

***Ordo socialis*: an Association for the International Scientific Communication of Christian Social Ethics**

Ordo socialis is a scientific association with the aim to promote “Christian Social Teaching” and thus to defend “freedom and justice in the world”. It has been founded 1985 as independent association within the Union of Catholic Entrepreneurs (BKU-Bund Katholischer Unternehmer) and contributes above all in the area of business ethics to the discussion of Christian positions in church and society. It describes its profile by three adjectives: Christian, social, worldwide. The choosing of the term “Christian” marks the willingness for ecumenical openness of the catholic association. The term “Social Teaching” indicates the orientation towards the pontifical and Episcopal social doctrine. With the texts which the association translates and communicates it is more and more oriented by the academic discipline for which in the meantime the designation “Christian Social Ethics” has been largely adopted. Insofar *Ordo socialis* may be qualified as association for the international scientific communication of Christian social ethics.

The work of the association is based on the following questions and premises:

- Globalisation is marked by deep ambivalences which require new ethical reflection on the order forms and conditions of responsible management. This must be concretized for challenges such as financial crises, climate change or global combating of poverty and be fed back with experiences of entrepreneurial and social practice.
- Social conflicts cannot be resolved without freedom, democracy, social market economy and a right to take part in the political, economic, social and cultural shaping of the society. To the right of self-determination corresponds the obligation of self-responsibility. Persons not being in a position to help themselves by their own strength are entitled to get help from the community.
- The Christian faith has specific potential of contributing to solutions which, however, can be developed only adequately in an interdisciplinary and intercultural learning process. With regard to the global challenges today such an international scientific and practice relevant discussion is of high importance for the development and the capacity of resonance of Christian social ethics.

Ordo socialis wishes to fertilize in a special manner the reflections, generated in Germany and in Europe in the course of a long tradition of socio-political and entrepreneurial responsibility on the understanding and the solution of the difficult problems of the global business community. For this purpose are included in an electronic library and made available translations of programmatic texts of Christian social ethics. Also authors from cultures outside Europe and cultural regions are included.

In order to reflect and to accompany again and again with criticism the pretentious tasks of Ordo socialis, the Scientific Council has been enlarged in 2011 and incorporated more strongly in the active work. It is the task of the Council to propose for publication appropriate subjects and texts from different countries and to introduce its advice into the dialogue. Moreover, it is planned to hold in future in regular intervals international conferences with the members of the Council and with other partners in the discussions from science, society and church. Every two or three years the association confers the “Ordo socialis Award” to persons who have distinguished by excellent socio-ethical works or by exemplary social engagement for responsibility in the business community and the society.

For the moment the Executive Committee is composed by Cornelius Georg Fetsch (Chairman), Helmut Linnenbrink, Dr. Thomas Köster, Dr. h. c. Josef Thesing. Mrs. Beate Kaltefleiter is Secretary General. Actually the Scientific Council has 37 members under the chairmanship of Prof. Markus Vogt. The association is located in Cologne (Georgstr. 18, D-50676 Cologne Tel.: 02 21/27 23 70, E-Mail: GF@ordosocialis.de, www.ordosocialis.de).

The targets which Ordo socialis pursues exceed largely that what an association with few financial and independent scientific resources can perform. It therefore depends upon its concerns being taken over, supported and continued by different parties. Priorities for the future work and the conceptional development are above all:

- Christian social ethics is a comparably young discipline which actually succumbs deep radical changes of professional understanding. That must also be expressed in the work of Ordo socialis. As the scientific orientation of the association must be understood in the sense of transmission and scientific communication it need just

because of this limitation an intensive feed-back to primary research and methodical reflection at the universities.

- The concentration on economo-ethical questions makes sense, but necessary is however reflection which importance such questions have for the whole of social ethics.
- The starting point was the promotion of the global availability of texts of social ethics from the German-speaking area where the discipline has been generated and until today is operated most intensively as academic discipline. In order that this does not remain in “one-way communication”, the reception of texts and experiences from not germanophone countries is of growing importance.
- The good translation of scientific texts requires high skill and the intensive communication between author and translator(s); the technical terms must be compared with the terms used in the scientific documents and discussions; moreover adaptations of the contents to the changed context are often required in order that the thinking becomes understandable and evident. Ordo socialis can long-term only subsist if financial resources for such professionalization are opened.
- Intercultural understanding can be realized only seldom by the translation of texts. It requires to be accompanied by personal meetings in order to discuss the differentiated understanding of matters and problems.
- Because of the BKU-background many entrepreneurs participate in the network of Ordo socialis. This could be used in future to arrange practical work in enterprises for example within the so-called “soft-skill-courses”. The inclusion of entrepreneurial perspectives from practise could enrich enormously students of theology. Ordo socialis would also be an appropriate forum in order to promote the exchange of scientists and practitioners in the area of business ethics which actually is developing with high speed.

In November 2012 Ordo socialis together with the Foundation Konrad Adenauer and the Catholic Centre of Social Sciences held a meeting in Brussels on “Economic Order and Social Justice in the Ere of Globalization”. Amongst others were discussed the researches on “civil economy” by Stefano Zamagni, member of the Scientific Council of Ordo socialis and whose conception had been translated intensively in the Encyclical *Caritas in veritate*. Open is the debate if “Economia civile” which is more strongly

orientated towards entrepreneurial and civil social initiatives for the common welfare, is an alternative to social market economy as it is the opinion of Zamagni, or if it is a complement and further development. At any rate, this is an example for the specific kind of questions which have central importance not only for Ordo socialis but also for the future of the community.

*Prof. Dr. Markus Vogt, Chair for Christian Social Ethics
at the Ludwig-Maximilian University Munich
and Chairman of the Scientific Council of Ordo socialis*