Islamic Theology: Human Being as Individual and Social Being / As Relational Being

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Glossary

Important terms for students

Allah (God):

The General notion of God in Islam finds its reification and counterpart in Allah. In the Qur'an, God describes Himself with names such as 'The Exceedingly Beneficent, The Exceedingly Merciful, The Exceedingly Gracious, The Omniscient, The Almighty, The Loving, The Giver of Life, The Repeatedly Forgiving', which He refers to as 'The Most Beautiful Names'. Taking the features common to these 'Beautiful Names' as their point of departure, Islamic theologians have derived certain attributes from them. These are life, omniscience, will, omnipotence, the ability to hear, the ability to see, the ability to speak and creative power. The essence and characteristics of God relate chiefly to the order and aim of creation and are evident in experience.

Human Beings:

Human beings are a unique life form that was created by Allah in a special way, with unique gifts and abilities unlike any other beings such as conscience, reason, ability to create knowledge, and free will (Some related verses in the Quran: 15:29; 2:28; 3:6; 6:98; 30:54; 32:9). Please note that Muslims do not believe that human beings randomly evolved from apes. The life of human beings began with the creation of two people, a male and a female named Adam and Hawwa (Eve). According to Islam, God breathed a life-giving spirit into the human and as such every human being is unique and precious. Therefore, all humans are to be treated with dignity and respect.

Culture:

Culture is the features and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts. The term "Islamic culture" embraces a wide variety of people and societies spreads over many countries. Islamic culture is embedded in certain common beliefs that there is no God but Allah and Prophet Muhammad is His messenger.

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Muslim customs and traditions include Islamic/Muslim clothing, food, wedding traditions and other aspects of Islamic life that Muslims have adopted in their respective countries. Islamic culture also represents some common and shared values and beliefs of different cultures. Religion and culture influence each other in many ways. At times, cultural practices can be confused with religious teachings and a particular cultural practice can gain religious importance. Our cultural location largely determines many of the beliefs and values we embrace.

Islam:

Islam refers to the belief in the existence and oneness of God, as well as to devotion to God. Islam is also the general name of the religion proclaimed by all of the prophets of God, both named and unnamed, in the Qur'an. Revelations sent down, from the days of Adam through Muhammad, may differ in terms of their form (sharia), but in terms of their essence they are all the same (Q:5:48). Because the term 'Islam' in Arabic denotes self-submission to God, in the Qur'an Abraham is referred to as Muslim, meaning someone who has devoted himself entirely to God. In Islam, in clear distinction to polytheism, God is One. God is unique, eternal and transcendent. The objective consists in gaining God's favour (Q: 98:8). A person must remain aware that every activity has a religious connection. The individual must bow to no one but God. Noble and sacred values may not be instrumentalised for selfish ends. Among the principal characteristics of historical Islam is that scholars reinterpret the main sources of the religion, the Qur'an and the Sunnah, in light of their respective age (ijtihad) and arrive at a consensus (ijma). The fundamental principle is the confession of faith that 'There is no god but God and Muhammad is the messenger of God'. Elements of Islam also include belief in angels, Holy Scripture, prophets, the hereafter and the Final Judgement. Ritual prayer, fasting, obligatory alms-giving and pilgrimage are basic obligations or so-called 'pillars' of religious practice.

Islam calls upon us to comply with the commandments and actions that bring us God's favour while at the same time keeping us conscious of the fact that we will be called to account in the hereafter for every action taken and for every word spoken. There are many verses in the Qur'an in which faith and righteous deeds are mentioned together, and the significance of moral conduct as reflection of faith is emphasised (2:25, 82, 277; 4:57, 124). Muhammad considered morally impeccable behaviour to be a basic condition of being a Muslim (cf. Bukhari; Abu Dawud). Consequently, Islam is not a faith that persists in the realm of the theoretical; instead, it is reflected both in the conduct of one's own life and in the larger society. Muhammad provided a living example of these principles. Islam aims to achieve individual happiness and well-being, urging that the individual maintain a peaceful, loving and harmonious relationship with him- or herself, with the Creator, and with the entire creation.

Encounter learning:

Encounter learning refers to the didactically guided and accompanied topic- centred exchange between participants who are as similar in status as possible in a framework that is limited in terms of content, time and space (safe space), which provides for multi-perspective reflection processes taking into account a conflict hermeneutics that lead to the initiation of content-related and process- related competences. The project "Sharing Worldviews: Encounter Learning for common Values in Diversity" is based on a 4-phase concept of Encounter Learning: preparation, presentation, exchange and reflection.

Worldviews:

The concept of **Worldviews** has various culturally determined meanings. In our project we use it as "**Worldviews**" (individual or collective perspective on the world):

World interpretation (dt.: Weltdeutung) Refers to the fundamental anthropological existential that man brings his fellow man, his environment and himself into an explanatory and interpretive context, regardless of whether this context has religious, spiritual or secular connotations.

World view (dt.: Weltbild) Coherent overall conception of the whole of reality, of the development of life and the structure of the universe, of a certain image of man and history etc. from a certain theoretically underpinned (e.g. scientific or mythological etc.) perspective.

Worldviews (dt.: Weltsichten/ Weltansichten/ Perspektiven auf die Welt) Individual or collective perspective on the world. Worldviews as perspectives can also be shaped by influences (events, media, etc.).

Worldview (dt.: Weltanschauung) Refers to a coherent overall conception of the whole of reality, which shapes one's perception of reality and in turn shapes that perception. Beyond 'worldviews', they are embedded in a specific framework of thought and action and thus also include evaluative statements and corresponding options for action. Worldviews unite their adherents into a secular community (e.g. humanism, atheism, materialism). Such an understanding of worldview is shaped in Europe by the Enlightenment, which sought to free itself from traditional communities (such as religions) and grant the individual more independence from them.