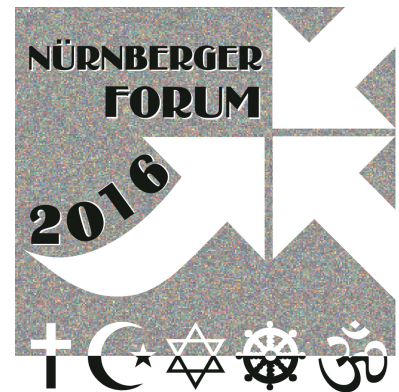


Werner Haussmann

**The Spirituality of Mindfulness –
a Religious Contribution to Public Education**



ABSTRACT

Many teachers and even students suffer from psychosomatic diseases, commonly known as „burnout“. From a religious perspective, this problem can be counteracted with spiritual exercises, as their positive effects for resilience are scientifically recognized.

In all religions there have always been concepts of mindfulness; today more often the approaches refrain from the religious reference, e.g. MBSR or MBCT. Altogether they are variations to instruct awareness. Why are mindfulness and appreciation essential in educational contexts and how can we reach an appropriate attitude?

To encounter others with mindfulness one needs the same basic attitude for oneself, corresponding to the directive "love your neighbor as yourself"; to love oneself in a sense of self-care enables for encounter with others in an attitude of mindful appreciation. Jesus Christ himself is not only mindful encountering other people but he also shows unconditional appreciation, not expecting anything in return. Christian spirituality is marked by the trust in this prevenient grace of God, if you expose yourself to the presence of God.

With regard to children in school, a mindful-based approach will lead teachers to an attitude of awareness for the "integral" individual pupil. At the same time it's crucial to be appreciative, to foster the "interests of the child" and the "child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential" (cf. UN Convention). That's what Public Education has to care for. Nevertheless, this does not mean that appreciation should be regarded as a "tool" to optimise performance at school, because, from a theological as well as a human rights viewpoint, the individual person is the measure of all education and its trust should not be betrayed.

A Spirituality of Mindfulness will foster this kind of education, but mindfulness needs instruction! Especially religions therefore offer spiritual ways to improve perceptiveness that have a potential for relaxation, altogether strengthening pedagogical competences. Mentally stabilized, mindful and value-orientated students – themselves being attended in a appreciating way in their studies – could encourage their future pupils in a comparable way.

Some examples of a mindful-based teacher training at the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg will complete the lecture.

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