

## **Energy - a Question of Justice**

Current free of atom does not yet bring about a turn of energy. A real progress can only be achieved by minimization of the risks of all forms of energy generation. Moreover is wanted a balance between different goods such as protection of the climate, security of provisioning and the capability of competition - and that on the worldwide level.

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*(translated from German by Mrs. A. Elmendorff-Pfeifer, Düsseldorf)*

In Germany the debate of the future of energy provisioning is too concise. For it turns essentially around the fear of an atomic catastrophe. Under the terrible catastrophes of Fukushima and Chernobyl and the still not resolved issue of the definite storage of atomic refuse is at all understandable. The same applies to the correct requirement of finishing as soon as possible the generation of current from atomic power. But unfortunately this debate does not take into account that the so-called energy turn cannot consist in fleeing with closed eyes out of a risky and finally irresponsible form of energy.

The topic is many-layered. Besides of the question if the Germans are prepared to further bear the risks of atomic energy, also other developments are once again placed into forehand such as for instance the excessive utilization of fossil resources like carbon, petrol and natural gas, the more and more threatening climatic change, the thereto related increase of extraordinary natural catastrophes and, not to forget, the rapidly growing want of energy in the emerging countries and in the developing countries. It is extremely necessary to comprehensively take care of questions of ecological and energy policy. The German society must face this task without ignoring the complexity of the subject and to frighten away from the required precision and differentiation.

It was already two years ago that the Committee for Sociable and Social Questions of the German Episcopal Conference had decided to comprehensibly deal with subjects of energy policy. At the beginning of their work it was not foreseeable that the result of these fundamental deliberations could be presented at a point of time when the future of the energy provisioning is keeping the world in suspense. This coincidence also explains why the expert text "Obliged to the creation. Suggestions for a consistent intercourse with energy", which the German Episcopal Conference has now published is not a comment on atomic energy as one could perhaps presume. The horizon of the Church is exactly not limited by the topic nuclear energy. We are concerned above all by the ethical fundamentals of a consistent provisioning with energy. Thus ecological ethical acting is anchored in the faith of creation. Moreover, the question of energy is centrally a question of justice.

Therefore and with reason Pope Benedict XVI, in his important Encyclical "Caritas in veritate" has pointed to the energy provisioning as being one of the greatest challenges for the civilizing development of mankind. The excessive utilisation of short energy resources and the threatening climatic change by fossil consumption of energy insult already nowadays the global, intergenerational and ecological justice. Moreover, a considerable part of mankind has still not an open and cost-favourable access to energy. Thus is lacking the necessary basis for developing a living situation of human dignity.

In West Europe life with electric light is so self-evident and unconditional that life without this achievement seems to be unimaginable. In accustoming to the too self-evident it was forgotten which precious good energy represents for the human being. The access to energy is the basis of economic and social progress, of prosperity and social peace. To the contrary want of energy is the key problem of poverty. Above all the developing countries are concerned. Want of energy brings about manifold, even fundamental problems which are no

longer open to an electrified world: The want of energy delays the economic development, in the area of agriculture not less than in the area of communication. Involved are, however, not only the development chances of the national economy. Sometimes the pure survival is concerned. As water cannot sufficiently be cooked, drinking-water is wanted. Traditional places of cooking operated with wood or dung fire are sources of serious sickness. The securing of the provisioning with energy for all human beings must therefore be the maxim of a consistent intercourse with energy.

The protection of the climate is closely related to the question of a fair access to energy. The more and more threatening climatic change injures throughout the world the conditions of life of the human beings and affects especially the developing countries. It is a fundamental ethical problem that those who cause the high energy consumption and the emission of greenhouse gas are not identical with those who have to bear the consequences of such conduct. Insofar the concern of the 21st century is linked with the task to distribute the ecological subsequent cost of energy utilization according to the principle of the originator, and this globally and with justice.

Already in 1997 the Kyoto-protocol recognized that the members of the state community have different responsibilities. Above all the industrial nations which have transferred energy cost to the environment and still hold the major part of emission of green-house gas have duties. Therefore the energy policy of the future must be orientated towards global justice. This includes the engagement for the right of development of economy and prosperity in the developing and emergency countries too.

The fundamental dilemma of the climate and energy policy, that the beneficiaries and the persons injured are not identical, does, however, not affect only the present world community. The question of justice is above all actual with regard to the relationship between the now living and the future generations. The actual intercourse with energy has effects which largely exceed our space of lifetime. Every form of energy generation nowadays and in future must therefore also be orientated towards the standard of intergenerational and global justice. This requires that the subsequent generations are granted a kind of right of co-participation. The earth bestowed by God must be conserved for them and for all creatures as future capable "living house". In order to open to them comparable prosperity chances the consumption of exhaustible energy resources must be balanced by forms of energy as much as possible regenerative.

However, the securing of provisioning with energy is only one aspect amongst several. It is also necessary to take into account the secondary effects of the generation of energy, especially the effects on the creation and the human life. The protection of the climate and of the environment is commandments of ecological justice. This justice requires modes of life and conduct imprinted by measurement and solidarity. Economic and living styles must be seriously verified. The individual, but also the society and the state cannot be allowed to be indifferent against the damages committed by them.

All decisions of energy policy are therefore standing in a destination triangle of protection of the climate and the environment, of securing of provisioning as well as mutual of profitability and competitive capacity. There exists a certain relationship of tension of these targets. According to the weighting of social, economic and ecological aspects differentiated priorities are set. It is above all the task of politics to create a balance between the targets and to be orientated by the principle of consistency.

Against this background an ethical evaluation of nuclear energy is of particular interest. A secured provisioning with energy, the protection of the climate and the profitability are important targets to the realization of which nuclear energy can contribute - especially if we

must assume a further growing want of current. But the use of nuclear energy is nevertheless since long time contested.

Again and again the German bishops have thought over the ethical evaluation of the nuclear energy. Already in 1980 they have stated in the declaration "Future of the creation - Future of the mankind" that even then if morally responsible ways for the provisioning and the utilization of atomic energy would be found, it would remain questionable to determine in the planning only one kind of energy. Better than one kind of energy which technologically lays down the future of major parts of the mankind at long term and withdraws future generations the margin of proper decisions, better would be several ways which complete each other. This discussion was influenced by the discussions which since the beginning of the seventies have been carried on the limits of the growth following the exploitation of existing raw materials and the destruction of living space. The debates were also determined by the at that time ruling oil crisis. At that time the bishops did however not consider as their task to establish a concept of energy and environmental policy. At that time like today they feel nevertheless obliged to formulate standards giving orientation to politics, to economy and to technique.

At the occasion of this Episcopal word the then chairman of the German Episcopal Conference, Joseph Cardinal Höffner, presented in autumn 1980 a report on the subject "The human being and the nature in the era of technique". Because the Cologne cardinal formulated basic reserves against atomic energy he found great echo. The question of security was decisive for Höffner. As the utilization of atomic energy be the "most risky technique" and be the danger "of special nature as concerns quality", the protection of mankind against nuclear energy "be the task of all states". Science and technique must look for new forms of energy generation preserving as far as possible the environment and being less risky. Cardinal Höffner has never set great hopes in the peaceful utilization of nuclear energy. He regarded such utilization at the utmost as a defensible transitional technique under the condition that alternative forms of energy are seriously sought for. At the same time should not be discontinued the endeavours to reduce the remaining risks of security.

Likewise the expert text published by the German Episcopal Conference 2006 under the heading "The climatic change: Focus of global, intergenerational and ecological justice" had within the ethical evaluation of the nuclear energy for result that the utilization of this form of energy could not be a permanent responsible solution. On the account of the unclarified ignoring of the possibility of large catastrophes and terroristic attacks the bishops considered already five years ago the utilization of nuclear energy as no longer defensible. Nothing has changed this position. Therefore the speed on the path to an epoch of regenerative energies must be accelerated at the same degree as the generation of current by atomic energy must be terminated as soon as possible. Independent from the useful life of the atomic energy, solutions for the carrying away of atomic waste are urgently required. For the future quantities of atomic waste must be removed with security and social and environmental convenience.

An energy policy free from contradiction is not only necessary on the national level. Required are also international negotiations on corresponding framework conditions. Certainly many states will at the time being continue to utilize the nuclear energy. According to the principle of global responsibility this results in the obligation to contribute within international committees substantially to the security of nuclear power stations, to the solution of the interim and final storage problems and to the phasing out of the nuclear energy. In this context the withdrawal from the atomic power in Germany could have a signaling effect. It cannot be the target of energy change to morally excel. We must apply all our ambition to develop alternatives for the future and to further reduce the conflicts between security of

provisioning, profitability and consistency. The world will pursue with interest if Germany as a country of high technology and industry will succeed to take the lead on the way in full responsibility.

Within the ethical discussion must also be taken into account the consequences of the phasing out of the utilization of atomic energy. Necessary is not an "immediately at whatever price", but a policy which keeps as low as possible the negative secondary effects. Certainly in Germany the points of reconstruction of energy provisioning have been switched since longer time. But up to now the focus was set too much on the new orientation of the energy generation. The planning of the infrastructure required for the phasing out of change is going behind. The phasing out of the atomic energy presupposes therefore investments in the research and in the development of the transmission lines and of the storage technologies.

In evaluating with ethical responsibility the different strategies of energy provisioning the weighting of different risks should not be undervalued. New forms of energy generation are also related to risks and provoke conflicts on the targets: This is demonstrated by the off-shore wind farms which injure the ecological system, by the cultivation of so-called energy plants which rival the cultivation of foodstuff or by the risks of geothermic which is only possible at locations suitable under the geological aspect. It is absolutely necessary to perceive risks in their interdependencies. Therefore the result of a responsible weighting of risks is not the absolute minimization of either risk. Good policy consists in the avoidance of the critical threshold of risks and in the increase of potentials of resolving problems.

The phasing out of nuclear energy should therefore be operated at any rate under the premise of a simultaneous withdrawal from the fossil energy agents. This demand requires in many regards a change of course: Current free of atoms does not signify an energy turn. A consistent intercourse with energy and the change of energy provisioning are therefore to achieve on three paths to which also Pope Benedict XVI has referred in his Encyclical "Caritas in veritate". In the first place the consumption of energy should be reduced by savings. An economical intercourse with energy requires a new consciousness of responsibility of the consumers and a change of the living style. Secondly, traditional forms of energy should be used more efficiently: This increase of efficiency can be achieved by savings for example in the area of restraining heat, of the innovation of mobility or by savings in current consumption but also by technical innovation of increasing the energy output. Thirdly, a turn to regenerative energies is necessary. Pace-makers of this development must be, besides of research institutions, especially business enterprises producing energy and business enterprises with intense energy consumption. Moreover, indispensable for an energy turn are a technology open to promotion and the often contested development of a correspondent infrastructure. These three paths must not only be gone by politics, economy and science. An energy turn includes the disposition of every individual to alter also his living style. Then it could also become evident that an energy turn is not a pace back, but rather advances a new consistent idea of progress which is obliged to a "new humanistic synthesis!" which Pope Benedict XVI demands in his Encyclical "Caritas in veritate".

The expert text "Obligated to the creation. Suggestions for a consistent intercourse with energy" is a contribution to the social discussion on the requirements of a reasonable energy policy. The focus does not concern technical questions, but complicated ethical weightings between the different requirements of security, responsibility for the creation as well as of economic and social development. For reasons of solidarity and of justice it is necessary to alter the steering in energy policy.

The Ethics Committee "Sure Energy Provisioning" appointed by the Federal Government is charged to realize a social consensus on the future shaping of energy provisioning. It is one of the most important tasks of this committee to present a result which outlasts periods of

legislation and exceeds the borders of parties, grants planning security to enterprises and energy suppliers, but at the same time makes clear that energy provisioning is a task of the community. This task is not easy and not terminated by the submission of a report. For me it is clear: Energy policy is part of the greatest questions of our country which require a broad consensus such as it is for example with the fundamentals of the social and foreign policy of our country.

With the publication of the expert text "Obliged to the creation" the bishops too have not yet finished to deal with this subject. We have formulated a claim to the community which also must be a standard for us. The Church is prepared to face this many-layered task within the social dialogue and within its own practice.

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