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## Concepts of Order - A Common Root: The Search for Justice

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### Abstract

Since time religions have given people answers to the essential questions of life – including those that regard living together. Let us be reminded of to the so-called “Golden Rule”, which is found in many religions. We might also recall the Catholic Social Teaching, which in the course of recent history gave and still gives answers to questions and problems of human coexistence in view of numerous social and political challenges. It should not go unmentioned that Islam sees itself as a political religion - religion and politics are inseparably linked to each other in Islam. The always relevant answers of the different world religions to the questions of living together are based on different and differentiated philosophical-theological concepts. But despite all these differences, are there not similarities that need to be worked out and made fruitful for the present in the face of a growing global heterogeneity and global challenges?

The leitmotif of interreligious encounter should be the conviction formulated by Hans Küng: “No peace among nations without peace among religions. No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions. No dialogue between the religions without basic research in the religions.”<sup>1</sup> Religions are a “school of divine grace” and every interreligious dialogue should be marked by mutual acquaintance with the respective positions and the search for common roots and values. Values carry social, political, economic and also ecological developments of our society. People never live in a value-free space. Values, and especially religious values, always guide human action. Every social or political idea or concept therefore necessarily has a foundation of values. However, which values would form this foundation?

### **Peace as the fruit of justice**

So, which values are we talking about? Let us take one of these numerous values that is rightly to be regarded as an aspiration here on earth: peace. Is there anyone who does not want peace? It can be assumed that these people do not exist. The doctor of the Church Augustine (354-430) said:

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<sup>1</sup> Compare Hans Küng; Global Ethic Project, <http://www.weltethos.org> One principle of the project is: "No survival without a global ethic. No global ethic without world peace. No world peace without religious peace. No religious peace without religious dialogue. No religious dialogue without basic research [...], in order to do justice to the most important religious traditions and communities of mankind in a contemporary way and thus to serve the ecumenical understanding of religions." Hans Küng is concerned with preserving the "human" through a contribution of the religions. A critique of this concept states that the "human" is accepted in the parameters of Western enlightened philosophy and that the demands of the world religions are not sufficiently taken into account. In addition, it is to be considered that an ethos is a habit, an embedded thing that cannot be "made" in a project.

“If even those who want war want nothing more than victory, then they strive to achieve glorious peace through victory. Even those who want to disturb the peace in which they live do not hate peace as such, but only want another peace that corresponds to their desires.”<sup>1</sup>

So what is peace? The linguistic analysis provides us with a first hint. As in the Semitic sister language Hebrew, the meaning of the word peace in Arabic can be derived from three roots. The roots *Sin Lam Mim* form the root of the noun *Salâm*: security, integrity, wholeness, peace (cf. Shalom) and the word *Salima*: to be safe, to be whole, to be complete, to be free; to preserve, to keep away from harm, to surrender intact, to submit, to agree, to greet; to keep peace, to make peace; to leave, to give up, to surrender; to reconcile with each other, to make peace with each other. Augustine, in his work *The City of God*, defined peace as the tranquillity that springs from the order of things and as a unique high good, the condition of all reality, which is above all praised. Earthly peace cannot be compared to heavenly peace, and yet nothing can exist without the order which is the foundation of peace:

“Thus the peace of the body consists in the orderly relationship of its parts, the peace of a senseless soul in the orderly state of rest of its instincts, the peace of a rational soul in the orderly agreement of thought and action, the peace between body and soul in the orderly life and well-being of the inspired being, peace between mortal man and God in orderly faithful obedience to the eternal law, peace among men in orderly harmony, peace among the dwellers of the house in

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<sup>1</sup> Augustinus: *City of God*, book 19, chapter. 10.

command and obedience, peace of the heavenly state in the most orderly, most peaceful community, the peace if all things lies in God.“<sup>1</sup>

But in spite of all the declared or hidden love of peace, how must this inner attitude and external peace-making actions be translated? An important and central idea of the topic must not be forgotten. The Prophet Isaiah once expressed this thought: “The fruit of righteousness will be peace” (Isaiah 32:17). This was also the motto of Pope Pius XII: *Opus iustitiae pax*. There is a deep connection between justice, the order of things, and peace. Without justice there is no peace. For the religious man there is also, as Augustine explained another deep inner connection between the order of things, thus justice on earth, and God, the Creator. In the religious understanding, God as Creator is also the ruler of the world. According to his love and goodness, God communicates himself and this communication takes place on the basis of justice, which consequently is decisive for all creation, its well-ordered order and the government of the world, i.e. the leading of things to their goal.<sup>2</sup>

### **A common root: Plato?**

It was a Greek who placed the question of justice at the centre of his philosophical reflections and who was to continue to shape Western thought to this day, namely Plato and, subsequently, his disciple

<sup>1</sup> Augustinus: *City of God*, book 19, chapter 10.

<sup>2</sup> Vgl. Walter Hoeres: *Die Verratene Gerechtigkeit. Nach dem Abschied von Gottes heiliger Majestät*, S. 78, Patrimonium, Mainz, 2016.

Aristotle.<sup>1</sup> It is also no secret that Islam, and above all Shiite Islam, has a philosophical tradition that Plato passed on through Neoplatonic Islamic thinkers, such as Al-Farabi (872-950), Avicenna (980-1037) or Averroës (1126-1198).<sup>2</sup> This tradition was very much “buried” in Sunni Islam and also in “liberal Catholicism”, or in the following. We will trace the fundamental determinants of Platonic philosophy with regard to its concepts of order. Plato is concerned centrally with an answer to the questions: What is right? What is just? Criteria of Justice (*dikaiosyne*). It is not the soul or the state that is at the centre of Plato's politics, but "the essence of justice and injustice":

“Not whether I wrong you in this, or you wrong me - not what the philosopher desires to find out, but what justice and what injustice is at all; not whether a king who possesses much gold is happy or not, but what dominion is at all, what bliss, what misery - at all and in the last sense.”<sup>3</sup>

Following Socrates and against the relativism of the sophists, Plato assumes that the good and thus the just exists as something objective, that is, as an unchanging, eternal entity independent of our ideas and preferences. The realization of the right, good life remains the task of every human being. For Plato, this task consists first of all in this,

<sup>1</sup> Contrary to the processes of de-Hellenization in the West or within the Catholic Church, which Pope Benedict XVI explained for instance in his Regensburg speech, the Magisterium of the Catholic Church states that the Church must not separate itself from that which it has acquired through the inculturation into Greek-Latin thinking. Cf. for instance John Paul II: "The renunciation of such an inheritance would run contrary to God's plan of providence, who walks his church along the streets of time and history", *Fides et ratio*, Stein am Rhein (Switzerland), Christiana-Verlag, 1998, No. 72.

<sup>2</sup> These thinkers should also shape the most powerful Shiite philosopher and theologian Şadr ad-Dīn Muḥammad Shīrāzī (short: Mulla Sadrā, 1571-1640).

<sup>3</sup> Platon: *Politeia*, 472b

“to turn his gaze to a world where there is eternal order and immutability, where beings do neither wrong nor suffer from each other, and where everything goes according to a heavenly order and reason, and he then imitates this world and presents as much as possible of it in his life as an image.”<sup>1</sup>

Now, however, this view is confronted with the problem that our opinions about what is good seem to differ or actually differ, and that even the world accessible to our senses is subject to constant change. Against this background, how can a good exist as a constant entity that has always existed and will continue to exist in the future? Plato also knew that most people have little insight into what is good for them and for all. These people would have to be persuaded by the wise men to voluntarily obey the knowledge of the good. The danger of seducers being tempted to wrong opinions is given. So the question arises, how can the wise man come to power? For Plato, the coincidence of power and philosophy was already a stroke of luck or a divine coincidence. We are reminded of Plato's famous words about the end of happiness and misfortune of the human race. The misfortune of the human race will not stop, as Plato noted in his *Politeia*,

“if not the philosophers in the states become rulers or the rulers, as they are called today, genuine and good philosophers and if not in one hand political power and philosophy coincide. If not the multiplicity of those who today are based on to dedicate their facility only to one or

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<sup>1</sup> Platon: *Politeia*, 500b.

two tasks, is kept away from it by force, there is, my Glaucon, no end to the misfortune in the States, not even in the whole human race.”<sup>1</sup>

We know that Plato thought a whole of the order of being that encompassed the state as well as the soul of the individual.<sup>2</sup> In ancient times and the Christian Middle Ages, the world was taken for granted as a *cosmos* (Latin: *universum*). Etymologically, *cosmos* means as much as a piece of jewellery. The *cosmos* is the reality of the good and beautiful hierarchical order: *Omne est ordinatum*. As a whole filled with meaning, the *cosmos* extends to the whole world, the community, the family, the household and the life and soul of the individual. The *cosmos* itself was understood as animated and divine: Ancient man transcended himself to the cosmic order. To recreate his soul and human coexistence according to the order of the *cosmos*, to “attune” it to that order, is one of man's meaningful goals that correspond to his nature. Accordingly, an idea of a common good, the fulcrum of the political theory of the great doctor of the Church Thomas von Aquinas, for example, could develop. And a common good order can be theocentrically realized, as we will take a closer look at and Thomas, standing in the tradition of Plato, clearly elaborated: A creator establishes the natural and social order.

Plato's model of the best state community can be described in analogy to the order of the soul: Just as the soul is nourished by desire,

<sup>1</sup> Platon: *Politeia*, 473d.

<sup>2</sup> This conception is in apparent contradiction to the "open society" often postulated today, such as Karl Popper's work *Die offene Gesellschaft und ihre Feinde* (The open society and its enemies). In his liberal critique of Plato's work, however, Popper reveals neither a genuine philosophical understanding of metaphysics or natural law, nor a divine revelation with its prophetic tradition, nor a myth. In his accusation of totalitarianism against Plato, Popper in particular overlooks the Platonic difference between the individual soul and the polis.

protected by courage, and guided by reason, the city must also be nourished, guarded, and guided. Three estates are responsible for fulfilling these tasks: The warrior and the ruler form the two decisive “estates” of the “guardians”. The three estates are characterized by three specific virtues, that allow them to fulfil their corresponding tasks well: the breadwinners by prudence (*sophrosyne*), the warriors by bravery (*andreia*) and the rulers by wisdom (*sophia*). From these three virtues results justice (*dikaiosyne*), which itself is to found the ideal or best state. But these virtues are supposed to be first in the soul of the individual human being. The individual soul always exists in an interaction with the whole of the state community.

In order, however, for man or the state community to be guided by reason and thus be well ordered, man must direct his soul and also the state community towards the supreme good, the reason of all things, the “idea of good”, which is the divine cause of the world:

“Thus the objects of knowledge of the good are not only given recognisability, but they also receive existence and essence from it. What the truth communicates to the discernible and gives the power to discern to discern is the idea of the good.”<sup>1</sup>

The sun is in the world of the senses what the “idea of good” is in the world accessible only to thinking. The sun spreads light, the “idea of good” truth. And just as the eye sees in daylight, so reason hears in the light of truth. Reason is man's ability to enable us to relate to the “idea of the good”, just as the eye is the sense organ that connects us to the light of the sun. But the eye or sight is not identical with the sun, just as

<sup>1</sup> Platon: *Politeia*, 508d-509a.



reason is not the same as the “idea of the good”. According to Plato, both the existence of things and their perceptibility are based on the “idea of the good”. Just as the sun gives us light and thus only enables us to see, but at the same time with its rays only creates the prerequisite for the growth and prosperity of nature and thus functions both as a condition of knowledge and as a source of energy, so according to Plato we must have an idea of what is good in order to understand the order of things, and at the same time the order of things is oriented towards the highest good.

The basis of the legitimacy of the state: justice

In Platonic thinking the divine “idea of good” is the guideline and foundation of good community life. It causes the creation and preservation of the unity of the polis. The “idea of the good” is the last normative anchoring of the ideas and is to be seen in particular as a spiritual power. Accordingly, it is the task of the statesman, whom Plato compares with a helmsman and a doctor, to practice “statecraft”. An important task here is in particular the art of “royal interweaving”, i.e. to ensure that there is an orderly, harmonious whole in the state. And this concern is connected with the idea of enabling the material and spiritual well-being of the whole and not only of the individual parts:

“However, we did not found our state with the intention that an individual state should feel particularly happy. We have had the happiness of the whole before our eyes. In such happy states we hope to find justice, as vice versa in the badly administered we hope to find

injustice. (...) We do not pick out a part of the state and make it happy, but we make the whole state happy.”<sup>1</sup>

For Plato, (social) justice is a comprehensive, state-building principle that guarantees the order of the city and the happiness of the citizens. Justice prevails in Plato's state when every individual and every part of it does its own thing, that is, what it does best. Prudence in the sense of moderation, and self-determination is not only relevant to the state of nutrition, but also, as the general measure of the city, a general virtue. Only a state that has lost its inner measure becomes expansive and is waging war. Through virtue, harmony and stability prevail, supported by the consensus that the best should rule. Every member of this community is aware that this order is by no means only good for the ruling philosophical kings, but good for all in the state. In particular, it is the task of this state to educate its citizens to virtue.<sup>2</sup> And justice as an internal structural feature is the basis of a peaceful existence of the states.

For Plato, a world that is as just as possible does not just exist in his head or imagination; he is a “realist of ideas”. The divine “idea of the good” is the formal principle of everything that exists and its knowledge. Plato thought theocentrically, from God towards the state. In the words of Thomas Aquinas, justice is also connected with religion: It is a debt of man before God that can never be completely

<sup>1</sup> Platon: *Politeia*, 420b.

<sup>2</sup> With regard to the contemporary reference to Platonic ideas, it is worth recalling at this point only the school objective paragraph which applies to all teachers in Austria: "The Austrian school has the task of contributing to the development of the youth's abilities according to moral, religious and social values as well as according to the values of the True, Good and Beautiful by teaching corresponding to their stage of development and their educational path", Schulorganisationsgesetz, BGBl. Nr. 242/1962, last amended by BGBl. Nr. 512/1993.

fulfilled. Is not the “idea of the good”, which is ultimately the highest reality that can never be fully grasped, but in which we ought to participate as far as possible, the God of the monotheistic world religions? Is it not also today a common basis for dialogue in the search for justice and peace? Does Plato not possibly at all help to clarify basic insights of Christianity, but also of Islam?

### **Christian-Muslim dialogue in tension with “modernity”**

Interreligious dialogue and in particular Christian-Muslim dialogue is today of eminent relevance. This requirement applies in particular in many areas of life which are under the claim of justice and peace. Christian and Islamic faith in God goes hand in hand with the responsibility for a God-fearing or humane life and a just approach to creation. Ultimately, a Christian-Muslim dialogue would remain untrustworthy if it did not show itself in concrete commitment and engagement for a fairer and more peaceful world. It is precisely this theme that will be the focus of the coming decades.<sup>1</sup> In this sense the historic document on human fraternity emphasize the role of religion in promoting universal peace was signed by His Holiness Pope Francis, head of the Catholic Church, and His Eminence Dr. Ahmed el-Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al Azhar, which sought to seek building bridges of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the words of Metropolitan Kyrill von Smolenks and Kaliningrad before the plenum of the European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu: "By fighting for uniform ethical norms, Christians must seek alliances with the followers of other religions who hold the same ethical positions as Christians. For this purpose, it is necessary to develop inter-religious contacts in Europe and throughout the world. Despite all differences, the world religions have a common understanding of the priority of eternal values over earthly ones." The Light of Christ and the Churches, Frankfurt am Main, 2 October 2007, pp. 31-34, 34.

love, amity and coexistence among peoples and to confront extremism and its negative impacts.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, it cannot remain unnoticed that religions today more than ever are confronted with the reality of a secular worldview. Moreover, it must also be attested that a secular worldview, whose roots lie in the so-called “Enlightenment”, has as far removed itself from Plato and Aristotle as from Christianity and Islam. Now one hears in public discussions and in academic circles that the basis of a possible dialogue and coexistence between Islam and the “West” can only be the Enlightenment. It is precisely this Enlightenment that Islam has not or not yet gone through or internalized – and this failure should best be made up for as soon as possible, which is also increasingly rejected by Islam.<sup>2</sup> The discussion about modernity is pressing for clarification of the concept of “enlightenment”. What do we even understand by “Enlightenment”? Is “Enlightenment” at all to be equated with “modernity”? Which Enlightenment is meant? Is there perhaps a “modern Enlightenment” that could be distinguished from an ancient or even religious one? Are the achievements of “modern Enlightenment” the fruit of themselves or not of a Christian breeding ground? The answers to these questions are of great importance for Islam and also for Christianity.

<sup>1</sup> Document: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco\\_20190204\\_documento-fratellanza-umana.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html)

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Abdel-Hakim Ourghi: Muslims must not fear freedom in the Cicero on 14 July 2016. The German political scientist Bassam Tibi, who sketched the concept of a "Euro-Islam", is to be seen as one of the inner-Islamic thinkers of enlightenment. However, in his theory of the dream of half modernity, a critical examination of the developmental tendencies of Islamic civilization, he distinguishes between two aspects: On the one hand, institutional modernity, which occupies science and technology as well as traditional areas of life, and on the other, cultural modernity, which stands for fundamental values of freedom, human rights, democratization, and equal opportunities. Half of modernity is therefore a partial modernization through the adoption of instruments, especially in the fields of science and technology, while at the same time rejecting cultural modernity, i.e. the values and world view of the modern world.

A decisive signum of the “modern Enlightenment”, which would have to be distinguished from an “ancient Enlightenment” in the sense of Socrates, Plato and also Aristotle, and which should interest us in the context of our topic, is its understanding of the “privatization of religion”. And at exactly this point there is a decisive antithesis. Islam (similar to Judaism) as religion of law in its self-understanding makes a religiously conditioned claim to the entire private, public, legal, cultural, social and political life. On the other side is now a “modern Enlightenment” with its culture, which declares religion a private matter and wants to see it deprived of its public and thus also political claim to validity. No believing Muslim can seriously engage in a dialogue on the basis of the latter premises without giving up his own religious self-understanding.<sup>1</sup> However, which politics an individual Muslim or Muslim communities, societies and states make is always a current question of its leaders and state men. How do they interpret the Koran? Are guiding principles such as reason and justice being respected? And what about a Christian who confesses that the will of God will happen and that the kingdom of God may come in heaven as well as on earth?<sup>2</sup> Would not, according to a Christian “self-

<sup>1</sup> Without considering this point, Islam cannot be properly understood. Islam as a religion of law is centrally concerned with external facts that determine life and the congregation. The economic, the political, the social facts in all their outward appearances are precisely the religiously decisive ones and are opened up to Allah. And this is why religious law and state law are not alien to each other. In this context also psychologically one cannot disregard what many Muslims think: The West has already repeatedly politically degraded us, oppressed us and exploited us economically and now it wants to impose its philosophy of enlightenment on us with the consequence of abandoning our understanding of religion. Doesn't "Western" politics, therefore, have a share in the blame for certain undesirable developments and "counter-reactions"? Cf. Günther Rohrmoser: Islam, the misunderstood challenge.

<sup>2</sup> This problem has arisen in recent years where God is the subject of election campaigns, where his naming in constitutions or oaths of office is discussed. Not infrequently this naming leads to counter-reactions. Pope Pius XII clarified the political scope of the church: "It is part of the incontestable scope of the church, in those matters of social life that reach into the realm of morality or already touch it, to decide whether the foundations of the respective social order agree with the eternal, valid order that God, the Creator and Redeemer, has manifested through natural law and revelation".

consciousness” and according to social dissolution tendencies, a confession of one's own Christian identity and culture, as a believing Muslim in a Muslim society would taken for granted, offered?

At this point we would like to point out a difference between the two world religions. Christianity knows the belief in a God, which says that the world is based on both unity and multiplicity. And this view differs from the Islamic one, which sees the divine reason of the world rather as unity without any inner difference. According to some relevant passages of the Koran, can the latter faith not easily lead to a behaviour which in the world only allows for a “unity” and is thus intolerant, for instance towards Jews and Christians in particular?

But in spite of all demanded and postulated tolerance as contrast to intolerance, in the “West” the realization increasingly prevails that tolerance cannot exist without truth and that we often encounter intolerance where one has lost a truth, be it religious or philosophical. And this realization often goes hand in hand with the observation of a very widespread ignorance and unenlightened prejudices about religions. Nevertheless, a liberal, “enlightened” society benefits from its tolerance, which often turns into intolerance. How is this possible? The German philosopher and Catholic Robert Spaemann explains:

"It sounds paradoxical, but I think it has something to do with the spread of radical relativism. There, where one thinks that truth is attainable for man, there is discourse, there is a struggle of opinions, but everyone wants one goal: they want to know what it really is like. In a radical relativistic society, on the other hand, there is no longer the moment of regulation by the idea of truth, but only regulation by the

conventional, which is also in the interest of those who have power. Or the prevailing ideology.”<sup>1</sup>

### Jürgen Habermas and the Reason Potentials of Religions

Interestingly, a former Neomarxist thinker like Jürgen Habermas claimed recently that “modernity” experiences a shaking of its normative consciousness and comes to the realization that the Enlightenment requires religion.<sup>2</sup> Robert Spaemann also pointedly made this observation in reference to Friedrich Nietzsche: Nietzsche declared (as one of the first) that the Enlightenment lived from the faith of Christians, who was also Plato's faith, namely that “God is the truth and the truth is divine” and that the Enlightenment destroyed its own foundation.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Robert Spaemann in an interview in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on 15 February 2009. Further Pope Benedict XVI: “The tolerance that we urgently need includes the reverence for God - the reverence for what is holy to the other. But this reverence for the saints of others in turn presupposes that we ourselves learn reverence for God again. This reverence can only be regenerated in the Western world when faith in God grows again, when God becomes present again for us and in us.” See Apostolic Journey of Pope Benedict XVI to Munich, Altötting and Regensburg, Predigt, 14 September 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas: *Between Naturalism and Religion*. Philosophische Essays, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 2005, or Dankesrede zum Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels, Frankfurt, 2001. Cf. Habermas on the significance of the doctrine of creation: “This creativeness of the image expresses an intuition that can also say something about the religiously unmusical in our context. Hegel had a feeling for the difference between divine 'creation' and the mere 'emergence' from God. God remains a 'God of free men' only as long as we do not level the absolute difference between creator and creature. For only so long does divine shaping not mean a determination that falls into the arm of man's self-determination.”

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche: *Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, 2nd volume, edited by Karl Schlechta, Hanser Verlag, p. 127. Robert Spaemann: “If God does not exist, Nietzsche writes, then there is no such thing as truth. Then there are only subjective perspectives in the world, but there is not beyond these perspectives something like an absolute, unchangeable truth. If there is no truth in this sense, then there is also no Enlightenment, and then the Enlightenment, with the abolition of God, destroys itself at the same time. And exactly that was Nietzsche's conviction. The Enlightenment produces nihilism, at the end of which space is created for new myths: myths that do not reflect something like truth, but that express the will to the power of the fittest”, *Truth and Freedom, in the same words: Steps Beyond Us*, p. 329.

In the religions, according to Jürgen Habermas, there are slumbering potentials of reason that have to be brought to life and updated. And these are the presuppositions for every democracy and so called liberal state. And because these exist, he pleads for the fact that also the believers of religious communities, thus also of Christianity, must be again admitted and be heard in the public discourse. The Christian communities should be given back a public and thus also political claim to validity and according to their own self-understanding, in particular in regards to the area of human morality. Islam would have no problem with that. In its most important denominations Christianity makes a distinction between the religious and political spheres, but not a separation in the sense of secularism or laicism. (As a positive state model in this sense for a democratic state which acknowledge its national-religious identity the states of Israel or Hungary can be named.)

According to Habermas, it is a decisive problem of “modernity” that the question of truth and thus of the true, real life itself is no longer posed as a question. And in such a time of crisis, which Plato experienced in a similar way, is there not a great need for philosophy and thus for true knowledge of reality? With Plato a right philosophy could be distinguished from a wrong philosophy with a deficient concept of reason. The philosophical question of how things really are and what the right, good life is and remains the basis for every dialogue in society. And this question is just also a question about the reasonableness and also the reasonableness of religion, as Pope



Benedict XVI, for instance, often addressed.<sup>1</sup> Only in the sign of the openness of faith for reason and the openness of reason for faith interreligious encounter as well as an encounter of religions with a secular world will be possible.

A dialogue must not lead to the conclusion of a false, imaginary compromise for the sake of a false peace, or to the assertion of one at the expense of the other. It can, however, make it possible to (re)recognize common things from a tradition that loves reason, justice and peace, which can be made fruitful in today's world. A Koran passage may serve as a guiding idea for interreligious thinking that places the common before the divisive. When asked why the Almighty created the different religions and peoples, the Koran says:

“O men! You were created as men and women, and the Almighty has made you peoples and tribes, that ye may know one another. Verily before Allah is of you the most esteemed, which is the most fearful.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Pope Benedict XVI in his Regensburg speech quoting the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II: "Not acting rationally, not acting with the Logos is contrary to the essence of God".

<sup>2</sup> The Koran, Sura 49, 123rd Plato's Politeia begins with the words: "We prayed, looked, and made our way home to the city." Cf. also: "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God, it is innate to the believers". (Jesus Sirach 1:1)