

# RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION OF MUSLIM GIRLS AND YOUNGWOMEN BETWEEN PARTICULARISM AND UNIVERSALISM

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## ABSTRACT

*The appeal of contemporary radical interpretations for young Muslim women and men poses a new challenge to Islamic theology and education. While attention has been given to the radicalization of young men, Muslim women remain marginalized within academic research. This article discusses gender-sensitive issues concerning radicalization. Based on the results of a pretest-study that inquires the success of ISIS regarding the recruiting of young women, aspects of universalism are approached, as constructions of gender, religion and education are discussed. Here, reconstructions of Islam between ideological, systematic and functional references of religion are taken into account.*

**Keywords:** Women radicalization, particularism, universalism, ISIS

## INTRODUCTION

Muslim youngsters who join ISIS or other groups in their radical world- views are in the spotlight of media, public and political discourse. Whereas motivations of young men on their way to radicalization have been under focus for a long period of time, gender-sensitive motivations, backgrounds and needs of Muslim girls and young women have so far been faded out. Furthermore, the potentials of gender-sensitive aspects linked to Islamic theology and religious instruction are still underestimated. Why do young Muslim women and girls give up themselves to religious and ideological rigidity? Which kind of resources grounded on Islamic theology and education are at hand? How do scientists and actors have to react to this? What are the masks by which the increasing religious particularism and societal disintegration are disguised as presumably universalist post-modern Islamic thought?

This contribution looks at these topics and gender-sensitive approaches based on a pretest-

study that was conducted between October 2014 and December 2015 (Behr and Kulaçatan, 2015). Neo-Salafist groups support their concepts and religious understandings with their brands of Islamic universalism. As the results indicate, contacts with Neo-Salafist groups (via social media and personally) are the first step inside this hermetically bolted cosmos of radicalization. Universalist notions, based on Islam and its scriptures, are misused and actually solely abused for aims that are related to particularism. Particularism operates here as a main factor behind social engagement which lends an open ear to young people – a finding that does not only apply to radical groups but in the same way to regulative ensures in some countries, some of them Muslim, others not. The gender-sensitive attempts and approaches discussed here at first hand try to figure out the interdependence of personal motivations, psychological effects and the supply of radical Muslim rhetoric and worldviews. This leads to a more complex amalgam behind the mere dichotomy of particularism vs. universalism. It is more or

less a post-modern phenomenon of religious exclusivism in the shape of social, cultural and political demands that hides behind an alleged brand of universal Islam (the psychological attributes will be discussed below). It should be kept in mind that this points to non-Muslim dynamics, too. Gender-sensitive particularities are one of the results of the pretest-study that lead to the conclusions and recommendations with regard to Islamic theology and education in the last part of this contribution.

## **THE PRETEST-STUDY**

Significant numbers of Muslim women and girls have joined ISIS and similar radicalized groups. Their motivations raise gender-related questions which need sensitive treatment both in the fields of pedagogy and theology. Neo-Salafist and Islamist networks offer concepts which specifically address gender equality (Mohaghehi, 2015). At first glance, this seems to be ambivalent, since rigorous expectations based on gender roles and gender relations are addressed to both, females and males.

This study was conducted in collaboration with the International Nuremberg Principles Academy. It comprises media analysis and qualitative interviews with protagonists and parties involved in young Muslim women's jihadist aspirations in Germany. It has been released as an internal report and will be published in a slimmed version in 2016. It figures out the need for individual gender-sensitive spirituality and Islamic religious orientation.

This article is based on a pretest-study that scrutinized the lack of gender-sensitive issues in German media when reporting about young people who join ISIS. The media coverage focused on the motivation of young men, regardless of the increasing numbers of young women and girls, who are attracted to radicalized groups. Turkish media, in comparison, have reported about girls and women much earlier due to the fact that Turkey is a transit country on the way to Syria and Iraq. However, German girls of Turkish origin who joined ISIS caught the attention of

the media beginning around May 2015 (Behr and Kulaçatan 2015). The public perception of young women and girls as active players has changed so far. Media reports and public debates on this issue lead to questions linked to gender issues. Both the topic as well as the cautiousness have been neglected and disregarded in many ways.

Radicalization has been under an exclusively masculine focus for a very long time. This one-sided perception inherent to the media seems to be rooted in gender-related stereotypes: Women and girls are shaped as beings with a more sensible nature than boys and men, especially in the period of adolescence (Behr and Kulaçatan, 2015). The German reports on radicalized girls and women focus on a kind of romantic momentum which tries to convince readers that female persons are presumably more easily addicted to romantic phantasies – thus more easily attracted by the promise of relationships with male marriage candidates. Though having an element of truth, this explanation hardly suffices. The interaction of psychological pre-conditions and social processes of religious radicalization still are, besides the familiar self-centeredness of scientists or journalists, a blind spot within academic research. Religious approaches to coping with the imponderabilia of juvenile spiritual adolescence, as will be described in the following sections, are neither an integral part of school education nor of programmes of deradicalization. The current ideology of social work bears mistrust against any impending religious overprint of the post-modern society. Thereby it suppresses the potential dynamic of religiousness as a resource within client-orientation. On the contrary: Religion in general and Islam in particular are almost exclusively identified as the trouble-makers – a structural prejudice that has come more and more under self-critical focus by contemporary psychotherapists (Pargament, 1997).

One major effect of these blind spots within the discourse is the structural disregard towards issues of giving birth and maternity. Central cognitive, emotional and aesthetic aspects of being a girl and becoming a woman are left

unspoken. Following the results of this study, the attraction of reevaluating maternity and pregnancy and their link to spiritual growth are still underestimated. To take a short-cut to religious radicalization, Muslim girls and women are promised to obtain stable roles and positions in a real and Islamic community (umma). The propaganda promises them protection, love and care by a handsome and pious man who is a real Muslim. This is a vision their actual social surroundings would hardly ever achieve, especially when these girls face patronal and misogynic intransigence wherever they turn.

Still the media do not cover these religious aspects. They have not yet understood the need for gender-sensitive theological expertise (Lamptey 2014) and for spiritual and religious orientation addressed to these young women and girls. It is the secular structures of the public sphere that seem to influence the marginalization and near-to invisibility of gender-oriented religious approaches (Göle, 2015). Based on the results of the study, different overlapping items within the manifold typology of Muslim girls and young women can be described. There are those of a somewhat Islamic origin in the cultural or geographical sense, or girls that have undergone some kind of mental and spiritual transformation in terms of religious awakening or inner conversion. They may be girls and young women of native German descent or other origin. All these items may unfold their active parts during the process of radicalization as well as the mobilization of other family members for joining ISIS, though not necessarily. There is hardly any indication that one of these items exclusively stands up for the phenomenon of religious radicalization. As it seems, it is rather the individual modality of mediating between such factors that results in the surprising variety of religious positioning. In the end, religious radicalism seems to be fired up by social and psychological dynamics that lie outside religion itself but at the same time affect the cognitive and emotional reconstruction of the personal religiousness.

One of the most significant factors on the way to radicalization of young women and girls of Islamic origin is their experiences of being discriminated against in daily life, especially in the education system. The self-perception of being victimized by structural discrimination, e. g. during their search for an apprenticeship, strengthens the inner need for separation from what they would call the non-Muslim society. Wearing the headscarf for example has always been seriously expounded as a major challenge. It has been experienced as an integral feature of the othering at schools or working places. Female Muslim students in our university seminars have burst into tears when reporting the hate they face in public schools. They are told to take off their headscarf. They are free to put it on again when leaving the schoolyard or the working place.

These issues are far from being settled; the tensions are rising. In their personal views, the pluralistic and liberal values of Germany, as a country with factual immigration, still seem to be out of reach in their daily life. One reason for this is the deficient interpretation of the term integration. Individuals with biographical connections of migrational experience have to obtain integration as their achievement. With regard to social, cultural and economic integration, the burden of proof is solely on them instead of the society as a whole. All this still applies to the third generation, whose grandparents were former guest-workers. Contemporary debates seem to focus on the relation of islamicity and ethnicity, linked to these issues. Deconstructing the discourse not only in the media but also within the realm of the academia, the term ethnicity has all but replaced the term race (Lentin, 2004, 2015). Young Muslim girls and women are confronted with singular events of discrimination, aimed at their religious identity. In fact, they are confronted with structural racism – a topic that has not yet been picked up as a matter of their life-worlds and everyday situations. Besides, gender equality seems to be solely addressed to white and native girls and women, following the depictions of the social realities of girls with Muslim origin.

A situation like this makes it easy for female actors inside radicalized networks to kidnap these girls and young women and use them for their own aims. It is not only the promise of protection and motherly care mentioned above. They very quickly and profoundly acquire a language that enables them to defend themselves (Behr / Kulaçatan 2015). Instead of cutting their socialities, they have strengthened and expanded them via social media like WhatsApp, using these channels to recruit their friends and relatives. The actors, whether female or male, tie their arguments up to the widespread notion that Muslims are to be latently blamed for being unable to live peacefully in Western European societies. The promise of salvation gains territorial shape by ISIS depicting itself as the true Caliphate in terms of Allah's promised land (*baldatun tayyibatun wa-rabbun ghafūr*; 34:15).

As a matter of fact, deviant constructions of islamicity (a term that will be described in more detail in the conclusions) cushion the bitterness of being set back by society, refused by the near members of the personal life-world and cut off from one's own future. The fact of being a Muslima subject to such islamicity brings about a strong impact on the empowerment of girls and young women. This has different effects in the given context where girls and young women are becoming more aware of the differences in Islamic religious practices. The construction of islamicity may occur as a definite brand of teaching on the one hand or as a phenomenon of Muslim expressionism on the other. Both contain their specific gender aspects that are based on interpretation and habitus, being individually composed and linked to virtuousness and prudish-mindedness.

Girls and women of non-Muslim origin mainly come in touch with Islam via the Internet which brings about one major problem: How can the depersonalized trait of a contingent medium support the quest for spiritual and religious knowledge without defining the nature of such knowledge on grounded expertise? The virtual rehearsal of putative religious questions

and the juvenile search for answers about Islam lures them to websites with radical worldviews.

Based on the results of the study, women between the age of 23 and 30 are mobilized clearly sophisticatedly. Political visions are prioritized, for example building a new society or practicing real Islam within a real Islamic state. The promise of personal salvation and the millenarian vision of the end of days are twined into a sacred imagination, attractive to all young people, whether female or male. The psychological effects that stem from such imaginations are still underestimated. They are constructed on the surface of real duties that are fulfilled in the name of God. However, the perspective of a heavenly ordained duty has deeper roots. The materialized framing of violently radical Islam provides young Muslims with a kind of emergency exit out of their virtual domains into the realm of real life, turning the former escapism around. This carries an extremely stimulating and luring power into the young souls who lack the necessary life experience to get wind of the dangers. The more young people feel like being cut off from real life within society, void of designs of their future that could convey an alternative to the saturated middle-class expectations of a good life, the more liable they might be to get trapped. Here especially Muslim girls are in twofold danger since they are more likely to feel alienated to both the outer circle of society and the inner circle of their own Muslim solidarity-group.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The phenomena of young women and young girls joining ISIS or the Islamic State have been discussed by many scholars as ISIS has widened their strategy by recruiting female youngsters as their jihadist or combatant. The Islamic State makes use of modern media for their campaign. They use internet centered on social media networking. This media platform has attracted many youngsters to join this group or to go to Iraq and Syria for jihad. There is a report that many young European women are increasingly interested in joining this group. For instance,



British Counterterrorism official mentions that there are estimated 60 women from The United Kingdom are traveled to Syria and Iraq to join ISIS (Peachey, 2015 as quoted by Pearson, 2015: 5). In 2014, there were three girls age 15-17 years old from Denver Colorado who were stopped by German Authority in Frankfurt Airport. These teenagers were suspected of going to Turkey, then to Syria for joining Islamic State. Before this case, in January 2014 there was a girl age 19 years old arrested at Denver Airport who would fly to Frankfurt, then Syria. She was charged as helping the Islamic State (Aly and McDonnald, 2016).

Internet, especially social media networking, has become an important element for the Islamic State strategy for spreading their ideology and recruiting new members. This digital media opened a new era of connecting jihadists across the world without any need of physical contact. The Islamic State produces some propaganda material to attract the viewers. Tomerlin (2016) mentioned in his thesis that the Islamic State has been recognized as the “digital caliphate” which meant they would not exist and survive in this world if there is no digital technology. This is because that they are very dependent to the internet for spreading their ideology, communicating with their supporters, and recruiting new members as well as sending their strategy and instruction for fighting in the battle fields to their jihadists. This type of global network used by this Islamic State has tied them in one movement. The Islamic State has created a media house that produces several types of media containing different messages as follows; training video, instructional document, magazine named *Dabiq*, and pamphlets, video game containing war simulation (Tomerlin, 2016). Furthermore, Tomerlin (2016) examined the content of materials coming from the Al-Hayat Media Center that produces magazine named *Dabiq* and video. These both media are intended for the English speaking audiences (Tomerlin, 2016: 1).

Similar study on how ISIS used social media to recruit foreign fighters and how the government needs to counter this act was done by Brenna Durr

(2016). This research findings show that ISIS made a sophisticated propaganda media named Al Hayat Media Center which is targeted the Western and non-Arabic speaking audiences. The Islamic State also makes use of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to campaign their ideology and to transmit their messages. These social media allow ISIS to promote their goals to young generations since most of the youngsters are social media users. These social media are also used as the place for physiological warfare against their enemy. Furthermore, the social media platform also plays as the media to recruit new members across the globe. It is reported that there are at least 30.000 foreign fighters from 100 countries joining the Islamic state in the warzone in Iraq and Syria (Brooking and Singer, 2016 as cited by Durr, 2016: 16). ISIS also used Twitter to lure women to participate in their action and send them the order to take role in jihad. One example of girls joining ISIS because of learning through internet is Shanon Conley, a 19 years old girl from White Catholic family from Denver Colorado. She converted to Islam and learnt Islam online. She was radicalized through online media in which she understood that she has duty to do jihad in Syria, if she is not able to do so, then she has to carry out this duty in her home country. Conley had planned to fly to Syria as she communicated with Mouelhi, a Tunisian ISIS fighter, using Skype. Mouelhi planned to marry her and purchased a ticket for her for flying to Syria. However, she was arrested in September 2014 for helping terrorist organization, and she faced five years imprisonment (Walt, 2014, as cited by Durr, 2016: 20). This study also suggested that the government should use media-internet based social networking to make counter narration and deal with the ISIS propaganda.

Many experts have also discussed the issue of women involving in the Islamic State and published their work. Elizabeth Pearson (2015), for instance, wrote an article entitled “The Case of Roshonara Choudhry: Implications for Theory on Online Radicalization, ISIS Women, and the Gendered Jihad”. This paper discussed

several aspects of the Choudhry case. It is said that she was a student of King's College who tried to murder of the local MP Stephen Timms. She stabbed him twice in his stomach for the reason that he supported the war in Iraq. Before doing this attack, Choudhry has been radicalized through online media. She learnt and downloaded some material from the internet; she downloaded a video containing sermon by Awlaki, a radical preacher connected to Al-Qaeda. This article suggested that Choudhry case became an important element in the radicalization theory for the following reasons; firstly, she was the first women involved in the Islamic violent act in the United Kingdom. The second, she was a "lone wolf", who acts by herself without any contact with other radical people or groups. The third, the process of radicalization is through online media (Pearson, 2015, 7-9).

The growing number of young Muslim women in the United Kingdom joining ISIS was discussed by Elizabeth Pooley (2015). She concerned her writing on why those girls in this country have been attracted to be part of ISIS and supported them. This study found that one important motive why they desire to migrate to ISIS territory is to strengthen *ummah* (global Muslim community); as *ummah* is perceived as a significant aspect of Islam and it plays to make collective identity (Pooley, 2015: 58). This article mentioned that they think *ummah* now are under attack that is why they need to support them. Furthermore, their willingness to come to ISIS is to help building "new society" and this will be their destination of their migration (Pooley, 2015: 61-62). The next element found in this research is the mandatory responsibility of Muslim to migrate to ISIS territory; Iraq and Syria. This believed is called as *hijrah*. The subjects involved in the study mentioned that *hijrah* is a must for Muslim (Pooley, 2015: 65-66).

ISIS has been reported successfully recruited hundreds fighters around the world and 550 of them are women from the Western countries (Neumann, 2015 as cited by Kneip, 2016: 88). Another report mentioned that there

were about 500 European Muslim girls were departed to Syria for supporting ISIS (Ali, 2015). This data of women engagement to the radical group has become media attention and it urges scholars to look at why they are attracted to such group. Kneip (2016), for example, explored the reasons why Western women join ISIS. She emphasized her study on the underlying pull-factor of female empowerment which plays as the additional reasons of young female Muslim (*muhajirat*, female migrants) joining ISIS. She also seeks this phenomenon using gender perspective. This study found that those women seek for emancipation which are shown on these following aspects; by joining ISIS means that they control their life; this can be seen from these pull-factors; (a) young girls perceived that they are restricted by their parents, so that traveling to Syria means that they have taking charge their own life. Moreover, in this "new" community, they seek their identity and feel the belonging toward the community named sisterhood, (b) joining ISIS means that these young girls are independent for making their decision, since they see that they have restricted by their traditions. (c) They also see that flying to Syria means that they are free from the Western restriction, as they thought that living as Muslim women in the Western country are under oppression that has no right and respect from non-Muslims (Kneib, 2016: 92-95). This study concludes that women taking part in ISIS are motivated by their desire to empower themselves, however this concept of empowerment is different from the concept of Western emancipation (Kneib, 2016: 100).

The emergent number of Female jihadists for ISIS is one of the evident on how the propaganda conducted by ISIS media center are successfully influence the audience especially women and the world. A study done by Rukh-Ali (2015) depicted that ISIS used women for propaganda because this strategy will gain coverage from Western media and become headline for such publication. In addition, posting video through internet is an efficient way to spread their message, and at the same time ISIS still has its authority to control its

content. For instance, a female jihadist is posting her photo in the internet, her photo in Syria battlefield wearing *niqab* and holding gun. This photo has an important message to the world and will attract other women to join ISIS. As ISIS strategy dealing with the media and journalist is different from other radical groups who are having “mutual” relationship, ISIS is mostly control their information. ISIS strategy is excluding journalist and forbidding journalist entering their territory, therefore it enforces journalists and other media as well as researchers to relay their information on the content posted by ISIS media if they want to know what is going on ISIS. In this sense, ISIS has successfully control the flow of information and selected the wanted and unwanted information to be published in the media (Rukh-Ali, 2016: 9-10).

The Ali's research found that the role of women described by the manifesto released by ISIS is to be a mother and should be actively only in their house. This manifesto was published in Arabic and it was supposed targeted Arabic women. This manifesto was not published in English, since it might contradict with the idea of emancipation of women in the West. Hence, the propaganda made by ISIS media was also contradiction with their manifesto, since they depicted that women in their media are actively engaged in the warzone and carrying weapons; these women are acting as the female-feminist jihadists (Rukh-Ali, 2016: 21). This is an interesting finding which can be used to further analyze the women emancipation in the Islamic State movement. The Author argued that ISIS is actually created by men and intended for men to fulfill their desire to kill, to torture, and to abuse women using Islam as justification. He said that this claim has no real connection with Islam (Rukh-Ali, 2015: 21)

ISIS has continued appealing young-Muslim women around the world including the Western countries to join them and support their fighting. The Islamic stated adopted the idea of western notion of involving women into public sphere activities which is in the past mainly the domain of men. As it is the fact that war and fighting in the battlefield are perceived as men's area, so that

allowing women going to the battle ground, it is as if they give women the same right as men. This is portrayed by ISIS in their propaganda (Rukh-Ali, 2015; Leong, 2015). Furthermore, some women think that a group like the Islamic State provides a freedom from patriarchal tradition. Zakaria (2015) in his research questioned about this gender role of women in the radical group; Does the group really offer women a non traditional role? Meanwhile, Pearson (2015) mentioned that by looking at the case of Chaudhry, political ideology of jihad is seen as the gender ideology in which there is distinction between the role of men and women. This study argued that the limitation of gender might hinder young girls like Chaudhry to explore Islam and Islamism offline and this takes her to online learning. At the same time, the lack of knowledge and understanding of Islam makes them vulnerable to the radical ideology. Furthermore, Pearson (2015) mentioned that gender plays as one of the significant factors in the process of radicalization

The issue of ISIS recruiting female jihadists from the West should become concern of many parties including the government since this group has continued their action and made a massive propaganda through Internet. As it is previously discussed that many young girls are attracted to join this extremist group after being radicalized through online media, so that it is important to examine on how to stop these youngster to join the radical group. Metzger (2017) wrote an article entitled “How to Lure Away Youngsters from Becoming Jihadists?” In this article, she suggests some ways to deal with this issue as follow; (a) identify the potential jihadists; in this step parents should pay more attention to their children, like paying attention on what they watch in the internet. Teachers should also pay interest to their students when there is a behavior change, (b) providing a useful education to the youngster which can fulfill their expectation, like more open education so that students have opportunity to discuss some subjects freely, (c) respecting the young Muslim and giving them comprehensive Islamic teaching, at the same time, these young

Muslim generation should be trained using a broad Islamic education, for example providing them with material of the history of the world, and the understanding of Qur'an containing peace and tolerance messages. (d) The government should initiate a program for young generation which gives chance to them for engaging and taking part in the wider society. (e) There is a need of role model for the youngsters, thus they can imitate what their heroine do, (f) providing help and assistance for the youngsters in need, (g) asking youngsters in many positive program like reducing the children illiteracy either in their home country or abroad, (h) involving young generation to contribute in the making of better society (Metzger, 2017: 81-85).

Another important way to combat ISIS is making countermeasure on their propaganda using social media. Durr (2016) mentioned on his writing that the government should cooperate with the media company to make countermeasure toward such action with regard to the free speech ethic. For instance, when asking to remove the radical content on the internet, this should be accompanied by the clarity. In addition, the government along with the media company should make an interesting content of counter narrative based on the demographics, as it is the fact that the ISIS content are mostly appeal to youngsters, so that this countermeasure must attract young audience as well. The next way is the government should work to attain the same level of ISIS attention from the internet users, such as ISIS provide one on one basis to connect with people, thus government should do the same thing, providing them with one on one communication (Durr, 2016, 45-46).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Gender-sensitive particularities**

The aspects of female emancipation and gender equality belong to the most significant foci. This leads to questions referring both to religious and educational needs. Young girls and young women are more liable to be attracted by radical groups (grounded on Salafist ideologies) when

they feel approached and understood on grounds of their identities as girls and would-be women. The issue of equality finds its expression by the propaganda alerting both woman and men to be pious and modest. Girls and women in traditional Muslim families often are confronted with separated gender spaces. Female family members are expected to stay home while male family members can roam free. The space outside is limited to boys and men in radical ideologies too, which appears to be a gender-paradoxon. However, many Muslim girls are very much acquainted with these authoritative structures. They have never had the chance to get to know an alternative to the authoritative habitus they are subjected to. Hence, they look for alternatives only within the authoritarian regime of paternalism within their minds.

Stereotyped expectations linked to maternity and marriages are conceived as emancipated, concealing the structural violence this brings about. Radical Islamist and Neo-Salafist groups abuse the experiences of daily racism and discrimination in favor of their own goals. They construct stereotyped narratives and notions. The topics of daily racism, discrimination and attacks, recently increasingly against Muslim girls and women, are one of the underestimated agents of their radicalization. One might get the impression that the lack of public esteem for religious life-style diversity and public inattentiveness towards racist attitudes and mechanisms still constitutes a major area of work in the German society. According to the results of the given study, spirituality as a central trait of the forum internum and visible religion as part of the forum externum remain vague or unwritten and unspoken, sometimes even demonized as a symptom of the process of radicalization itself. By contrast, Muslim girls and young women are searching for spirituality and religious bindings, offered by female experts.

There is another gender-sensitive issue, too, which has not received proper attention: girls and young women of Muslim origin are hesitant to speak about issues linked to



sexuality, pregnancy and abortion. Overlooking their socialisation, they are very often left alone with their curiosity in issues of sexuality. Based on the results of the study, they seem to be educated and raised in divergent ways (if not deviant against human nature) fostering physical and psychological tensions. Bodily needs and changes, e. g. during menstruation, are faded out. Female sexuality is subjected to male control and is often denied and demised while male sexuality is not. Gender asymmetries like these are justified by patriarchal traditions falsely labeled as Islamic (El Feki, 2013; Ahmed, 1992). There still is a huge lack of knowledge about the meaning of sexuality in the tender connection between woman and man in Islamic religion. German-speaking Islamic female theologians and religious pedagogues can contribute to more clarification and consultation here, bringing the spiritual and aesthetical aspects at least to eye-level with the legal and morale ones.

Periods of radicalization are often equalized to the processes of outer or inner conversion to Islam, which is most probably an incorrect conclusion. Young people, male and female, are converting to radical ideologies in terms of a conversion to violence and violation of law. It has much to do with the powerful impression to position oneself above the law – a kind of diabolical self-empowerment that is exemplified in the Qur’ān: There it is depicted as a basic dangerous trait of the human nature that has the potential to override one’s own conscience and thereby above all violate oneself (abā wastakbara wa-kāna min-a l-kāfirīn; 2:34; qālā rabbanā zalamnā anfu- sanā; 7:23). The result is the violation of the humanum and the traumatization of the soul. Islamic theology and education have to be reformulated to address this, taking gender-based arguments into account.

## **CONCLUSIONS WITH REGARD TO ISLAMIC THEOLOGY AND EDUCATION**

The phenomena described above may be summarized in a way that young Muslims,

especially girls and younger women, reveal categorical characteristics of their Islamic-religious construction of the personal self. This make shift brand of Islam is to some extent uncertain because it is at the same time particular and universal. For the combination of the interdependent shaping of Muslim identity and personalized Islamic teaching the term *islamicity* is being used here. This unstable kind of *islamicity* is fed by an increasing social intricacy. Furthermore, it is characterized by a strengthened reconstruction of the religious self along the othering of non-Muslims by erecting an intransigent counter-horizon. The challenge given here is conceptual as well as educational. It lies in facing such precarious efforts of accomplishing spiritual and social coherence. They show three basic traits of coping with contingency, shifting the ethical disposition of the subject from responsibility-orientation towards attitude-orientation as well as the framing of Islam from its original critical tolerance<sup>2</sup> towards essentialistic intolerance (Behr 2015): Ibn ‘Abbās (quoted by Ahmad Ibn hanbal, Bukhārī) reports: “Once we asked the messenger of God, what kind of religion God loves most. He replied: The original and the tolerant (al-hanafiyya al-samha).”

- reducing the complexity of Islamic teachings and contemporary Muslim life-styles to monolithic religious reconstructions of *islamicity*,
- transforming diffuse social roles into simple-minded reconstructions of religious social-group affiliation and exclusion, and
- replacing the functional and pragmatic feature of Islam with regard to problem-solving by an *islamicity* as a comprehensive and essentialistic ideology of obedience towards the rule.

This entails the danger especially for Muslim girls to get trapped in inner conflicts of loyalty. Finally this indicates major changes in both the ways Islam is being thought and taught. These changes have to be fundamental with regard to a new formulation of Islamic universality. Both Islamic religious studies (theology) and Islamic education (especially when understood as

religious habitualization within the regulations of German constitution) need to take the humanum, the essential idea of human mankind, into a more thorough consideration. What seems to be paradoxical, taking into account that Islam nowadays pops up as a contingent and self-referential system of symbols, interactions and interpretations, is indeed rooted deeply in the philosophical traditions of Islam itself.

### **Theological universalism**

As a matter of fact, Islamic theological schools have often brought the religious and the secular momentum into an intelligent and pragmatic equilibrium that points towards a third scheme between the religious and the secular – with its declination of spiritual and legal pragmatism, religious pluralism, conventional wisdom and universal instead of particular standards of ethics and morale. This third scheme shines through emblematic Qur'ānic texts like 2:177, underlining the motive of love, as well as through Arabic theological technical terms like *ma'rūf* – the non-negotiable code of good conduct everybody knows: goodness towards the parents, not.

“It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards east or west. But it is righteousness to believe in God and the Last Day and the Angels and the Book and the Messengers. And to spend of your substance, out of love, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves. And to hold on regular prayer and regular charity. And to fulfill the contracts which they have made. And to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and through-out all periods of panic. Such are the people who make things come true. Who look forward to meet God? “turning one’s cheek away from people in false pride, not walking haughtily and in a boastful manner on earth, being modest, lowering one’s voice and refraining from harshness and violence (compare the profiles of Jesus and Luqmān in 19:32 and 31:12–19).

The humanum within Islam is based on the idea that mankind actually finds itself set free

from religious determination. What might be understood as the divine setting of life is restricted to the existential sphere. In 17:70 the Qur'ān depicts mankind as honored (*la-qaḍ karramnā banī ādama*) and carried (*wa-hammalnāhum fī l-barri wa-l-bahr*) and taken care about in the deepness of the souls safe from cognitive manipulation (*wa-mā tašā'ūna illā an yashā'a llāhu*; 76:30, 81:29). With regard to questions of truth, faith, conscience and religious life-style (which sums up in the Arabic term *dīn*; 39:3; similarly to Jewish Torah-traditions before the medieval Rabbinic teachings, there is no definite term for religion in Islam), the individual must be understood as a spiritually autonomous subject. It is inclined to discover his personal pace in religion (*inna sa'yakum la-šattā*; 92:4). Spiritual learning does not happen from paper to mind but from heart to heart. This presumes communication, which is based on encounter, and there is no encounter without movement. This is a lesson the ISIS-propaganda seems to have grasped quite well.

These arguments point towards two corresponding aspects of religious dynamics: spiritual movement (which is multi-directional; *innanī hadānī rab- bī ilā sirātin mustaqīmīn dīnan qiyāman millata ibrahīma hanīfan*; 6:161) and spiritual growth (*takmīl, takāmul*) as two existential components of the Islamic theological anthropology. Mankind is on its way, it is both mover and being moved – as a physical, religious and social individual, woman or man, whose actions bear effects in his life-world (*bi-ta'thīr*). Both the dynamic and the qualitative aspects are represented by the Arabic term of *tazkiya* which is near to competence-orientation. *Tazkiya* would be the more suitable word to describe Islamic education instead of the widespread term *tarbiya* which connotes to a more systematic understanding. Thus, the change being discussed here to some extent marks an anthropological turn. Given that Islamic theology and education want to address the critical implications of contemporary deviant islamicity on the grounds of religious normativity, they are well advised

to take Muslims in particular and people in general as well as the situations they live in as the starting point of theological expertise. Islamic thought must neither be reduced to rehearsing the tension of old versus new traditions, nor to counter-speaking negative by positive prejudices.

Such tactical discourse is being practiced by predominantly Western Muslim authors at the moment. They stage themselves as the would-be masters of Muslim progressiveness, imputing everyone else as retrograde. The result of Muslim counter-propaganda on the grounds of non-scrutinized positive prejudices leads to nothing except the conflicting reification of Islam: Regressive islamicity as a system of mere obedience to the divine versus progressive islamicity as a makeshift school of disobedience to traditionalism. For sure, even within the religious territory a healthy amount of disobedience (*fa-lā tuti'humā*; 31:15) is always welcome, but this leads to the question of the hermeneutical algorithm according to scientific standards. These standards have to be formatted more offensively by Islamic theologians. Today, they must take more courage to reconstruct and reformulate Islam under plausible functional and pragmatic precepts instead of the widespread reduction of Islam to its essentialistic substantivism. The latter emerges especially within the realm of diverse cultural items, framings and encodings, notably under the auspices of migration. Thus, Islamic theology must be decisively anti-migrational in terms of its emancipation from post-migrant Muslim pressure groups to be spiritually and intellectually attractive and pluralistic.

The Muslim girls and young women that were part of our empirical research tend to position themselves within a meta-identical reconstruction of having something like a Muslim identity – doing so with a kind of resolute decidedness. Their cognitive reconstruction of Islam as a body of symbols and teachings reminds us of an almost sub-cultural kind of shaping of identity by inventing traditions claiming universal truth – a confusion of universalism with ideology, which is a state of mind. This alludes to the criteria of

religious dynamics as were thrown into debate for example by Rodney Stark's central theses: a more successful healing of emotional breaches, a more convincing economical idea and a more attractive sub-culture (Stark 1985). Thus, Islamic theology needs not turn away from the phenomena of migration since scriptures like the Qur'ān pick up the topic. From the view-point of academic theological research, it might need to free itself from the phenomenological Husserl-like reduction of self-hermeneutics and develop broader approaches with regard for example to the relevant-structures-approach of Alfred Schütz. Such relevance, however, preferentially unfolds within the personal realms of looking at the world – within the inward cognitive and spiritual maps. As concerns the impact of female identities, the psychoanalytical and psychotherapeutical concepts of imagination (Irigay 2007; Lacan 2007; Singer 2006) could turn out be helpful when thinking of educational strategies of coping with deviant religious orientations. Such imaginations allude more to the modalities than to the constellations within the analysis of the conditions of female religious orientation and life-style decision. However, they in effect threaten to overlook the systematic inclinations of Islam.

Islamic theology, for starters, could therefore formulate universal aspects of human migration within the physical and spiritual topography. Otherwise the persistent orientalizing of Muslims (including their self-orientalization in the West), the increasing Islamization of general social constraint and the penetrant ethnicity of German versus Foreign Islamic theology will continue. This might turn Islam into a clot of post-migrational identity-shaping marked by one major deficiency: The decline of normality in everyday life and the inclination of Muslim self-discrimination as a structural minority of what can be called particular righteousness (something we witness even within societies where Muslims are in the demographic majority, for example in Malaysia or in Turkey). These processes of Muslim particularism pose a major threat to democratic and open societies. Here

Islamic theology as an academic discipline has to carry out cultural and political responsibility within civil society as a whole.

Islamic education, in a somewhat complementary addition to this, should take some kind of balance between scientific analysis and spiritual synthesis into consideration, putting the discourse-oriented and pragmatic approaches, for example that of 4:82f., into practice. The majority of those students who decide to take teacher training courses tend to address questions of personal religious orientation to the seminars they are in – just the same way pupils in the religious instruction courses in public schools would do. They want answers right where the art and culture of putting the right questions (without overwhelming it by hasty answers) needs to be put forward in the didactical dramaturgy of religious instruction. The answers they are after arrange themselves around the halalization-paradigm of a hyper-substantial expression of Islam in terms of obedience and accuracy instead of spiritual impact. Here, everything is put into the religious indicative – questions seem to be something that needs to be overcome, very much far away from the aesthetics of philosophical curiosity towards the self and the word. The explicitly invented postmodern traditionalist normativism collides with the traditionally implicit normative potential of Islam as the humanum, as was mentioned above.

At this point, the desideratum of what we named fundamental change and anthropological turn must be substantiated in more detail, for example in syllabus design. Islamic theology has to come to terms with the social, political, economical and spiritual transformation. Invoking the sociology and philosophy of Alfred Schütz, Islamic theology and education have become relevant functional, topical and emotional structures of society. Muslim theologians have to initiate a change in the conceptualization, the habits and the culture in dealing with Islam (and in general with religion). What is needed is a shift from the text to the mind when dealing

with the scriptural heritage, from the tradition to the situation, from community-focus to society-orientation, from the collectivistic to the subjective disposition, from the restrictive habitus of religion as a set of rules to the supportive habitus of religion as a resource, from the particular to the universal interest and from the utopistic to the pragmatic perspective. Of course, visions are the realm of religion. They are in the same way necessary as the healthy amount of disobedience mentioned above. Teaching Muslim girls how to mediate both within their life-world might be a contribution to immunize them against the hidden seduction and persuasion.

Islamic education will be able to contribute to preventive measures against ideological separatist reconstructions of the islamicity of Muslim youngsters in general and Muslim girls and young women in particular only if it teaches them how to deconstruct their own prejudices. These prejudices are spiritual, cultural, social, gender-based and age-based. The mishap lies within its potential for Muslim self-discrimination – which in the end will be addressed to the phantom of an allegedly non-believing societal majority.

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