

## *Alliance of Ethics and Enlightenment*

Some Reflections concerning the Link between Xenophobia and the Rule of Power, as well as the option of fostering Critical and Responsible Humanitarianism through an Alliance of Ethics and Enlightenment

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A Culture of Peace overcomes Psychological Homelessness

I Xenophobia and its Effects upon Society

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### **A Culture of Peace overcomes Psychological Homelessness**

People who suffered from love deprivation in their childhood, from a lack of acceptance by their immediate social environment, whose lives seemed never given tangible meaning or a goal worth pursuing - people who were thus left psychologically homeless tend to compensate for this lack by seizing for guiding orientation upon anything that proclaims their own nation or race as something special. In order to imbue this ideal with extra meaning, to the extent of even using it as a justification for action, anyone foreign, or different, not coming from one's own nation or race or thinking differently, is then branded as the enemy, and will eventually be violently attacked as posing a recognisable threat to the group identified with.

Repressed personal insecurity is thus compensated and one's own ego or self apparently elevated through the devaluing of foreign or arbitrarily separated identities - a typically neurotic and potentially psychotic attitude. A motivation thus generated e. g. in the racist neo-Nazi scene, is nourished by the individually underdeveloped, insecure and unloved egos, with correspondingly dangerous consequences for a social environment that is different. Only where the motivation of political activists (of either the right or the left) is directed towards individual development for the sake of improving social conditions may it show even wholistic, humanist attributes.

Historically there have been frequent instances of the right and left motivations overlapping in a variety of totalitarian systems. In this respect Stalin did not correspond to a progressive socialist theory. And likewise the former leadership of the GDR (the East German state), with its tendency to paint the West as the devil whilst at the same time committing human rights violations in their own country, could be considered as being totalitarian rather than progressive in the sense of the socialist left. Whether their theoretical understanding proclaims them as on the right or of the "progressive" left: both kinds of activists will show their true colours by their activities in social practice. And it is this practice, too, on which any unambiguous statement may be based concerning the quality of the respective reigning culture.

On a global scale, the behaviour of the industrialised nations (Minority World) towards the vast majority of the world's population bears the marks of a totalitarian attitude which has little regard for people or life as such. The clumsiness or even tolerance if not ignorance shown by German politicians with regard to neo-Nazi tendencies, as well as the half-hearted attitude of the judiciary towards the crimes committed by this group are both rooted in the fact that this totalitarianism (and thereby the system itself) is here not endangered. At the same time, however, the dissident move-

ment remains consistently under attack.

On the other hand, the likewise totalitarian tendencies of other governments with regard to the striving for self-responsibility within their countries are revealed by their attacking any separatist national movements, to the point of even using military force. What this means for the freedom movement within other nations is this: wherever they seem to threaten the tendency towards a totalitarian rigidification of the world order, they are opposed militarily, whereas in regions where the nation state order is being maintained if not supported by anti-human activities, such groups, may they hold human life ever so cheap, are even rewarded (- globally: support of all nations against the interests of indigenous populations, and in general: legalised destruction of their means of survival).

The eyes of global justice remain blind; they will gain their sight only when the general psychological homelessness is overcome by a wholistic humanist orientation, an orientation by the necessities of Life, that will provide meaning and purpose on a global scale. Then the development and maturing of a truly peaceful mentality which also respects environment will be able to be reflected in a culture of therapeutic quality which can heal the damage incurred throughout history as a consequence of immature motivations.

### **I. Xenophobia and its Effects upon Society**

'Xenophobia' is a negative prejudicial thought system postulating an intrinsically higher worth of one's own ethnic group in comparison to other such groups. It is determined by racist and ethnocentric (nationalistic) thinking.

The racist component considers the de-valued 'alien' race as inferior 'by nature' (i.e. on account of biological-genetic determination). The ethno-centric, nationalistic component of xenophobia regards the question of superior or inferior value as culturally determined.

The concept of 'Race' involved here is being used in political and ideological combat. It may utilise biological features of certain populations, but may just as well disregard them; in either case social inequality will be presented as a biologically determined natural order. Accordingly, any attempt to change this order is rejected as 'contrary to nature', whereas that which is constant, i.e. the immutability of existing power constellations, is glorified.

Thus in the final analysis the concept is invariably directed against the idea of equality and any efforts to achieve it. (Inasmuch as racism pronounces the differences to be biologically determined and hence insurmountable, it may be regarded as "worse" than nationalism or ethnocentrism.) This is not to discuss the question whether or not "race" is meaningful as a biological concept. However, any use of the concept to explain anything in the social sphere is plain nonsense.

Numerous research projects have presented empirical evidence indicating that many prejudices towards foreign immigrants in Germany have a racist tendency. These prejudices postulate a genetic inferiority of the foreign groups (i.e. an inferiority determined by ethnic origin) so as to justify their social and judicial discrimination. In this respect the current xenophobia has largely adopted

the contents and forms of traditional racism.

In the context of society at large, racism or xenophobia have the effect of stabilising the current power constellations under the conditions of socio-economic instability. This statement is not to support a "governmental conspiracy" theory disregarding the xenophobia (or antisemitism, for that matter) of the "man in the street". It is true that the purposive utilisation of racist ideology has been a "proven" instrument for securing (or gaining) power in times of social instability, or of mobilising its resources, to which end the technique of separation ("divide and rule") has been applied throughout history. However, pointing this out is not to state that this means is being used by consensus within ruling groups let alone by all ruling groups. Ideology as an instrument for disguising facts may also take the form of "systematic toleration" of tendencies emanating from the "man in the street" (such as blindness towards neo-nazism).

Furthermore, a sociological examination of the phenomenon of power indicates that due to the exigencies of foreign policy or international economics, racism (or xenophobia) in itself constitutes an element of destabilisation the limitation of which must be in the interest of those in power.

## II. The Alliance of Moral Values with a View to Overcoming the Effects of an as yet inadequate Awareness of Responsibility.

A feeling of being threatened by the appearance of strangers in one's familiar environment may, at least in persons who are insecure in themselves, be explained in terms of biology; and this feeling will produce an emotional urge to drive the stranger away. However, those whose actions are in this way biologically determined may well be regarded as being in proximity to the animal kingdom. Would they really rather be identified with animals than with humans who carry the responsibility for their actions?

Any attempt to devise a strategy of countering phenomena of under-developed human nature such as xenophobia must begin with the question as to our own personal identity.

Who am I? Where do I belong? Where do I come from? Where am I going? With whom, or with what do I identify?

Am I identifying in a holistic spirit with the one humanity sharing life in this world, in a sense embedded in Nature, - or else, feeling insufficient in myself as part of the whole, with elitist values, concepts and desires that exclude others? Am I thus, childlike and biologically determined, seeking to stabilise my identity through differentiation instead in an adult, spiritual manner through connectedness with the one family of man and with nature?

At this point we ought to realise that the effect of a mind-set dogmatically solidified in the interest of the status quo is akin to that of a conspiracy against social progress and the development of responsible humanity. Acknowledging this will facilitate the task of changing this mind-set in such a way that its thinking will result in changed aims and action and thus contribute to the creation of a tolerant and just society.

A closer look at our civilisation will show it to be functioning as it does only because those in power - whether engaged in a conspiracy or not - are in the final result agreed to leave the current power constellations intact as far as possible. Only this enables them to safeguard adequate servicing of Capital, to acquire resources at a minimum cost, to support the expansion of the middle class only to the point of securing adequate labour, to reinterpret election results as far as possible (so as to prevent them being seen as an expression of mistrust towards a political system which can no longer hide its corruptness) - and so on, the list is endless...

Those acting in this way find this totally okay. For them, any change to this situation would constitute a real threat. And thus they are in total agreement that "one good turn deserves another". Intergovernmental treaties, laws and teams secure the status quo 'Rich over Poor' and 'Man over Woman', and a mind-set dominated by patriarchal thinking for millenia will reject any kind of alternative as "Utopian".

Those individuals who nonetheless insist on expressing a deviating opinion are, wherever they could bring about effective change, made out to be criminals.

Does it not seem right to regard all this as constituting the perfect model of a conspiracy by those who rule? Whoever follows closely the argument here presented must concede that what is needed is a kind of counter-conspiracy - or better: an alliance of ethics, of enlightenment, a league for the purpose of fostering responsible humanitarianism.

Only through an unambiguous espousal of humanitarianism may we hope to get the better of social phenomena like neo-nazism and the hostility towards foreigners. This presupposes finding our own identity as responsibly acting individuals, and will ultimately lead to a solidly united society which is accepting its responsibilities also beyond national boundaries. Accordingly, this kind of society will no longer merely regard asylum seekers as either of practical use (in today's terms, "the useful ones") or a threat, but it will empathise with their fate which may also be investigated.

In the case of many foreign asylum seekers this fate has been marked by harrowing social conditions in their home country. For the wealthy nations the situation of these countries continues to be an advantage, as their natural resources are being plundered. Accordingly, many of their inhabitants are considered of 'value' only as extremely cheap labour and as such are forced to eke out a miserable existence unworthy of human beings. In their struggle against these conditions many of them are branded as criminals and then land at our borders seeking our sympathy for their situation.

According to the German constitution the dignity of humans is inviolable. The state has a duty to respect and protect it with all powers at its disposal. Seeing that, beginning with the first paragraph of the first article of the constitution, the state, under the sway of diverse interests, shows itself unwilling to enforce the constitutional right of inviolability of human dignity, it seems not surprising that in the sphere of foreign and asylum politics so much continues to go wrong. Not enough with this, politicians are publicly differentiating between "useful" and "other" foreigners or asylum seekers, thus preparing a fertile soil for the relapse of human maturity into a lack of responsibility befitting a stone-age mentality.

Bans and prohibitions alone will accomplish nothing in the long run, just as children cannot develop into responsible adults simply through being punished. No one is born as a racist, nor will anyone ever be cured through ostracism or punishment.

What is needed is the engagement of all concerned groups in a comprehensive public debate about themes such as nationalism and violence and their causes. And, whatever the consequences for a changed self-image of power and politics: it will be absolutely essential to discuss and openly proclaim the fundamentals of responsible humanitarianism.

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