The present problematic situation, thus, almost forces the discussion of values upon western society; indeed, it reveals the West's previous avoidance of such a discussion. Only when western society honestly engages in this long overdue discussion of values will it be able to cope with the present crisis and derive lasting profit from it. Otherwise, all that will be accomplished will be superficial touch-up jobs. For this reason, the present crisis is at the same time a chance for defining our position and our goals.

Discerning Islam in its Totality

In regard to Islam in Germany, this means, for example, the necessity of seeing Islam in its entire range as a religion and seeing it in the way that Islam understands itself: as a vital religion pointing the way to the future, but not only as a religion, but also as a social order that, for many Muslim authorities, also possesses a political dimension.

Whoever desires to understand present-day Islam in Germany must deal with its history and theology, and with the founder of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad, at once the military leader, lawgiver, and community leader. Whoever desires to understand Muhammad's significance for today's Muslims will discover in history and theology that, as the last historical prophet sent by God, he already during his lifetime was considered an unassailable standard in all worldly as well as spiritual affairs, and that the Koran, as a literally divinely-inspired message, has not been subjected to any historical criticism to the present day.

Whoever desires to grasp the Palestinian conflict in its historical and theological dimensions, and whoever wishes to put into proper perspective the anti-Semitic statements of contemporary Muslim theologians and spokesmen, must know how negatively the Koran judges the Jewish community of that time – on the basis of Muhammad's struggles with Jewish groups. Also, that the Koran, to be sure, respects the Christian religion at the beginning of the period of Muhammad's proclamation, but that, toward the end of his life, it more and more vehemently condemns it as distorted. A process must take place that considers, on the basis of these statements from the Koran, what significance is to be attached to these verses as cited in contemporary mosque sermons, and to what actions

Moslems are summoned there. And whoever wants to place into proper perspective the violent worldwide reactions, extending even to destruction of property and the murder of innocent bystanders, to the at first insignificant cartoons in a Danish newspaper depicting Muhammad, must know – along with the fact that these worldwide disturbances were fomented deliberately using misinformation – that Muhammad answered the mockery of his own person by the Jewish community in Medina with punitive military campaigns and retaliation beginning in 624 AD – at least, according to Islamic tradition.

Then, when we speak about Islam in Germany, we must recognize that, to the present, too little attention has been paid to the fact that we have to do not only with a Muslim community living in Germany, but also indirectly with political parties, ideologies, theologians, and movements from the Islamic home countries that, in part, exercise great influence on the Muslim community in Germany through the mosques, Islamic centers, and the media. The literature from Muslim legal scholars (muftis) and theologians is available in German in numerous mosques, their sermons are sold on cassette, or their opinions on legal matters are accessible via Internet or email. Whoever exercises influence on the Islamic community in Arabic countries will exercise this influence in a certain sense on European Muslims, too, for local groups here reflect the

theological, national, and ideological diversity in those countries and the connections are, in part, quite intensive. Thus, if we want to understand the Muslim community in Germany, then we must look at the same time at the Muslim countries of origin.

In order to make progress in integration, we thus must direct our attention to Islam and its historical, theological, cultural, and political significance. If we ignore one aspect, then our analysis will be based on an incomplete set of assumptions. In the present situation, the social values founded upon Islam are of especial significance, but in the end they have their roots in Islamic law, tradition, and theology.

Naming the Foundations of European Culture and Civilization

Precisely because Islam urgently poses the question about the cultural, political, and religious values of this society, it is high time to think about sound answers. About the answers, namely, that we have avoided up to now, partially out of indolence, ignorance, or an attitude of refusal, but answers that inevitably must be given in order to convert the present situation into something positive. For this to succeed, we first of all need to engage in “stocktaking”, that is, stocktaking in regard to the values under-

lying indigenous culture as well as migrant culture.

Whoever thinks about the roots of European culture and history thereby has not declared him- or herself in favor of a super-culture, or for the creation of a monoculture. To think about one's own roots, rather, is a sign of genuine tolerance and open-mindedness: Whoever does not achieve clarity about one's own self will not be able to encounter others, too, in openness and freedom. A cosmopolitan outlook is called for – and this all the more in an age of globalization – but a cosmopolitan outlook that is conscious of its own history and tradition. Cultural strength can come only from a consciousness of one's own values and their history and tradition. The alternative would be the surrender of one's own self through a disoriented and limitless admiration – and the ensuing absorption into immigrant culture – or the complete rejection of all that may have the effect of being “foreign” here. Both, however, are in no way practicable paths into the future.

Recognizing the Basic Elements of the Jewish-Christian Legacy

Whoever considers European cultural history will recognize that it is based quite essentially upon its Jewish-Christian legacy, as well as upon the Enlightenment. What concrete

profit is to be drawn from this, at first, seemingly abstract idea?

The more fundamentally this question is approached, the clearer will the real intersections with immigrant culture be recognized.

Separation of Powers and Equality Before the Law

There is, first of all, the separation of powers, an essential precondition for the western concept of the rule of law. It is in no way the chance product of a modernizing society in transition from the Middle Ages to the modern age, and also not the necessary consequence of Enlightenment liberation from the “shackles of the Church”. It is much more the case that the separation of the executive power from the legislative already is laid out in the Old Testament as a component part of the Jewish-Christian heritage and is confirmed and strengthened in the New Testament. Closely connected with it is the separation of church and state, the worldly and religious spheres, which, of course, was not always practiced in Christian church history. The classic formulation of this is found in Jesus' call to give the Emperor and God what belongs to each (Matthew 22:21).

The most important consequence of the fact that the separation of legislative and executive powers, the powers of the priest, the proclaimer of God's laws, and of the king, already existed

in Israel in Old Testament times was perhaps that the king did not enact the law, but much rather that he was subject to it. If he broke the law – and the Old Testament contains numerous reports about power-mad, corrupt, lawless, and godless kings – he was reminded of God’s law by a prophet and brought to account for his failings. Perhaps the most famous example of this is the story of King David, who believed he could abuse his power and commit adultery and murder because he was the most powerful man in Israel. The prophet Nathan, however, confronted him mercilessly with his guilt, for which he had to pay with the death of his first son (2. Samuel 11-12). Derived from this again and again in the Old and New Testaments is the teaching: “God is no respecter of persons” (2. Chron. 19:7, and many other passages).

... in Western Societies

One can dismiss this story as insignificant – yet, it portrays one of the foundations of our concept of the state and our sense of the law. Only when the representative of state power stands under, and not above, the law can there be a possibility of appeal for the citizen against the state. Only in this case does a healthy sense of self-responsibility in the face of an excess of authority or abuse of power grow. Only the person who can call upon the state to act against itself, and can remind the administrators of the law

to comply with it, who can demand an accounting from the state or even file suit against it, is a free citizen who possesses his or her own personal dignity as an individual, and is not just a subject. Only then, when there is a counterweight to state power – the possibility of appeal to the highest instance – can justice and an administration of justice bound to the law arise. Hand in hand with this goes the prohibition – which also was formulated already in the Old Testament (Exodus 23:8) – on accepting bribes, that is, putting the law up for sale – the epitome of the door to injustice.

When a person in public life arrogates things to him- or herself that would not be possible for a common citizen – such as tax evasion to the sum of millions, or the unlawful use of personal advantage – the inhabitant of the western hemisphere rebels. But, why should this be? Are not those who work hard and bear great responsibility also permitted to enjoy more extensive rights? The fact that this, as ever, is not the prevailing conviction and general public opinion, but rather that a just punishment of such lawbreakers, even those in the highest positions, is expected, is to be sought above all in the fundamental Christian values of our society – the equality of all before the law irrespective of reputation and position.

and in Islamic Countries

Without wanting to claim in black and white terms that the law in west-

ern states is implemented in perfect accord with these principles, one nevertheless will have to see that the contrast with conditions elsewhere is exceedingly distinct when one looks at the foundations of other cultures. Is it mere coincidence that none of the core Arabic-Islamic countries today can be termed a constitutional state?

On the basis of our original consideration that the separation of powers makes the rule of law possible, we can observe first of all that, in the original Islamic congregation, such a separation of powers was renounced straightforwardly in the person of Muhammad, as well as in regard to his successors, the caliphs. Muhammad, as the religious leader of his congregation and conveyor of the divine message, was at the same time a law-giver in worldly affairs, as well as the leader of the army and a field general. It is the worldwide goal of Islamist movements to restore this original Islamic unity of state and religious congregation, and to unite the Islamic community under the leadership of a caliph.

What about Muhammad's position in regard to the Islamic law that he himself proclaimed to his congregation? Even Muslim theologians do not deny that, in different situations, Muhammad placed himself above instead of under the law, or claimed for his own person revelations applying only to himself and, in this way, justified special rights for himself (for example, in regard to the large

number of his wives, the violation of peace treaties, or the marriage with his daughter-in-law, Zainab, which in principle was forbidden for anyone else).

Is it mere coincidence that no Islamic country today recognizes a citizen's right of appeal against the state in the real sense of the term? Is it mere coincidence that, to be sure, concessions in reaction to obvious injustices are made here and there (as, for example, in the form of the "reconciliation commission" like that appointed by King Mohammed VI in 2004 to investigate the human rights situation in Morocco), but that the common citizen hardly can sue for justice or take legal action against a state that in most cases is experienced as overpowering? Is it mere coincidence that arbitrary arrest, unlimited incarceration without trial and attorney-assisted defence, and, indeed, that overwhelming state power in the form of torture and arbitrariness in many places are nothing unusual? Is it mere coincidence that the question of who gets to feel the despotism of the state and the power wielded by the powerful depends rather upon a person's social position, his family and social connections to the powerful people in the country, as well as upon his financial possibilities when it is a legal question of right or wrong? And, is it mere coincidence that all of this is the case particularly in those countries that plead for the complete introduction of Sharia as the divine law that creates

justice? Is it a coincidence that in so many Islamic countries the outcome of a trial is so often unpredictable and that every outcome – for example, an acquittal as well as a death sentence in the case of defection from Islam – appears to be possible up to the day of judgement? Or, that the law in many places appears to be so easy to pervert, and that in many societies it is indispensable, for self-preservation, to avoid government authorities in the search for justice – for example, precisely in the case when a woman desires to file a charge of rape – and not to ask for help and support from those authorities where even greater injustice can befall the petitioner? Or, that the common man on the street does not experience a policeman primarily as a representative of law and justice, but rather not seldom as someone who first of all delivers him into the hands of injustice?

Monopoly in the Use of Force, and Retribution

To the guarantee of security and the creation of justice in a society also belongs the assertion by the state of a monopoly on the use of force and the renunciation of every kind of private retribution, against which the New Testament already warns (Romans 13). Private retribution, when others repay injustice as they see fit instead of the state and which is bound by its own laws, causes an escalation of

injustice, inevitably makes innocent family members liable, and leads to the dissolution of constitutional structures.

There has been family liability and retribution suffered on behalf of others in many societies, not least of all during the Third Reich. It is always a sign of despotism, the more so since it lies in the nature of the matter to overrule the theoretical necessity of a clearly demonstrable injustice and its punishment according to the principle of equality, and to give way to anarchy.

The Koran, too, recognizes the unlimited private retribution practiced in pre-Islamic times, which it limits but does not abolish. It expressly permits retribution for bodily injury and manslaughter through the same such injury or execution of the guilty person or a representative. The representative principle, thus, is not renounced fundamentally. This, too, is an aspect of the current “cartoon dispute”, in which, first, Danish products and firms, too, were included under the retribution for slandering Muhammad, and then people of different nationalities, but primarily those of Christian confession, were threatened and killed and the embassies of several countries sent up in flames – they all belonged to the collective group of western societies that were held in wholesale responsibility.

Dignity and Freedom of all People

From where can the dignity and freedom of a human being be derived? According to the Christian view, this is possible above all on the basis of the human being's creation in the image of God, according to which the human being is seen as a distinct, uniquely gifted creature called into life by God. Since the dignity of the human being comes, in the last analysis, from God himself, it is in the Christian view inviolable. This applies to the dignity of every human being, whether it be a Christian or a non-Christian, a man or a woman, a citizen or a guest, indeed whether a criminal or one true to the law. The idea of the indivisible dignity of each individual is closely linked with the idea of equality before God and the law, but also just as much with respect and genuine tolerance, which can arise only where this legal and natural equality of all human beings is a part of basic consensus.

... in the Christian View

The Christian, who "shall cultivate and preserve" the earth (Genesis 1), experiences this equality and dignity, but also the freedom given by God. He is obligated to keep God's commandments, but he does this as a free creator of his world in obligation to his conscience. Creativity, inventiveness, enterprise, and free scholarship – the foundations of all economic and intellectual growth and progress

– but also the freedom of speech, the press, and religion are the concrete expressions of this fundamental orientation in Christianity on the dignity and freedom of a human being. Only Christianity has rejected slavery fundamentally. Important representatives of their faith fought against it despite energetic resistance from the highest authorities, and declared it to be incompatible with human dignity.

Critical thought, reflection upon one's own being, upon life on this earth and in the hereafter, indeed, even the reproach and the accusation directed against God are not tabus already in the Old Testament– one need think only of Job or the psalms of lament, which mercilessly expose the eternal God to criticism by limited human beings. This God is, on the one hand, inscrutable, but, on the other, exhorts human beings to reflect and inquire. For this reason, the Christian faith constantly raises questions, is discussed anew, and is re-examined on the basis of social realities. It inquires, weighs, compares, and questions the meaning of history and personal existence, but also lets itself be questioned in the process – and this, too, already in the Old and New Testaments – without being damaged fundamentally or having to fear for its honor.

Criticism and fundamental questioning of itself, creativity and freedom, did not have to be wrung from the Christian faith, but rather were compatible with its central concern

from the very beginning, so that, finally, the ideas of the Enlightenment could be taken up, too – even if the social reality often did not reflect this ideal.

and in Islamic Theology

A comparison with the realities of Islamic theology and the social facts of life shows that these values, too, are not universal matters of fact. In a theology that, to be sure, considers the human being to be a creation of God, but does not grant him the special dignity inhering in a creature made in the image of God, it is then only a logical consequence that the human being primarily is not a free and questioning creature, but rather is a subjected one, a “Muslim” (Islam= submission, devotion). For this reason, the one subjected enjoys basically more rights in the Islamic state than the Jew or the Christian, neither of whom subjects himself to God in the religion of Islam, is thus a non-Muslim, and for this reason is subjected as a second-class citizen in the Islamic state through special taxes or discrimination. In the same way, the man enjoys more rights in Islamic inheritance, witness, and marital law than a woman, for there can be no equality among those who are fundamentally unequal – a fundamental principle of Islamic law.

For this reason, the human being is not bound by his conscience, but rather by the law with its numerous individual regulations regarding

foods and ablutions, clothing and the direction in which prayers are to be made, the prescribed formulation of prayers, the prayer times determined to the very minute, and the ritual of pilgrimage. Submission instead of critical questioning, an educational system oriented on the whole much too much on repetition instead of free research, the limitation of personal freedoms such as the freedom of the press or of speech, or the withheld right to found political parties, are a part of daily life in Islamic countries. Art, culture, literature, and religious freedom may have had better opportunities for development to a degree in the past, but however are very limited in Islamic countries today. Sharia recognizes only the right to turn to Islam, but for 1400 years it has threatened the defection from Islam with a death sentence.

There are further aspects that could be examined comparatively, for example the features of the Christian work ethic, which declares every form of work to be valuable because it is service done at the same time both for God and for the neighbor. The educational mission and the care of the sick and the dying, the poor and the handicapped irrespective of their “value”, their confession, their sex, or their origins are, in their foundations, specifically Christian values and in no case universal matters of fact.

No Fear of the Discussion of Values

There finally must be a well-grounded discussion about these values, which have their roots in religion, legal thought, and tradition and which underlie a society. It is absolutely not the case that everything that sounds similar is also the “same” in content. Only when the foundations of our society – as well as the foundations of the immigrant society – and their consequences for life together are frankly analyzed and illuminated – for example, in regard to the role of men and women, tolerance, and legal thought – will the values essential for our society emerge. These then also must be demanded of immigrants in order to be able to shape a constructive life together.

However, if this society persists in its uncertainty about its own values and identity, then it will be able to offer only little resistance in opposition to such a challenging culture and tradition that possesses its own firmly established framework of values. In the long run, it will be able only to admire that culture in a disoriented fashion, or must dissociate itself from it for the sake of survival. Both, however, are no alternatives for a common future, which, without any doubt, we must shape together.

A discussion of values and the rules for life together derived from such a discussion, thus, cannot be a sign of arrogance or of a “forced germanization”, but on the contrary a sign

of good will on behalf of a genuine shared existence. Whoever carelessly casts his or her own history and identity overboard, already has given up him- or herself and will live tomorrow in a crumbling order of values, in which parallel value and legal systems establish themselves.

Christian values supplemented by the Enlightenment and humanism offer a stable framework for a life together that has meaning and exhibits equality. This is because these values make possible the respect of every person, tolerance on the basis of equality, the rights of women and minorities, rights of freedom and religion, and the common shaping of the future in equality and under a common canon of values “without respect of persons”.

Islam has become an irrevocable component of German and European society. Let us finally establish common rules. For, a successful life together, because of the divergent notions of values, will not arise by itself. On the contrary, because of the long period of neglect of the problems, greater efforts are necessary today. Politics needs to propose additional programs in the instruction of language and values, for children as well as also for those resident here for thirty years. New solutions are needed for finding work and training for those who have failed and left school early. Additional educational programs and perhaps even a new housing policy are needed to prevent the formation

of additional ghettos and the development there of independent notions of the law. But, every citizen also has a responsibility in his or her own environment when encounter with others and engagement in politics and society, support und demands, programs and the drawing of boundaries are at issue.

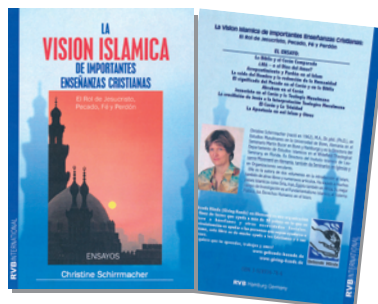
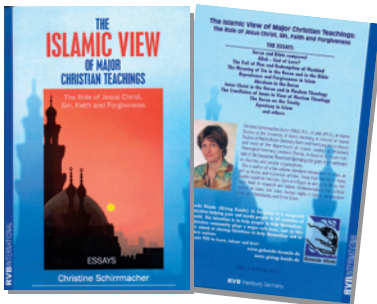
This society at the moment stands at a crossroads: Will it summon the energy to reassure itself once again

of its culture and civilization, to find sound arguments for it, and to defend it successfully in the confrontation with other philosophies of life? The future of us all already has begun – let us find the courage to shape it together.

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