

Summary

„Ist Menschenwürde ein gesellschaftlich notwendiger Begriff?: Brauchen wir in einer pluralistischen Gesellschaft einen Menschenwürdebegriff?“

by Altan Heper

Is “human dignity” a socially necessary term? Do we need a concept of human dignity in a pluralistic society? It is clear that the German society has become pluralistic. In view of the global development it is beyond doubt that nowadays almost all societies are heterogenic. Pluralism concerning life philosophies, both in Germany and the modern world, is an undeniable fact. Thus, joint action based on shared values hardly appears possible. The question is, whether the concept of human dignity might be a common denominator and guiding principle in view of wide-ranging pluralism and in pluralistic societies. This article deals with this question, trying to find reasons for and against the concept of human dignity as shared value. In addition, it examines whether a minimal moral code or a core moral code are necessary in a pluralistic society and whether this minimal moral code is congruent with the concept of human dignity as defined by Art.1 of the German constitution.

The reasons arguing against the concept of human dignity as guiding principle are as follows: Different disciplines like philosophy, theology and law are competing with one another for the definition and interpretation of the concept of human dignity. The concept of human dignity is often seen as part of the European – western intellectual history. It is doubtful whether the relation between the state and the concept of human dignity reflects the states’ hidden religious confession and is therefore disturbing its religious and ethical neutrality and independence. The reason for the concept of human dignity as shared value is its broad acceptance within all different disciplines. The concept of human dignity is accepted worldwide and by all important international documents. It meets with approval among diverse cultural groups. In summary, in pluralistic societies the guiding principle - like the concept of human dignity - is an important point of orientation, which is shared and agreed upon by people with different cultural backgrounds and life philosophies.