

The threat to freedom

The Western community as a whole is also increasingly under attack. Be it because of agitations by foreign powers or because of the almost envious glances at a success story of authoritarian governments in the acute corona crisis. In any case, the West is increasingly uncertain of its identity. In this situation, self-assurance is called for. This volume therefore shows how closely freedom and tolerance are interwoven and shape Western liberal societies down to the last detail.

In this volume, Daniel Munteanu uses John Lock and John Rawls to show the roots of freedom and tolerance in liberalism. These ideas are closely linked to the idea of economic freedom in a social market economy, as Arnd Küppers makes clear. Limitless freedom, however, can be self-destructive. Therefore, freedom at the same time requires limits, which, however, do not arise externally, but from the fact that tolerance as a concept of freedom must be defended against intolerance and the attack on freedom.

The very freedom to which tolerance exhorts is currently endangered by the worldwide advance of authoritarian regimes. Their concept of internal unity and social identity as a homogeneous space is the opposite of tolerance. In this respect, the struggle for different concepts of society that currently characterizes the dramaturgy of world conflicts can be described as a trial of strength between tolerant, liberal and open models on the one hand and closed, authoritarian and intolerant models on the other.¹ The “authoritarian temptation” is great.² It promises to get rid of the uncomfortable complexity of the late-modern world with its manifold upheavals and its high degree of condensed plurality through populist simplification and compartmentalization. Tolerance offers an alternative to this by aiming to understand plurality as a “factor of the political,” as Katrin Boeckh makes clear. Today, this must be defended against a variety of threats, as can be exemplified by the hybrid war in Ukraine.

In the face of these uncertainties, the volume provides arguments for a liberal form of society, which it nevertheless combines with strong rules and a dynamic of social cohesion through open communication.

1 Cf. Fukuyama 2019.

2 Applebaum 2020.