

Prof. Dr. Anton Grabner-Haider  
A-8047 Graz, Eisslgasse 34  
Mail: a.grabner-haider@aon.at  
Tel: 0316 / 303585

## CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND PEACEMAKING OF RELIGIONS

(31. Jan. 2020, Vienna, UNO-City)

Dear Mr. President Peter Haider! Dear friends of religious peacemaking and peacekeeping!

I am speaking here in the sight of the critical philosophy of enlightenment, in the school of Critical Rationalism from Karl Raimund Popper. The critical philosophy aims to look at consequences of religious teachings for the life and the behavior of religious followers, because some religious teachings can disturb and damage the human life or the psychological balance of its followers. For example, the teaching of hell and devils have very bad consequences for the psychical health.

But most teachings or moral norms of religions are very useful for the individual life and for social situations. All religions in the world follow the goal **to make and to keep the peace** in situations of political conflicts. They have many experiences and possibilities to reconcile the enemies and the fighting groups. The great religions in the world, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Daoism, Hinduism and many others have a lot of experience to keep the peace in their own region for a very long time. Peace can be kept at optimum within the groups of the uniformed believers.

**But** it is very difficult to keep the peace within groups of different convictions and moral norms. The problem is coming out in the relation to persons of the **outgroup**. Most religions draw a very strong border to different believers or to nonbelievers. Many religious teachers say that different believers and members of other religions are enemies of the only true religion, **or even** that they are enemies of God. To this neglected group belong atheists, scepticists or members of other religions and confessions. As a consequence, religious fundamentalists are fighting at first with words and later very often with weapons against these so called “enemies” of the one true religion or of God. Here we see the dangerous side of religious convictions.

In this situation the critical philosophy says that religious people must learn tolerance towards other believers, towards members of other religions, towards atheists or scepticists. Because all religions say that God is a deep mystery and no man can fully understand this absolute mystery. Therefore, there are many ways to God and many forms of beliefs and worship. The members of other religions are **not** enemies of the one true belief, they are **not** enemies of God at all. **They are only going another way** of religion, another way to the one God of all mankind. If we can think in this way, it will be possible to **cooperate** with the members of other confessions or religions in order to make peace in political conflicts or to preserve the peace in difficult situations. **All religions** can work for peacemaking and for peacekeeping in situations of political and economical conflicts. Because, religious people have a **very strong motivation** to work for peace and justice; because the **God of all men wants the peace** between the people, the groups and the countries. Religions have a lot of possibilities to work for peace and solidarity in the world today. **But some rules** must be accepted and realized.

Religions must discharge all pictures and teachings of so-called enemies of God, because these pictures and ideologies produce a lot of hate and anger against other men. Therefore, religious believers must learn, that also the “strange” people, members of other religions or atheists and nonbelievers are symbolically spoken “Children of God”.

Prof. Dr. Anton Grabner-Haider  
A-8047 Graz, Eisslgasse 34  
Mail: a.grabner-haider@aon.at  
Tel: 0316 / 303585

Religious believers must learn and accept, that **not only they themselves** have a **monopoly** of the one and only true belief and of the worship of God. They must learn to recognize, that there are **many ways to God** and many forms of life in a religious context.

Religious people must learn that they cannot have the absolute truth and the ultimate wisdom themselves. They must see, that in all religions and confessions are many seeds and grains of truth and of mercy.

#### THE POWER OF PEACEMAKING AND PEACEKEEPING:

In the global situation, 92% of mankind are living in relative peaceful situations; with many conflicts and problems, but not in situations of war. But about 8% of mankind are living in situations of partial or total war, in situations of flight and expulsion. Many situations of war have a religious background. What can and must religious people perform, that the situations of war can be reduced?

The **dialogue** between religious groups and confessions must be enforced in all countries and in all communities; for instance, the dialogue between the Sunnits and Shiites, within the Islam; the dialogue between the Moslems and the Christians, between the Hindus and the Moslems.

In all religions, denominations and confessions the fundamentalism must be reduced. The Bible and the Koran must not be accepted literally and word by word, but it must be read in their historical contexts. These Holy Books had been written by men, not by God. But these writers heard the order and commission of God in their hearts. The contents of the Holy Books must be translated into modern situations of life. All these books are **relative to their cultural contexts** of emergency.

Religious people must be engaged in many forms of **mental disarmament** and in political reconciliation between hostile groups. They must reduce the hostility in their language, in their ideologies, in their behavior. This mental disarmament is a very difficult process.

Also, religious people must learn to **critically reflect** the practical consequences of their teachings and norms. They must discuss with the fundamentalist believers in their own denominations and confessions. Because the **fundamentalist thinking** in religion is very dangerous for the community and for peace. Also, religious people can be engaged in the development of global justice and fairness, for all men and countries in the world. Because **the faith in God is a very effective motivation** to live in solidarity towards the poor people in the world. If God is the **Father and the Mother of all men**, then we must accept the solidarity with others, with suffering men and women in the whole world.

To conclude, religious leaders must recognize the big danger which is coming from fundamentalist believers of all religions, of Christianity and Islam, of Hinduism and Buddhism, of Judaism and natural religions. We **all** can accept, that there are many ways to God, to piety and to worship. We can learn to tolerate many forms of religious convictions. But we **cannot accept** the hate and war between persons and groups. Because the **total tolerance** would **destroy its own principles**.

I thank you for your attention.