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SPIRITUALITY IN THEOLOGICAL SOCIAL ETHICS

An (un)common Relation

Theological *Social Ethics* is an established scientific discipline. During the height of scholasticism at the latest, it implicitly plays a fundamental role in the theological debate of ethical issues. This also applies to places where it was not explicitly named social ethics. In the disputes about the social developments during the Industrial Age and following specific "Catholic Social Teachings" in the late 19th century, the (social ethical) Christian teaching of society was decoupled from the (individual- orientated ethical) moral theology. The former became an independent subject, today commonly labelled social ethics. Scientific-theoretical, hermeneutical and social thought of *Communio* has become the subject 'Christian Theology'.[1]

The topic spirituality arrived in theology at the beginning of the 20th century. Since then, a wide-ranging reflection has unfolded on the inter-relationship between spirituality and theology. However, it comes as a surprise that the relation between spirituality and theological social ethics has not yet been made the subject of discussions. The following contribution, with due humbleness, tries to show up this relation. It starts off from the premise that neither theological social ethics without spiritual impetus nor spirituality without social references do make sense. The fact that spirituality leads to positive effects in a community is commonly assumed in the world of jobs and work and respectively received.[2]

At first, it is explicated what kind of spirituality is to be enacted appropriately if it is to be connected with social ethics. Thereafter, social ethics is also defined meaningfully to finally venture an outlook on the two aspects.

Spirituality – Purposeful Definition

To begin with, one must define what term of spirituality to set off from. The topic is multi-facetted and does not only touch upon theological moments or at least religious ones. Additionally, in this discourse spirituality is to be distinguished from a vulgar understanding from the far-reaching field of wellness and meditation.[3]

Spirituality and *religion* are part and parcel in large areas but are not mutually conditional in any case. If the pedagogue and theologian Anton A. Bucher sees evidence that individual spirituality could replace traditional *religiosity*, this, on the one hand, hints at the proximity of the two phenomena and its terms to one another, but, on the other hand, at the competitive relationship.[4] Comparing the different concepts of religiosity and spirituality, one can agree with Bucher, that, in the end, one must take into account an "overlapping" of the two phenomena and their terms, irrespective of the fact that they are not identical.

Bucher pleads "for a broader understanding of spirituality whose core is attachment to, horizontally, social environment, nature and cosmos, and, vertically, a man-transcending, all-encompassing ultimate, spiritual, holy entity, many commonly still call God. This opening requires that man is capable of self- transcending and neglecting his own ego."[5] This makes spirituality the more comprehensive notion subsuming different forms of religion and religiosity. Thus religion is to be understood as a more or less structured faith-institution, religiosity, however, as an individualized basic attitude inspired by religion but not necessarily directly derived from a certain institution. Religion is a system of meaning in which humans meet holiness and react accordingly. Religiosity is prerequisite for religion and place for religion.[6] Religion and religious things are the themes and linguistic denotations in a discourse and have a certain cultural-historical range.[7]

If the paradigmatic principle of the (former) institute for spirituality at the Philosophical-Theological College Münster ran, spirituality is "the continuous transforming of a human being answering to God's call"[8], the connection between spirituality and religiosity is specified factually. Nevertheless, the relation appears as rather dynamic: drawing on diverse surveys, Bucher shows that the main areas in this relation are specific to countries and generations. In the USA for example, youth is significantly more religious than in Europe, respectively Germany. Spirituality and belief remain rather constant in youth, religiosity, however, fades.[9]

In our discussion it is essential that there is a need for attachment of the individual to his/her social environment to talk of spirituality. Not without reason has spiritual care been carried out for a long time in the USA. It is about assisting sick or needy people because of one's attitude to life based on spirituality.[10] In this context it is evident that spirituality cannot simply be understood as a self-centred, self-redeeming component for personal improvement but as an existing or unfolding basic attitude that influences sustainably dealing with other people. Christian tradition calls this in all humbleness but, at the same time, forcefully "love of one's neighbour".[11] Under certain circumstances, the individualized moments of the spiritual might play a role but man does not only live with a "you" as face to face but also a "you (plural)" i.e. a larger social association ranging from a small group to society thus facing the "I". The place of the spiritual is in the *room of the mundane*, i.e. the sphere of social interaction.[12] In this space, spirituality- be it religious or non-religious – must put up to the test of processes of maturing and development.[13]

Reference Points of Spirituality

Spirituality has a central place in the realm of scientific theology. The discipline of the *Theology of Spirituality* discusses the interdependent relationship between theology and spirituality in a special manner. Thus the phenomenon of *contemplation* determines the relation between the two.[14] Theologian Jürgen Werbick does not see in spirituality a specific method within the theological subjects as theology does not make use of methods that determine scientific proceedings in other sciences. In his opinion, the specific element of theology as a

science lies rather in its own workings in which all applied methods are used to examine and evaluate testimonies bonded to the Christian faith.

> "Thus, in this sense, spirituality is theology's method, in which it prescribes for theology the way in which theology critically accompanies the believed perception of what is witnessed in the testimonies and, if need be, challenges the believingly or wrongly perceived things and interprets them for the meaning of life and faith, estimating them, discovering them anew and critically putting them in perspective for man's search for an abounding life: critical of distortions and levelling wrought upon them in churches and society."[15]

Theology of spirituality turns into theological hermeneutics of the spiritual, mindful life.[16]

(Systematic) theology may be a priority place of spiritual reflection but it is not the only site. On the one hand, it is evident that spirituality is more than introvert reflection to further individual well-being (s.a.).[17] On the other hand, it need not necessarily be located in the religious realm. Accordingly, spirituality is not made a topic only in psychology and health care but also in the world of business and work. It is applied in the general development of organisation or qua corporate identity as a "specific company spirituality"[18], eventually serving a good work atmosphere doing good to co-workers as well as efficiency within the company. Spirituality plays an important role in the area of leisure and tourism. Not only that it is practised for the benefit of personal well-being and self-improvement and, therefore, is used on holiday or the free weekend, it is also a relevant topic for tourist experts to further enlarge on. The community feeling of like-minded people is enormous, and work-life-balance is a factor in the personnel offices of enterprises to be taken seriously as the young generation of employees holds in high esteem respective agreements.[19]

There are a number of reference points for spirituality – be it to theology, be it to other disciplines. One of the essential characteristics of the spiritual relation is not that much the introspection and self-centeredness of the individual in personal conflict, but rather the thought of communion in the respectively adapted sense of a relation face to face, to a group or society. This space of the spiritual finds itself in the mundane and, in this context, eventually, must be posited in relation to the (theological) social ethics with the dimension of the spiritual.

<center>Social Ethics and Spirituality</center>

What is meant in the following is social ethics, implicitly the theological social ethics respectively Christian social ethics, as a scientific discipline and thus is differentiated from similar perspectives as, for example, from philosophical social ethics or social philosophy – which principally correlates with the distinction between moral theology and moral philosophy or ethics. Of course, this does not mean that they are completely different disciplines, but hermeneutics of a theological or Christian social ethics is starkly different from the one of a philosophical leaning. Thus writes Friedo Ricken in his philosophical social ethics:

> "The issue is not about social philosophy but social ethics, i.e. about the question of norm helping to judge the forms of human community which is justice… the object of social ethics is the relationship between the individual and the various forms of human community… Social ethics judges the relations between the different forms of the human community."[20]

On the part of Christian social ethics, Ricken's statement is to be agreed to fully and completely, however expanded by the aspect of *Christian inspired hermeneutics..*

It is – as it befits a theological discipline – marked and influenced by the church's historical tradition (among others, the Biblical and theological sources, the social proclamations since the late 19th century and the respective social principles respectively normative orientations as well as the picture of the church as a community of solidarity).[21]

It is not obvious that spirituality and social ethics go hand in hand. Social ethics differs from other theological subjects by its affinity to *social scientific methods*. Social ethics can hardly manage without an interdisciplinary discourse with sociological or social scientific analyses and, hermeneutically, places emphasis on empirical moments for the understanding of the social environment which must be taken into account. Meanwhile, the necessity to integrate the empirical sciences into theological research is no more specific of social ethics. Above all, it is the practical disciplines led by pastoral theology that increasingly find support from social scientifically orientated surveys. Fundamental theologian Magnus Striet expressively supports recurring to the social sciences, which, from a historical perspective, are regarded as an emerging new type of knowledge in the humanities entering a certain competition to speculative theology which was used to presenting itself as all-explaining. According to Striet, it is an article of faith that God has left the world to its inherent order which, in the historical ways of revelation, has become true again because God has bonded with the freedom of humankind.[22] To him this results in a genuinely theological argument why theology, by necessity, is obliged to engage in research in sociology. He sums up:

> "If theology does not want to move into the trap of hermeneutics of creativity, the only way it then would know how to describe the functioning and dynamics of society, would not be different from the manner these sciences do. …A Church which seeks orientation through theology shows itself as anchored in the belief in God who himself wanted the worldliness of the world – which can be unfolded in logics of its own."[23]

Within this framework, *Sociology of Religion* has specially evolved as a faculty, not the least, to pointedly address questions of religious or theological provenance.[24]

Communio as a Key

In social ethics, the social element, i.e. the encounter of one with another, the 'I' touching 'you' and the 'I' relating to community, remains as a primary factor. This is a good reason to ask for the relation of spirituality to social ethics. This way the aspects presented above can be further elaborated on: the phenomenon of spirituality was purposefully defined to come to a circumscription which is of relevance in this discourse. As it behoves religious approaches, it is appropriate to start from religiously motivated spirituality. Religiosity and spirituality, for lack of a constantly clear focus, have been described as "overlapping". In addition, spirituality has been defined as a personal web of relations as it cannot be specified as such only for the individual. The accordingly denoted "continuous transformation of man" does not only hint at him reacting "to God's call" but that he finds himself in a process with himself and his environment wherein he changes and develops himself. This call first reaches the individuals, but it being accepted and effectively implemented socially rather results from the impetus of Christian charity.

In the same vein, "continuous transformation of man" initiates itself in the individual. But as the single human being is embedded in a social reality, which often brings down to earth, the

process of transforming the individual takes place not only in the social context but also in the community.

The concrete terms of spiritual care or work-life-balance show how practical spirituality can be, i.e. how much it relates not only to oneself but also to the other person thus really supporting him/her. In respect to theology, it has become clear that the theology of spirituality can become the theological hermeneutics of a spiritual life. This does not only apply to the systematic alignment of the theological discipline but also to the social and practical variants, for example, Christian social ethics, as the communion -concept unites systematic theology and empirical-oriented social ethics in their subject matter.

Communio has become the key term embedding the spiritual element in theology. The moment of societal matters in social ethics here is spirituality's point of reference *for* and *in* social ethics.

Annotations

[1]"Primarily, man remains related to the communication with God and understands himself as capable of a successful, two-way communication to and then, finally, from Him which through hope transcends all times. This 'roundabout communication' to one's neighbour via and from a community with God should be the distinctive Christian element when Christians talk about communion." Ludger Schulte, Communion "among diverse forms". Communio as a dogmatic key term, in: Thomas Dienberg/Thomas Eggensperger/Ulrich Engel (ed.), Searching a new "We". Theological Contributions on Community and Individualization, Münster 2016, 87-100; here: 100.

[2] Cf. the contributions in Judi Neal (ed.), Handbook of Faith and Spirituality in the Workplace, Berlin 2013. ditto Joan Marques et al (eds.) Workplace and Spirituality. New Perspectives on Research and Ppractice, Woodstock/Vermont 2009.

[3] Thus attributed on the part of Matthias Horx, The Megatrend-Principle. How Tomorrow's World Evolves, Munich 2014, who reckons with a future "global patchwork-spirituality" and a concurrent "ascetic-spiritual cosmopolitan atheism" (288).

[4] Cf. Anton A. Bucher, Psychology of Spirituality. Handbook, Weinheim-Basel ²2014,16.

[5] Ibid, 69

[6] Cf. Ferdinand Angel, Religious Pedagogy and the Religious Element. Reflections on a Theory of an Anthropologically Based Religiosity, in: Ulrich Körtner/Robert Schelander (eds), Concepts of God, Vienna 1999 (FS Gottfried Adam), Vienna 1999, pp. 9-34

[7] Cf. Monika Jakobs, Religion and Religiosity as Discursive Terms in Relgious Pedagogy, in: TheoWeb 1 (2002), 70-81 (http://www.theo-web.de/zeitschrift/ausgabe-2002-01/,15.10.2016).

[8] First in the institute for spirituality (ed.) Foundation Course Spirituality, Stuttgart 2000, 10. Then further continued and developed up to Regina Bäumer/Michael Plattig (eds.) Transformation through Attention – Attention through Transformation. Collected contributions for spiritual guidance, St. Ottilien 2014, 14

[9] With commentaries there are various surveys on the topic spirituality in childhood, youth and young grown-up phase at Bucher, Psychology of Spirituality, 85-112

[10] Cf. Franziskus Knoll, Stay Human! On Rating Spirituality in Care, Stuttgart 2015. Knoll prefers the term spirituality to religiosity, among other things, as the former is semantically close to the term religion, and, relevant Anglo-American studies, as a rule, use the term spirituality (cf.39).

[11] "The next one to God stepping out of the social ascription who organizes the scope between human closeness and distance anew by his stepping out, describes, on the one hand, the phenomenal surplus and, on the other, the social blank of human interaction. Thereby, the difference between humanity and inhumanity of man is always made explicit from the theological perspective in the space of inter-human behaviours as non-difference, and an indifference of humanity toward the phenomena of social inhumanity is hereby avoided." Thus runs the thesis by Rebekka A. Klein, Sociality as a Condition Humana. An Interdisciplinary Analysis of Social Anthropology in Experimental Economics, Social Philosophy and Theology (edition ethics Vol. 6), Göttingen 2010, 294.

[12] Cf. Thomas Eggensperger, Individualization and the Sphere of the Mundane, in: same/Thomas Dienberg/Ulrich Engel (eds.), Towards Heaven and Looking At the World. Church and Order in (Post-) Secular Society, Münster 2014, 247-254.

[13] By spiritualities I understand a way of deepening and enlivening a personal life-sustaining conviction, for a Christian, for example, an alignment of life to God through Jesus Christ and his gospel … as deepening and enlivening of a personal, life-sustaining conviction, spirituality concerns a process which can be understood as personal maturing." Otto Muck, Plurality of Spiritualities. A religion-philosophical reflection on spirituality, in: Journal for Catholic Theology 138 (2016), 159-172, here: 159

[14] Hereby, I start from the assumption that, in the relation of contemplation and theology, the more comprehensive relation between spirituality and theology is merged in a striking manner." Thus says Simon Peng-Keller, Contemplation and Theology. Defining relations against the horizon of contemporary spiritual movements of search; in this bok, 13-26; here: 13

[15] Jürgen Werbick, How Pious Must Theology Be?Spirituality as a Method of Theology, in this book, 201-216, here: 2001.

[16] Cf. Simon Peng-Keller, Introduction to the Theology of Spirituality, Darmstadt 2010, 24 ff. 148.

[17] A reflected discourse about the relation between spirituality and corporeality can be found in Clara Vasseur/Johannes Bündgens, Spirituality of Perception. Introduction and Practice, Freiburg/Br.-Munich 2015

[18] Wilhelm Guggenberger, Spirituality in Business – a growing market for what?, in: Journal of Catholic Theology 138 (2016), 216-229; here: 217 Guggenberger sums up his presentation:" "If the flourishing of spiritualities in the field of business generates a new market of growth, this should be, above all, a market not determined by the exchange of equivalents but by those educational values of relations which make possible an all-encompassing human development." (228)

[19] Cf. Thomas Eggensperger, Leisure and Peace of Mind. Between Sovereignty of Time and Individualization, in: Thomas Dienberg/Thomas Eggensperger/Ulrich Engel (eds.), On the Search of a New "We". Theological Contributions on Community and Individualization, Münster 2016, 171-188.

[20] Friedo Ricken, Social Ethics (Foundation Course Philosophy Vol. 13), Stuttgart 2014,11.

[21] Cf. the relevant introductions by Günter Wilhelms, Christian SocialEthics, Paderborn 2010, 39 ff; or Marianne Heimbach-Steins, Biblical Hermeneutics and Christian Social Ethics, in: same (ed.) Christian Social Ethics. A Textbook (Vol.1), Regensburg 2004, 83-110.

[22] Cf. Magnus Striet, Wanting to Describe Oneself as Having Become Oneself. Theology and Sociology, in: same (ed.), "Not Outside the World". Theology and Sociology, Freiburg/Br. 2014, 13-32; here 24

[23] Ibid.,31

[24] Gert Pickel, Religion Sociology, An Introduction to Central Themes; Wiesbaden 2011. More of a religion-historical approach is Wolfgang Eßbach's, Religion Sociology (Vol.1: Religious War and Revolution as a Cradle of New Religions) Paderborn 2014. Like some others, Eßbach assumes that, due to the perceived return of the religious element, a new alignment in religion sociology has emerged. In the same vein argue the editors (and authors) of a Collective Volume: Ansgar Kreutzer/Franz Gruber (eds.), In Dialogue. Systematic Theology and Religion Sociology (Quaestiones disputatae Vol. 258), Freiburg/Br.2013