Chapter IV: Contribution of Ethical Virtue Conceptions to the Modern Understanding of Education

1. Society, Virtue, and Competence

In the introduction to this book, I pointed out that it is an urgent task of schools to promote and strengthen the development of the entire personality of children and young people, especially on an emotional and social level, so that they are empowered to shape their own lives with their fellow human beings actively. As we have seen, this development process primarily involves young people learning to perceive themselves and practise this self-awareness, as well as acquiring values, virtues, and skills for successful relationships. As has been shown, competencies are not identical to virtues, but in their objectives and orientation, both can enable people to act in a self-determined and socially responsible manner. If competencies are designed to enable people to overcome challenges, and virtues are designed to activate untapped anthropological potential, then it is worth exploring the question of what contribution they can make to the acquisition of *ethical competence* at school as a place of learning.[767]

The preceding reflections on virtue ethics and the inner life of the soul have sharpened our awareness of the inner negotiation processes and their conditions for virtuous behaviour, combined with the overarching question of how people can develop their humanity to the best possible extent. The pivotal point in maturing and growing, therefore, lies at the core of the self. As Aristotle and others have made clear, dealing with the self primarily trains the ability to deal with one's own feelings, to cultivate positive emotions and character

767 At this point, many more competencies could be listed, above all, those of judgement and changing perspectives.

dispositions and to learn to *observe* them. An in-depth study of the virtues has once again made it clear that this endeavour begins with working on one's own self and that the cultivation of personal qualities is linked to the purification of the soul, which leads people to self-realisation. The Muslim philosophers and mystics, who brought Greek thought into their own reflection on faith, understand faith as a constitutive element of a happy and successful way of life.[768] The recourse to Muslim *udabā* (literary scholars), philosophers, and mystics has broadened the view of the human being and their need for development and relationships, and has placed the human self at the centre.

For children and young people, as well as for adults, the process of working on the self requires people to examine themselves actively and consciously. By working on and cultivating the self, not only children and young people but also adults learn to recognise their own strengths and weaknesses, which exist in every human nature, and how to counteract them.

The importance of starting this process with children needs no further explanation. The language of virtue can be used at an early age to enable children to experience themselves as agents, gain a sense of themselves with feedback, and subsequently make them aware that they have all the necessary dispositions and strengths within them to work on themselves. Only on this basis and with the awareness of who one is can virtuous action be learned. Above all, the premise of self-knowledge, which Muslim philosophers and mystics so strongly emphasised, is based on the realisation that one should not make others responsible for one's own worries and state of mind but should instead become aware of one's own attitudes, emotions, value preferences, and habits and work on them.

The individual's path to a successful and happy life—and this means life with community—leads through self-knowledge. Self-awareness begins in childhood. Even in the school context, children can be supported in getting to know themselves, learning to recog-

768 "Again and again, he [Miskawayh] replaces Aristotle's non-religious terms with theological terms and invokes qur'ānic narratives. Religion appears to him as a catalyst of philosophical insights, but time and again it also becomes productive in order to enrich and challenge these insights"; Topkara, *Umrisse*, v.

nise and understand their feelings, and placing value on themselves and their attitudes. If the competence of self-reflection can be built up gradually with age, this enables future adults to critically assess, evaluate, and categorise their thoughts and actions. Self-reflection is, therefore, an important first step or prerequisite for self-knowledge and working on the self. As already explained, becoming aware of or realising all facets that construct the self plays a major role in these processes. Thus, self-knowledge includes correct self-assessment, the ability to perceive one's own self and to formulate one's own mistakes and shortcomings as well as wishes for the community in such a way that others can relate to them. In this way, people are relieved and freed from the burden of having to fight the never-ending battle for self-improvement alone. By admitting their own fallibility, people—from an Islamic perspective—confess their anthropological weakness, which is divinely intended. The confession of one's mistakes and sins (or the moment of ethical reflection) is preparation for liberation from spiritual incongruity in order to restore spiritual (and possibly physical) health and personal coherence. If people accept their own anthropologically ambivalent constitution, they will become aware of their essential incompetence for self-perfection. While adults rely on friends, relatives, or professionals to work on themselves, the school context can directly and indirectly play a decisive role in the development of children and young people's personalities, provided that decisive processes are initiated and given space: perceiving inner processes and the impact of behaviour on others (self-perception) and evaluating oneself (self-esteem). This also makes the budding adult realise that each person is in control of their own development and cannot blame others for personality flaws and undesirable characteristics. For young people and adults alike, in a society in which people are encouraged to improve themselves by looking at others, when it is assumed that fellow human beings are striving for virtues, it can have a stabilising effect on their own aspirations. The striving for self-improvement, which is regarded in the *tahdhīb* literature as an anthropological determination of humans, is to be understood as a reminder to cultivate the competence for explicit self-criticism despite the incompetence for

self-perfection.[769] On this basis, I also understand (religious) education as educational work on people.[770] However, growing morally is a difficult matter, and it is not only an important phase in (early) childhood but also a component of lifelong learning.

Following Kant, Jochen Schmidt states: "The difficulty of working on one's own moral character lies in the fact that a person's own heart is not transparent."[771] Working on the self is made more difficult by the opacity of the heart, which can only be changed by purifying the soul and heart. Working on the soul, the heart, and consequently the character, harbours self-deception as a great, yet hidden difficulty. "In the blind spot of self-reflection" lurk weaknesses, inclinations, a tendency towards evil and vices that people overlook either unintentionally or intentionally.[772] The greatest burden, however, lies in moral (often concealed) arrogance—in Kant's words, in the "pride of virtue."[773] Even reason can sometimes be of little help in this frenzy of virtue, insofar as it finds (or invents) seemingly reasonable reasons to justify its own patronising attitude. This is another argument in favour of beginning the work of cultivating the self with self-knowledge. Both philosophers and mystics formulate that *only* after self-knowledge can knowledge of God follow. Self-knowledge in a religious perspective sometimes means the subjective recognition of human conditionality and divine unconditionality as well as the realisation of one's particularity as a human being.[774] The realisation

769 The acknowledgement of sin is therefore both a glorification of divine unconditionality and a recognition of our own human conditionality.

770 The results of what has been presented so far can also be situated in religiously contoured educational contexts.

771 Jochen Schmidt, "Selbstbekenntniskompetenz als interreligiöse Schlüsselkompetenz," https://www.academia.edu/30558032/Selbstbekenntniskompetenz_als_interreligi%C3%B6se_Schl%C3%BCsselkompetenz, last accessed 31 January 2019, 4.

772 On the concept of "blind spot of self-reflection," see Schmidt, "Selbstbekenntniskompetenz," 4.

773 According to the Qur'ān, arrogance is one of the most serious sins (cf. Q 4:173; 7:166; 16:29). For example, Iblis was banished from paradise because of his arrogance (Q 38:71–77). For the term *arrogantia moralis* in Kant, MS, AA VI:435: "The persuasion of a greatness of its value, but only for lack of comparison with the law, can be called pride of virtue (arrogantia moralis)." An accusation of egoism would then be justified against the pride of virtue.

774 Based on the Adam narrative (Q 2:30–38) and other passages in the Qur'ān, the image of man is concretised with the description that God breathed his

of one's own creatureliness is the basis for becoming aware of the Creator and thus of the creative aspect of the self. "The human being is a synthesis of infinity and finiteness."[775] Creatureliness implies, on the one hand, the certainty of the moral disposition to be a valuable creature and, on the other hand, the call, in Kant's words, not to *be stingy towards oneself* in one's duty of self-respect.[776] If one knows that every other human being is wanted by God, he or she also knows that the other is equally valuable. The reconnection to the divine origin enables people to reflect on their responsibility for themselves and others. Kant expresses this core statement as follows: "Religion is for me a matter of conscience, the holiness of the promise and truthfulness of what man must confess to himself. Confess to yourself."[777] In a globalised world, actions not only have an indirect impact on others, but they also increasingly have a direct impact. Careful consideration for others can only be maintained if (co-)humanity and compassion are cultivated.[778] Educational work, therefore, also begins with work on the self.

Following Kant, for whom work on the self is work towards a culture, Bettina Stangneth calls this a *culture of sincerity*. I also

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breath into man when he was created and also provided His 99 beautiful names. "In Islamic theology, the qur'ānic descriptions have led to the conclusion that man is in a certain way able to use his abilities to shape contexts of life on earth and to act creatively and thus, as a servant of God, to be able to act in his name," Tatari, *Gott und Mensch im Spannung*sverhältnis, 61. "On the one hand, the Islamic correspondence of names between God and man prepares the ground for implementing a partnership aspect in the God-human relationship, and the idea of serving God is thus enriched by the idea of human creativity and relative autonomy, which is associated with freedom and responsibility. On the other hand, this would then be accompanied by the idea that the human dignity thus guaranteed harbours an imperative to make it tangible for every human being in lifeworld relationships"; Tatari, *Gott und Mensch im Spannungsverhältnis*, 225.

775 Søren Kierkegaard, *Die Krankheit zum Tode* (Stuttgart, 1997), 13.

776 Cf. Kant, MS, AA VI:432.

777 Immanuel Kant, *Opus postum. Handschriftlicher Nachlass. Erste Hälfte* (Berlin, 1936); MS, AA XXI, 81; see also MS, AA VI:441.

778 Compassion for others can be developed on the assumption that compassion always implies identification and relatedness. By relatedness, I mean that people are not separated from each other, because all souls are from one divine original soul (cf. Q 15:29). By compassion, I mean the ability to feel the other as oneself. See also the essay "Martin Buber und die Mystik," *Martin Buber*, eds. Paul A. Schilpp and Maurice Friedman (Stuttgart, 1963), 40ff.

mentioned Avishai Margalit, who favours calling this a *decent society*. Against the background of the results so far, it seems to me that the cultivation of certain characteristics, attitudes, and emotions for social interaction, which, as this book has attempted to show, can also be religiously orientated in their justification, is constitutive for a society conceived in this way. This makes it necessary to promote connectedness and interdependence between people, so that the potential inherent in people can unfold in order to transform and be transformed for the good. Because a successful life shows itself in practice.

2. Four Possible Virtues

The observations and remarks made in the course of reflecting on philosophical and pedagogical discourses on the one hand, and Islamic theological discourses on the other hand, can now be placed within the horizon of far-reaching moral concepts and central virtues. The decisive selection criterion is the aspect of their impact on the process of becoming human. Given the many virtues mentioned, especially those that imply a socially beneficial dimension, I would like to explain the four meta-virtues of justice, honesty, compassion, and friendship, which are particularly important for the development of children and young people, above all for cooperation in the school context and beyond. Under the premise of strengthening personal development, I would like to briefly define the content of the virtues in order to conclude with a holistic summary. I will start with the queen of virtues: justice.

2.1 Justice

When discussing the concept of justice, it hardly seems possible to exclude references to the polis, as it was always associated with the idea of a just community—in antiquity, in medieval Islamic, and modern approaches—and was thus considered in conjunction with a political order. Onora O'Neill rightly asks how and by what means justice can be better institutionalised: through a culture of trust or

through formalised structures of accountability?[779] The question of whether citizens in an unjust state are capable of acquiring and cultivating justice has never lost its topicality—even in the history of Islamic education.[780] However, I will exclude the political frame of reference in the following and relate justice to the intersubjective context, not as a social structural norm but as a basic personal attitude.

Justice as a virtue of character is a basic attitude that one would wish every person to have. Justice is the disposition to do what is just, to judge justly and to act justly.[781] The opposite disposition is unjust attitudes, such as the pursuit of one's own advantage, partiality, egoism, all those attitudes that are concerned with one's own advantage and orient life according to selfish motives.[782] However, it is not only the focus on one's own advantage but also the concentration and prioritisation of one's own wishes and needs. A kind of self-love would then determine the form of action. Acting justly implies the starting point or attitude of giving everyone their due. Accordingly, justice is a middle habitus that avoids too much and too little, because it is also the centre between "doing wrong and suffering injustice." Justice is thus manifested in intersubjective actions.

In order to reveal the ambiguity and indeterminacy of the term, Aristotle established criteria for (un)just action. He distinguishes between general and particular justice. General justice refers to virtuous behaviour in relation to other people. Particular justice refers to an area of general justice, namely the distribution of material and immaterial goods. Thus, justice as a character disposition—like other virtues—requires actions appropriate to the situation, which presuppose certain perceptual evidence. For it is not only the accumulation of power and goods that must be confronted with the

779 Cf. Onora O'Neill, "Gerechtigkeit, Vertrauen und Verantwortlichkeit," in *Gerechtigkeit. Auf der Suche nach einem Gleichgewicht*, eds. Neumaier Otto, Clemens Sedmak, and Michael Zichy (Frankfurt, 2005), 33.

780 Cf. NE 1179b, 31 ff.; John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, 2005); Manuel Knoll, *Aristokratische oder demokratische Gerechtigkeit? Die politische Philosophie des Aristoteles und Martha Nussbaums egalitaristische Rezeption* (Paderborn, 2009).

781 Cf. NE 1128b 5–10.

782 Cf. NE 1128b 5–10.

question of how just this action is when people suffer hunger on the other side, but also the patronising of people by authoritatively dictating how they should live their lives is an unjust action. Because if I have the right to live the way I want, I must also grant others this right.[783]

The disposition to act justly, therefore, means the ability to do justice to the individual person in their particular situation.[784] The perspective of liberation theology adds that this claim relates in particular to those who are not in a position to stand up for their own rights. For the Muslim liberation theologian Farid Esack, justice is a basic prerequisite for life in general.[785] He considers passive neutrality, in the sense of a wait-and-see attitude in a situation that requires action, to be a sin. According to Esack, failure to act justly contradicts the divine goal of a just world. As a *kalifa* and in his responsibility as a *kalifa*, one should work towards this goal as much as possible.[786] In my opinion, justice therefore has the character of a social virtue. This form of justice, in particular, can promote care and compassion, which can lead to the development of solidarity or even friendships.[787] The concept of justice from an Islamic perspective reveals that the focus is on the just actor and his or her just motives and intentions, as well as the just action. The community forms the core of just action and has the common good as its main point of reference.

In terms of the justice relationship, my focus is therefore on the relationship with the other. I understand justice as a (shared) responsibility that requires me to uphold the other person's claim or, to put it another way, to protect the realisation of the other person's justice and to orient my actions accordingly.[788] To give an example:

783 Cf. NE 1129a.

784 See also Q 55:5–9; Q 4:135.

785 Cf. Farid Esack, *Qur'ān, Liberation and Pluralism. An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity against Oppression* (Oxford, 1997), 98.

786 Cf. Tatari, *Gott und Mensch im Spannungsverhältnis*, 212.

787 Cf. Onora O'Neill, *Tugend und Gerechtigkeit. Eine konstruktive Darstellung des praktischen Denkens*, trans. Joachim Schulte (Berlin, 1996), 258ff.

788 This idea is based on religious socialisation, in which the right of the neighbour, i.e., the other person, has an essential meaning and role. An example of this is the prophetic recommendation in which the Prophet Muhammad points out that the neighbour has a right to the food, even if he only catches the

Protecting the lives of fellow motorists should be the priority of the driver. The supposed freedom not to wear a seatbelt, which is based on a driver's conviction that he is an attentive and experienced driver, would be assigned to the issue of justice, i.e., justice is related to others and thus always has a "social reference."[789] In order to replace an egocentric view that grants others the same rights that one claims for oneself, many different aspects are required. Including everyone in the concept of justice requires a sense of community, on the one hand, and the ability to argue on the other, but above all, it requires time to overcome egocentric claims to ownership. Concepts of justice can only manifest themselves in action when children also develop an idea of justice within themselves.

2.2 Sincerity

In his fourth book of the NE, Aristotle lists individual social virtues, including truthfulness or sincerity.[790] Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā and other *udabā* clearly emphasised sincerity as an essential link between language (*lisān*) and its cultivation. It was correlated with the sincerity of the heart (*ṣidq al-qalb*), which can emerge when there is a coherence of thought, feeling, and action. The heart, which mystics also consider the place of the soul, can only reflect the truth. The sincerity of the heart is to do what is good, because a sincere heart always excludes self-interest and selfishness.

Truthfulness refers to sincerity in word and deed, whereby sincerity in turn has the truth as its point of reference. It represents the middle ground between deceitful boasting or bragging and feigned modesty or irony.[791] A person's truthfulness is their disposition to be sincere and honest. The boaster, on the other hand, exalts his

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smell of this food because the windows are open. This hadith is probably the origin of the Turkish proverb: *One eats, the other watches; for this reason, the world comes to an end.* It might not occur to a non-Muslim European to share his pretzel with others in a group because he prioritises other aspects in his deliberation and has a different idea of justice and (legal) entitlement.

789 For the term "social reference," see Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, *Geschichte der Rechts- und Staatsphilosophie* (Stuttgart, 2006), 254.

790 Both translations can be found, so I use them synonymously.

791 Cf. NE 1127a 12–15; NE 1108a 20–24.

self and makes himself bigger than he is. Self-enhancement is also a disguised form of arrogance. Irony is a state of mind that can be used in opposition to something true or real. In the Socratic sense, it may be a good tool, but without sensitivity in delicate situations, irony can have a destructive effect. If irony is to be understood more in the sense of feigned modesty, we are dealing with a person who likes to hide their light under a bushel. On the contrary, sincere, honest people are usually stable, self-confident, and thus, not dependent on attention. Confident people are honest with themselves and their environment and can deal well with rejection or criticism. Being honest with oneself means being true to oneself, being able not to orient one's own behaviour primarily towards pleasing others. In order to please others, a person will act and behave as others expect them to, and this leads to a loss of a sincere attitude towards themselves, which can also be recognised in their posture.[792]

Sincerity can be paired with many other primary virtues, such as justice, and secondary virtues such as reliability, authenticity, compassion, gentleness, and integrity. The antonym of sincerity is hypocrisy. Someone is hypocritical when they feign emotions or say something that simulates emotions. Someone is a hypocrite if

792 A story by the famous humourist Nasreddin Hodja is an example of sincerity and authenticity. The story is entitled *"Eat, my fur, eat!"* One day, "Hodja" is "invited to a banquet. He is wearing his everyday clothes and is not greeted or noticed by anyone. This affects him. He hurries home, throws on his magnificent fur coat, and returns to the party. He is received with honour at the entrance and led to a platform where he is given the best seat. When the soup is served, Hodja dips the lapel of his coat into the bowl and says: 'Please, help yourself. Eat, my fur, eat, my fur!' He explains to the astonished guests watching him: 'The honour goes to the fur, then it should have the food too!'" In Hodja's case, he needs to dress appropriately to gain the honour, respect, and attention of his hosts. What is more interesting is what Hodja wants to convey a lesson to his fellow human beings and consequently to the reader, with his behaviour, namely to make them aware of their falseness and insincerity. Hodja as a person deserves no respect; the person with his personality becomes superfluous. Instead, the status expressed through clothing becomes the object of esteem and respect. Nasreddin Hodja respects himself as a unique individual, which the hosts clearly do not. In order to maintain his self-respect and mirror the ethically wrong behaviour of his hosts, he dips the lapel of his coat in the soup and, with this act, wants to make his fellow human beings aware of their carelessness in all its consequences. If the fur coat is respected, it is also entitled to consume the soup.

they present an image of themselves that does not correspond to their true self. If there is no consistency and congruence between one's own code of values and the outward expression in words and actions, that thing becomes false and untrue. Moreover, hypocrisy creates a positive appearance that deceives others about one's personality. An attempt to deceive with regard to appearance and reality, which many people are tempted to do on social media, undermines the establishment of a basis of trust. Sincerity is a good example of the fact that, without the *dianoetic* virtue of prudence, people can fundamentally fail to be virtuous. It requires mental agility, in which one is prepared to leave behind the tried and tested if necessary. It requires fantasy and imagination in order to discover alternative paths beyond the well-trodden. Prudence is in the role of an agent who coordinates the inner goal-setting of other virtues, since it refers to the ability of phronesis to apply moral rules according to the situation and therefore plays an essential role in the interplay with character virtues.[793]

> Such choices require judgement, and the exercise of virtue therefore requires the ability to judge and do the right thing in the right place at the right time in the right way.[794]

The truly virtuous person acts on the basis of a true and rational judgement as a consequence of conscious perception and a deliberative thought process with the help of prudence, as it represents the gateway to new possibilities. Sincerity as a disposition also includes being able to discern in a situation whether it might not be wiser to keep one's mouth shut than to be honest if it would cause harm. I am thinking here of the classic example of the white lie.[795] In the face of reality, wisdom helps us to look for a realistic and ethically acceptable path. At the same time, being honest does not necessarily mean throwing the naked truth in the face of someone who has not asked for it or who may not be able to bear it in this form. In the first place, that would be a rude but not sincere behaviour.

In addition to hypocrisy, other opposites would be falsehood, dishonesty, corruptibility, and deception. All these vices manifest reprehensible qualities that make moral behaviour impossible. Agreeing

793 Schmidt, "Glaube und Charakter." Cf. Hähnel, *Das Ethos der Ethik*, 71.
794 MacIntyre, *Der Verlust der Tugend*, 202.
795 See Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*.

with Bettina Stangneth, the attempt to overcome evil would basically require overcoming moral depravity.

> For if radical evil is insincerity itself, then sincerity is not just one virtue among others, but the overcoming of the fundamental corruption of morality, i.e., the condition of the possibility of utilising moral consciousness at all, and that means: sincerity is the subjective precondition of the possibility of morality at all.[796]

Sincerity, therefore, appears to be a constitutive minimum requirement for the possibility of moral development.

Furthermore, sincerity also correlates with respect, a quality that could almost be described as a mega-virtue. I relate the primary virtue of sincerity, as a disposition of order, to respect and would like to subsume respect under secondary virtues, as it does not necessarily have to be oriented towards an ethically good goal by itself; I will discuss this further below.

Excursus: Respect as an Important Secondary Virtue

Showing respect is a form of recognition and goes hand in hand with sincerity. If someone shows respect to their superior just because they are afraid of losing their job, this is not sincere. If a person is friendly to other people, this does not mean that they respect others or that they are humble. It can also mean that they follow social norms, i.e., what is called etiquette in general dealings with people, and that their inner attitude is actually contrary to this, i.e., that their thoughts, feelings, and actions show cognitive dissonance. This would not be respect in the sense of a virtue but merely tolerance, which simply endures, bears, or even just accepts otherness.

> Morality also differs from etiquette, which concerns form and style rather than the essence of social existence. Etiquette determines what is polite behaviour rather than what is *right* behaviour in a deeper sense.[797]

796 Stangneth, *Kultur der Aufrichtigkeit*, 209.
797 Louis P. Pojman, *Discovering What is Right and Wrong* (Belmont, 2005), 5.

Polite manners or *adab* are fundamental for social interaction, but the decisive factor is whether they are also able to shape a person's character, which I will reflect on at the end.[798]

Respect as *aretē* is the middle disposition between vices such as boorishness, contempt, and restriction of religious and cultural self-rights, humiliation, degradation, arrogance, and rejection, on the one hand, and indifference to otherness, servility, paralysis of action, and falsehood, on the other hand.[799] This kind of vice ignores the other in their outwardly displayed individuality and self-expression. An exaggerated way of showing respect is that which turns into servility, skilful flattery, and intimate submissiveness. Given the concept of servanthood, Kant's plea for the dignity of human beings comes into the picture. In this plea, which he entitles "Von der Kriecherei" (*Of Grovelling*), he describes his concept of dignity, which, for Kant, forbids any form of self-abasement.[800] In it, he describes certain forms of "stooping and grovelling," in which someone "turns themselves into a worm," as unworthy.[801] For Kant, untruthfulness towards oneself represents the greatest violation of the duty to uphold self-respect, regardless of whether, according to the classic topos of the Stoa, one is used as a slave or worshipped as an emperor.[802] For Kant, sycophancy, which also includes servility, flattery or humiliation, is a vice. Furthermore, artificial, insincere affection, as well as inauthentic behaviour and feelings, destroy the basis of trust and thwart communality. A patronising attitude demonstrates contempt and the conviction of the inferiority or unworthiness of my counterpart. This prevents any possibility of initiating friendship

798 Cf. Avishai Margalit, *Politik der Würde. Über Achtung und Verachtung* (Frankfurt, 1994), *passim*.

799 Cf. Karl-Otto Apel, "Anderssein, ein Menschenrecht?," in *Anderssein, ein Menschenrecht. Über die Vereinbarkeit universaler Normen mit kultureller und ethnischer Vielfalt*, eds/ Hilmar Hoffmann and Dieter Kramer (Weinheim, 1995), 1065.

800 Cf. Andreas Brenner, *Bioethik und Biophänomen. Den Leib zur Sprache bringen* (Würzburg, 2006), 236.

801 Cf. Kant, MS AA, 92ff.

802 Kant expresses it as follows: "For his end, which is a duty in itself, he [the rational man] should not beg by grovelling, not *servilely* (*animo servili*), as if seeking favour, nor deny his dignity, but always with the consciousness of the sublimity of his moral disposition (which is already contained in the concept of virtue); and this self-esteem is man's duty towards himself." MS AA VI, 434.

and trust and taking the other person seriously as a thinking and sovereign being.

In his book *Die Wiederentdeckung des Respekts. Wie interkulturelle Begegnungen gelingen* (*Rediscovering Respect: How Intercultural Encounters Succeed*), Josef Schönberger introduces respect as an essential category in cultural exchange and distinguishes between behavioural and attitudinal components.[803] For Schönberger, it is important to respect people as fellow human beings in their humanity—with the exception of their behaviour.[804] Respect should not be understood as something that has to be negotiated between people in everyday life. I therefore see showing respect to others neither as a duty nor as guilt. It should stem from a deep conviction, an inner realisation.

In the eighteenth century, Kant first addressed the view that respect is the anthropological basis of morality. A comprehensive definition of respectability and human dignity itself can be found in Kant's *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals). For Kant, the basic principle of human dignity is "that all persons have a dignity that must be respected under all circumstances and at all times."[805] According to Kant, human dignity is an essential object of respect. Dignity demands a categorical respect for others as the framework for all intersubjectivity, in the recognition of their right to exist and in the recognition of the fundamental equality of all people. It is, in principle, unlosable; it cannot be conferred from outside, and it is intrinsic to every human being without exception. According to Kant, a human being is an end in itself; thus, human dignity is always violated when a person instrumentalises another person as a means and uses them for their own ends.[806] Any treatment of human beings that reifies

803 See Josef Schönberger, *Die Wiederentdeckung des Respekts. Wie interkulturelle Begegnungen gelingen* (Munich,) 2010.

804 Cf. Schönberger, *Die Wiederentdeckung des Respekts*, 14.

805 Lisa Linder, "Respekt," in *Psychologie der Werte. Von Achtsamkeit bis Zivilcourage – Basiswissen aus Psychologie und Philosophie*, ed. Dieter Frey (Berlin/Heidelberg, 2016), 169.

806 "The practical imperative will therefore be the following: Act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, at all times simultaneously as an end, never merely as a means." Kant, GMS, AA IV:429; ET, 38.

and fundamentally undermines their subjectivity, including their integrity, violates their dignity.

> The understanding of human dignity is rooted in a moral feeling. This feeling is moral because it provides standards of judgement for actions and omissions, but it is a feeling because it is not a calculative standard but a comprehensive, spontaneously acting, world-exploring attitude.[807]

Respect in the sense of a character disposition also entails recognising the identity of others. Recognition is an essential component of respect. In contrast to tolerance, positive recognition of the other is shown not by simply accepting or mocking the identity, the particularity, the *otherness* of the other person as it is presented, but by recognising it as otherness.[808] The opposite is hurtful and the beginning of all inhumanity.[809] "Disregard and degradation are serious offences because people can suffer damage to their self-esteem by suffering disregard."[810] American President Donald Trump displayed this kind of behaviour when, during an election campaign event, he mocked journalist Serge Kovaleski, who lives with arthrogryposis, a congenital joint stiffness, and made fun of his illness on camera in an attempt to humiliate him. Based on Kant's self-purpose formula, Kovaleski's human dignity was immensely violated by Trump's attempt to discredit and ridicule him in this way.[811] This example combines various attitudes. I would just like to suggest that there are different approaches to the concept of dignity, which cannot be explored in depth here.[812] In some situations, the prohibition

807 Brumlik, "Ethische Gefühle," 44.

808 When it comes to social cohesion and living together in an immigration society, tolerance is the wrong term and the wrong expectation. Tolerance perpetuates inequality and hierarchy within a society. Today, the structural principles of tolerance can neither be secured intergenerationally nor helped to achieve authentic recognition.

809 Cf. Margalit, *Politik der Würde*, 7.

810 Jochen Schmidt, *Wahrgenommene Individualität. Eine Theologie der Lebensführung* (Göttingen, 2014), 40ff.

811 The second part of the categorical imperative reads as follows: "Act in such a way that you use humanity, both in your own person and in the person of everyone else, at all times simultaneously as an end, never merely as a means"; Kant, GMS, AA IV:429.

812 For a comprehensive treatise on the topic of dignity, see Eva Weber-Guskar, *Würde als Haltung. Eine philosophische Untersuchung zum Begriff der Menschenwürde* (Berlin, 2017).

of instrumentalisation may represent a helpful normative orientation for the application of human dignity as a norm. However, understanding dignity not only as an intrinsic quality but also as a contingent attitude, in the sense of a comprehensive shaping of dispositions and thus as a supreme good, seems to me to be more appropriate.[813] Trump's behaviour or appearance was undignified, i.e., he has lost his dignity in the sense of an attitude. As I have previously summarised, an attitude is the authentic, performative expression of inner motivations. Dignity as an attitude reflects a correspondence between "inside and outside and a self-relationship that makes a person appear dignified."[814]

> If I discriminate against the poor or rich, black, or indigenous child, if I discriminate against the woman, the farmer, or the labourer, I cannot listen to them, and if I do not listen to them, I cannot talk to them on an equal level but only in a patronising manner. Above all, I prevent myself from understanding them. If I feel superior to those who differ from me, whoever they may be, I refuse to listen to them.[815]

The Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire states that sincere respect requires humility. This is because modesty expresses the inner (mental) attitude "that no one is superior to another," which means a de-hierarchisation.[816] Modesty expresses a person's relationship to themselves as well as to other people. It is the opposite of self-love, pride, arrogance, and arrogance. A racist person, for example, has the inner attitude of arrogance, as they classify people by placing negative characteristics attributed to others above the self-attributed characteristics of others.[817] A racist positions himself higher than others; he acts arrogantly. A similar form of discrimination, in which the same negative personal characteristics come into play, can also take place with regard to migrants. The *othering* begins with defamatory stereotyping and the associated attributions about the other.

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813 Cf. Eva Weber-Guskar, "Menschenwürde: Kontingente Haltung statt absoluter Wert," in *Menschenwürde: eine philosophische Debatte über Dimensionen ihrer Kontingenz*, eds. Mario Brandhorst and Eva Weber-Guskar (Berlin, 2017), 214.

814 Cf. Weber-Guskar, "Menschenwürde," 216.

815 Paulo Freire, *Pädagogik der Autonomie. Notwendiges Wissen für die Bildungspraxis* (Münster, 2008), 110.

816 Freire, *Pädagogik der Autonomie*, 111.

817 Cf. Birgit Rommelspacher, *Anerkennung und Ausgrenzung: Deutschland als multikulturelle Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt, 2002), 132ff.

The friendship that I favour for a culture of togetherness is based on equality and does not recognise superiority.[818]

I would like to define respect, which is here presented as a secondary virtue, as a basic ethical attitude that does not undermine plurality, takes differences seriously and is able to value every person as a whole from an ethical point of view. It is about respect as a condition for dignified coexistence and about the learning process of treating people as human beings. This opens up and enables openness in the first place, for the perception of the personality of the other person. It is not possible to say what this appreciation looks like in concrete terms from a virtue ethics perspective, but this is not necessary. After all, every situation requires a corresponding type of attention in order to assess it appropriately and act correctly. Basic gestures of respect can be a good exercise in acquiring a fundamentally respectful disposition. If, as previously described, habits arise from repetition, the repeated endeavour to be polite—which can take different forms—should lead to the virtues of human kindness and respect. This includes, for example, friendly glances and looks, when appropriate, as a sign of careful attention to the other person. Children and young people can get used to having respect for others if, among other things, they take care of others.

> It is wrong, all too wrong, to humiliate others who are on the margins of society. But to be treated as human beings, they do not have to be considered precious, pure, or soulful. Respect for people is about nothing else: it does not depend on people being something particularly noble.[819]

Contempt, on the other hand, reflects a lack of self-esteem. "Recognising the integrity of others is linked to the experience of one's own integrity and recognition, which is articulated in self-awareness, self-respect and self-esteem."[820] If someone has no self-respect and has not experienced this themselves, they cannot show this attitude to anyone else. This makes it almost impossible to develop the ability to empathise.

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818 Cf. NE 1158b.

819 Avishai Margalit, "Menschenwürde zwischen Kitsch und Vergötterung," in *Gerechtigkeit*, eds. Neumaier, Sedmak, and Zichy, 19.

820 Brumlik, "Ethische Gefühle," 44.

> Anyone who looks at their own attempts and aberrations with all honesty and attention, who learns to see and respect themselves in all their ambivalence, also develops their ability to recognise and respect other people in their individual characteristics.[821]

Sincerity can therefore create social bonds and friendship, and allow social relationships to grow and expand. Sincerity thus acquires a constitutive value in interpersonal relationships.

2.3 Compassion

The possibility of compassion (*ta'āruf*), which is also conditioned by successful mindfulness, is an important component of a successful lifestyle from a religious perspective. It is striking that emotions are hardly ever explicitly mentioned among Muslim thinkers as something that should be cultivated; instead, they always resonate through the thematisation of character traits and are an implicit component of all virtues. Compassion is a natural part of the theological virtue of mercy or the virtue of neighbourliness and friendship, as well as justice and moderation. A synonymous term that best expresses the scope and referentiality of compassion is humanity. Humanity can be measured by compassion. These considerations lead to the reference criterion that every virtue should be measured by "humanity as a guiding principle." Even in the Qur'ān there is a strong emphasis on the fraternal bond between all Muslims, which should be strengthened, but all people as humanity are addressed to bring about peace and justice in the world.[822] People are related to each other, and the common good is their point of reference. Dealing with the concerns of one's fellow human beings and empathising with them (*ta'āruf*) can enable the development of trust, respect and, as a result, compassion.[823]

The same can be said for the religious practices of charitable behaviour called for in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. In charity, compassion expresses a willingness to help. In Islamic countries, being charita-

821 Schmidt, *Wahrgenommene Individualität*, 36.
822 Q 49:9–13.
823 Cf. El-Fadl, "When Happiness Fails," 117.

ble is a central structural element of the sociality of a society.[824] At the same time, it is paired with emotions such as compassion, love, kindness, and humility—emotions that have their natural place, particularly in the traditions of the prophetic and post-prophetic cultures and in the narratives of these cultures. Through these, children and young adolescents can learn about experiences and positions on what is ethically good and what makes them happy. This can give them an idea of what love, friendship, and compassion mean and how they manifest themselves.

In my opinion, developing compassion is a central emotion for successful interpersonal relationships. In the words of Martha Nussbaum, compassion is the basic prerequisite for living together with others and a decisive basis for moral behaviour.[825] Dealing with each other in a compassionate, friendly, and loving way requires the conviction that another person has the same right to exist as we do, and it presupposes cooperating with others and showing consideration for others.[826] The opposite would be a person's selfish focus on their own personal interests and feelings. According to Nussbaum, being able to live with others requires an assessment of the situation of others in order to get to know their needs in relation to a good life, especially because the well-being of others is an important part of living together.[827] Anita Allen formulates it similarly in her book on the importance of ethics by speaking of "a lifelong quest to respond to others with a willingness to forego brazen self-interest."[828] In order to achieve this, a special form of sympathy is required, namely compassion.

Accepting others in their otherness and being able to see the world through the eyes of others requires, among other things, com-

824 Cf. Mahmud el-Wereny, "Wohltätigkeit im Islam. Theologisch-rechtliche Grundlagen und interreligiöse Perspektiven," in *Islam-Erkundungen Einheit und Vielfalt muslimischen Selbstverständnisses zwischen Tradition und Moderne*, eds. Hans-Georg Babke and Heiko Lamprecht (Berlin, 2017), 99.

825 Cf. Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2008), 4 ff.

826 For more information, see Giacomo Rizzolatti, *Empathie und Spiegelneurone. Die biologische Basis des Mitgefühls* (Frankfurt, 2008).

827 For more details, see Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*.

828 Anita L. Allen, *The New Ethics: A Guided Tour of the Twenty-First Century Moral Landscape* (New York, 2004), 7.

passion. Respect alone as a basic personal attitude is not always sufficient for this, as respect can be expressed honestly but also in a distanced manner. If respect is accompanied and linked with positive images of justice and emotions of kindness or gratitude, a different atmosphere can arise in our dealings with one another.[829] In my opinion, cultivating a mindful approach within us requires the constructive emotional disposition of compassion. In order to be cultivated as a disposition, the experience of the community of sharing burdens is helpful. However, empathising with the needs, feelings and interests of others does not yet form a moral personality. Since compassion is a secondary virtue, it needs to be combined with at least one other virtue, such as prudence. It helps to decide to what extent someone should be compassionate and in what form this compassion may be expressed. This also applies because it is fundamentally possible to feel compassion in the wrong way, towards the wrong people or in a way that offends the recipient.

Compassion must be distinguished from empathy, both emotional empathy and cognitive empathy. While the concept of cognitive empathy refers to understanding the emotions, thoughts, and feelings of the other person through conscious, cognitive processes, but no sharing of feelings, the concept of emotional empathy claims to be able to *empathise* with the other person, to be able to share the feelings of the other person in order to be able to give an emotional response to the other person.

This cannot always work.[830] I also share Paul Bloom's criticism that empathy narrows our moral view to certain people in the present and within our range of vision. Our moral decisions and actions are largely shaped by empathy. Bloom argues that empathy is essentially and inevitably partial or biased.[831]

Compassion emphasises the (empathetic) sharing of pain, suffering, sadness or joy, and this is only possible if we are actually able

829 With regard to gratitude, it should be noted that it is one of the demonstrably healthiest attitudes in life, as the experience of reciprocity goes hand in hand with the feeling of happiness from an Islamic theological perspective as well. Cf. Demmerling and Landweer, *Philosophie der Gefühle*, 124ff.

830 I am thinking of pregnant women. A woman who has never been pregnant cannot feel the feelings of being pregnant like an expectant mother. At best, someone can empathise with joy, pain, or grief.

831 Cf. Paul Bloom, *Against Empathy* (London, 2017), 9.

to *empathise*, i.e., the empathic reaction of sharing the feelings of our counterpart can be transformed into compassion or expressed in empathy-related exhaustion.[832] Compassion appears to be, among other things, the disposition to feel sympathetic concern for a (for example) sad person and at the same time to have the intention to alleviate suffering in some way, while empathic people are only able to see things through the eyes of their counterpart and put themselves in the position of other people.[833] This process can take place neutrally, even if one intuitively associates empathy with something positive.

But can we really see through the eyes of another person? The ability to feel empathy is strongly linked to our personality and our ability to deal with emotions and situations. The ability to deal with our own emotions enables us to experience positive social interactions, and it is crucial for building stable relationships with other people. There is also the ability to perceive, which develops over the course of a person's life through their own experiences. Against this background, it can be easier for some people to empathise with the other person's world of ideas, thoughts and feelings and to (fully) share their perspective, while it is more difficult for others because they lack personal experience.[834] Once a shared world of thoughts and feelings has been established (perhaps despite different perceptions of reality), the ego merges with the you, i.e., the ego becomes alienated from itself and becomes the you through empathy. The I changes because it is placed in the world of thought and feeling of the other and shares their mood. Nevertheless, a gradualness of this merging of perspectives must be recognised, in which the merging of I and You in the narrow sense can usually take place in intimate friendships or romantic relationships. Even if you can empathise and sympathise only with people you like, this ability is part of a

832 See Tania Singer and Matthias Bolz, "Mitgefühl," in *Alltag und Forschung*, Max Planck Society, 2013.

833 According to neuroscience studies, this attitude is also said to initiate the self-healing processes. For more information, see Kristin Neff, *Self-Compassion* (New York, 2011).

834 Cf. Thomas Fischl, *Mitgefühl – Mitleid – Barmherzigkeit: Ansätze von Empathie im 12. Jh.* (Mainz, 2017), 14.

process.[835] If you have developed the habit of empathy as a child through socialisation, it is fundamentally possible to empathise and understand the emotional lives of others.

Compassion also appears to be the disposition to act in a prosocial, i.e., people-centred, and genuinely interested way. It shows a motivation to alleviate the pain and suffering of others or to share their joy. Empathisers are solution-oriented; they create and anticipate solutions and do not make them dependent on sympathy for the person in question. To do this, empathisers must be fully present. However, if a person reacts with empathy-related exhaustion, i.e., an ego-centred attitude, this means that they are so overwhelmed by their own sadness that they avoid the situation as much as possible and leave the other person in pain alone.

Mindfulness also plays an important role in the context of compassion. Mindfulness is the "practised feeling of respect;" it requires "the inner attitude of perceived respect" for the other person and can be "understood as an element of interpersonal behaviour."[836] Mindfulness and respect are, therefore, also prosocial emotions. Compassion is a mindful awareness of the other person. If a person feels *respected* and *taken care of*, they feel noticed and accepted as a human being, because those who take care of their surroundings themselves also want to be taken care of in their being. The moment of attention, the moment of relating to the other person—even if this initially begins with a fleeting eye contact—is like an uncelebrated ceremony of being discovered, recognised, and affirmed; the active moment, however, which is free of discovery and recognition, should also be considered. At the same time, it is the affirmation of freedom and dignity, because if being this way is not respected, the ego cannot be truly free.[837]

In this context, one discourse from learning and educational research is worth mentioning as an example: mindfulness education

835 Cf. Hans Walter Gruhle, *Verstehen und Einfühlen: Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin/Göttingen/Heidelberg, 1953), 283.

836 Jochen Schmidt, "Achtsamkeit. Versuch zur Ethischen Theologie," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 54.1 (2012): 24ff.

837 Cf. Robert Spaemann, "Über den Begriff der Menschenwürde," in *Menschenrechte und Menschenwürde. Historische Voraussetzungen, säkulare Gestalt, christliches Verständnis*, eds. Ernst Wolfgang Böckenförde and Robert Spaemann (Stuttgart, 1987), 299.

in schools.[838] In relation to schools, mindfulness is associated with the development of socioemotional skills, stress reduction, promoting the health and resilience of teachers and pupils, and increasing concentration and well-being.[839] Vera Kaltwasser's concept is about training the ability to self-regulate and control impulses, which is based on self-awareness developed over time. Exercise practices, such as formal exercise practice and mindfulness exercises, which can be easily incorporated into lessons, are intended to develop the ability to be present and to recognise one's own ingrained patterns.[840] This approach is aimed in particular at self-cultivation.

Johann Baptist Metz coined the term "mysticism of God's open eyes," which I find relevant not only from a liberation theology perspective but also with regard to the development of social-emotional competence.[841] Empathy requires mindfulness, i.e., an attentive look at oneself and others. However, if the perception of the other person, i.e., respect, has become impossible, this points to the fact that someone is missing themselves, from which they must first be redeemed so that "admitted failures, disregard and shame no longer stand in the way of the view, so that the view can become free again."[842]

Miskawayh emphasised the cultivating dimension of religious practice, which the mystics bring into a high form. Against this backdrop, for example, passing on one's duty (*zakāt*) can be seen as a possible cultivation exercise for both the dispositions of justice and generosity as well as the emotional disposition of compassion.[843] Compassion can therefore activate positive and good feelings for others and for oneself. Compassion can be visualised with the help of narratives. At this point, it makes sense to cite a narrative from

838 See Vera Kaltwasser, *Achtsamkeit in der Schule. Stille-Inseln im Unterricht. Entspannung und Konzentration* (Weinheim, 2008).

839 Cf. Ute Koglin and Franz Petermann, "Kindergarten- und Grundschulalter: Entwicklungsrisiken und Entwicklungsabweichungen," in *Lehrbuch der Klinischen Kinderpsychologie*, ed. Franz Petermann (Göttingen, 2013), 101–118.

840 See Vera Kaltwasser, *Persönlichkeit und Präsenz. Achtsamkeit im Lehrerberuf* (Weinheim 2018), 10ff.; cf. Irina Spiel, "Empathie- und Compassion-Training," in *Handbuch Philosophie und Ethik*, vol. I, eds. Julian Nida-Rümelin, Irina Spiegel and Markus Thiedemann (Paderborn 2017), 246.

841 Johann Baptist Metz, *Mystik der offenen Augen. Wenn Spiritualität aufbricht*, ed. Johann Reikerstorfer (Freiburg, 2013).

842 Schmidt, *Wahrgenommene Individualität*, 97.

843 For more on this, see Isik, *Die Bedeutung des Gesandten Muḥammad*, 251ff.

the Islamic tradition that is well-suited as an example for thinking about dispositions to act and emotions. As already noted, it is part of the traditional form of learning in Islam to cultivate personal and emotional attitudes through discussion (deliberation) on the basis of religious narratives:

> While travelling, a man passed a date garden where a black slave woman was working. After her work, she was given three loaves of bread. The man observed that a dog approached the slave while she was working. The slave gave the dog a loaf of bread to eat. Then she gave him the second loaf, which the dog ate with relish. Finally, she gave him the last piece. The man then approached the slave girl and asked her: "What is your daily wage?" The slave girl replied: "As you saw, three loaves of bread." "Then why did you give all three to the dog to eat?" She said, "No dog has ever passed by here. This dog must have come from far away. I could not bear to see him so hungry." The man then asked: "Fine, but what are you going to eat today?" "I'll be patient, because I've given up my right to three loaves of bread today to this creature." The man thought to himself, "Behold, and I thought I was being very generous. Truly, this slave girl is more generous than I am!" The man then bought the slave girl and the date garden. He set the slave girl free and gave her the garden.[844]

Many personal qualities and attitudes can be seen in the behaviour of the slave woman, which on the one hand illustrate what is decisively Islamic and on the other hand offer the opportunity to discuss the differences between Islam's understanding of virtue with its Aristotelian influences and Aristotle's understanding of virtue itself and to bring them into a dialogue. These personal qualities include magnanimity, generosity, mercy, patience, sincerity, and altruism. However, the central emotion controlling these qualities is compassion.

The story is based on two different ideas of generosity. The man's behaviour of buying the garden and ransoming the slave girl in order to give her the garden as a gift is quite virtuous. The man draws his generosity from his obviously large fortune, while the slave girl gives from nothing. Giving out of little is based on a deep trust in the world or God, on the one hand, but on the other hand,

844 Cf. Ghazālī, *Kimyâ-yı Saâdet* (Istanbul, 1977), 467. It is disputed who this traveller is supposed to have been, ʿAbdullah bin Jaʿfār or Imām Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn.

it demonstrates a high degree of deliberation and judgement stemming from mindfulness and compassion. Her behaviour is therefore neither pretended nor calculated. The man is overwhelmed by her behaviour and her sincere attitude and is so impressed that he sets her free. How would Aristotle have assessed the slave's behaviour and her attitude? According to his doctrine of *mesotes*, the slave might have missed the appropriate centre and displayed an extreme attitude, as she could have just given away a loaf of bread; then both the dog and she would have been satisfied. Moreover, Aristotle would probably have regarded her attitude and actions as the result of an improper weighing of the surrounding variables and as an *excess.* The slave is putting her life in danger by giving too much. According to Aristotle, this deliberation also lacks the rational virtue of prudence as a reference criterion. Prudence assumes the role of an observer who coordinates the inner purpose of other virtues, as it refers to the ability of phronesis to apply moral rules according to the situation, and plays an essential role in the interplay with the character virtues.[845] "Such choices require judgement, and the exercise of the virtues therefore requires the ability to judge and to do the right thing in the right place at the right time in the right way."[846] Arendt also shaped the Aristotelian doctrine of phronesis into a theory of judgement. According to her, the slave may have displayed poor judgement. The truly virtuous person acts on the basis of rational judgement as a consequence of conscious perception and consideration. When asked about the slave's motivation, her answer is compassion (in this case, pity) and trust in God. This compassion manifests itself, i.e., this emotional disposition manifests itself in a very specific way. Emotions can have an "atmospheric" effect.[847] The slave gives kindly, lovingly, and caringly. She is morally judged and her example leaves an impression.

This attitude can be described as a theological virtue known as *īthār*. *Ithār* is a potentised form of perspective-taking. It is the highest possible form of dissolving the difference between I and You.

845 Cf. Schmidt, "Glaube und Charakter;" Hähnel, *Das Ethos der Ethik*, 71.

846 MacIntyre, *Der Verlust der Tugend*, 202.

847 On the term "atmospheric," see: Johannes Fischer, "Emotionen und die religiöse Dimension der Moral," in *Theologie der Gefühle*, eds. Roderich Barth and Christopher Zarnow (Berlin/Boston, 2015), 195.

The 'I' connected to the 'You' experiences such a unity that the good of the other is simultaneously recognised as one's own. This means that the other is no longer *the other*, whose good is put first, but the other is him-/herself, i.e., the difference is cancelled out so that the I dissolves into the You.[848] The early Sufi al-Nurī in particular was highly praised in biographies for this attitude.[849] In addition to compassion, it requires the interplay of other virtues that I would classify more as *theological* virtues: love and trust. With regard to these two virtues, *īthār* therefore cannot be translated as altruism. While altruism tries to achieve a goal, love has found its goal.

In the *akhlāq* works, *īthār* is found exclusively as a secondary virtue. It is presented as a comprehensive realisation of dispositions such as compassion, love, generosity, and trust. Giving from nothing is an expression of this attitude of prioritising the needs of others, because its motivation is based on love for God. It is part of this learning process that children learn that the world does not revolve around themselves and that their own interests, wishes and activities should/must/can be put aside. How can the feelings of others be (better) understood? How can someone empathise with others? The school context offers many opportunities to practise compassionate behaviour and adopt the perspectives of others.

2.4 Friendship

I will analyse friendship (Greek, *philia*; Arabic, *sadāqa*) exclusively in terms of its importance for a good and successful life and exclude forms of friendship and their gender-specific possibilities. For my context, I will discuss which aspects a friendship needs for a successful life together. In the Arabic translation of the NE, the terms *maḥabba* and *sadāqa* are used interchangeably and synonymously. With this alternating use, the dimension of love (*maḥabba*), which is established in the NE, comes to the fore at certain points.[850] The intrinsic motif of friendship is love.

848 Cf. Q 59:9.

849 Cf. Schimmel, "al-Nūrī," 60; for the biographies of the works already mentioned, see al-Sulamī, *Tabaqāt al-sufiyya*, and Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilyāt al-awliyāʾ*.

850 Cf. Topkara, *Umrisse*, 164; Ullmann, *Die Nikomachische Ethik*, 97.

According to Aristotle, who addresses friendship as a primary virtue in his eighth book of the NE, friendship is the most necessary thing in life because nobody would want to live without friends, even if they had all the goods.[851] The plausibility of this assertion does not seem to require any philosophical argumentation, as it probably makes everyone happy to have a friend and not to be alone in the world.[852] Friendship is not only a virtue but also a special good and an end in itself.[853] According to Aristotle, people do not behave amicably towards each other because they expect to gain an advantage or benefit from it—provided their frame of reference is respect and love.[854] The concept of friendship can be interpreted as an axiom of a happy life. It becomes a necessary condition of itself. Friendship as a virtue is the disposition to be able to make and maintain friendships.

Along with Aristotle, Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā, Miskawayh, and Ghazālī also emphasise the social function of friendship, insofar as friendship means sociability and affability.[855] Especially in the work of Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā, the vehemence of friendship and neighbourliness became very clear not only through the prophetic statements but also through the many narratives of subsequent generations. In them, the friend is placed directly at the centre of the interaction and is prioritised. Even if friendship, when explicitly mentioned, differs from neighbourliness in that it is friendship among equals in the narrower sense, neighbourliness can refer to many personal affiliations, relationships, and institutional forms.[856]

The virtues of friendship and love appear together as the basis of all virtues and boil down to love of humanity. Without this

851 Cf. NE 1154b.

852 For reasons of better readability, the masculine form is used in the rest of the text.

853 "For it [friendship] is a certain virtue (*aretē*) or associated with virtue; moreover, it is extremely necessary for life." NE 1154b.

854 Cf. NE 1155a 3ff.

855 Cf. Lenn E. Goodman, "Friendship in Aristotle, Miskawayh and al-Ghazālī," in *Friendship East and West: Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Oliver Leaman (Richmond, 1996), 176, 181.

856 Cf. Nathalie von Siemens, *Aristoteles über Freundschaft. Untersuchungen zur Nikomachischen Ethik VIII und IX* (Freiburg, 2007), 38ff.; Otfried Höffe, "Art. philia/Freundschaft, Liebe," in *Aristoteles-Lexikon*, 446.

fundamental love of humanity, social coexistence is impossible. In this sense, the cultivation of friendly attitudes makes a decisive contribution to cohesion in a society. For the philosophers, sociability is an indication of good character.[857] Reciprocal cooperation between people in the social sphere is a good field in which friendship can develop and flourish.[858]

Friendship as a way of connecting people humanely and at the same time in freedom is probably the most beautiful possible expression of ethical maturity. Freedom is paired with responsibility. The most enduring friendship exists between virtuous people or where friends are similar in their virtuousness. Friendship not only with others but also with oneself becomes a benevolent attitude towards one's fellow human beings and oneself. In order to be truly benevolent, a clear decision is required. The virtuous person shows benevolence towards his friend in that he identifies with his friend and is happy when the friend is happy and sad when the friend is sad.[859] A true friend is perceived as a »second self« that you respect and protect like yourself.[860] "The fact that the other person is important to me includes the dimension of praise and rebuke."[861] Friendship, therefore, implies openness to friendly criticism. Friendship as a relationship of recognition means honouring and respecting the other person in their particularity, in their special otherness.

The premises for reciprocal recognition in order for friendship to develop at all lie in the assumption that the other person can be understood in principle and in the willingness to realise this by getting to know and listening to them. An important aspect that Freire would like to emphasise is listening, because friendship is based on listening. The rejection of others is often based on problems of understanding, which stem from not really listening to each other, remaining in one's own attitude, and holding on to the conviction that one cannot understand the other anyway. In the encounter,

857 Cf. Ulrich Nortmann, "Art. energeia / Tätigkeit, Wirklichkeit," in *Aristoteles-Lexikon*, 180–182.

858 Cf. Otfried Höffe, "eleutheria / Freiheit," in *Aristoteles-Lexikon*, 170.

859 Elizabeth M. Bucar, "Islamic Virtue Ethics," in Nancy E. Snow, *Oxford Handbook of Virtue* (Oxford, 2018), 221.

860 Cf. NE 1166a, 32.

861 Hähnel, *Das Ethos der Ethik*, 264.

people are called upon to respond to the other person and listen to them.

When it comes to the question of what kind of friendship is desirable, intention plays a decisive role. Friendship for the sake of the friend is crucial.[862] In this type of friendship, friends want what is good for each other equally. Such friendships are rare because it takes a long time of familiarisation until you have proven to be reliable, pleasant, and lovable to each other. This is because friendship is a complex social form of relationship that requires many prerequisites. As far as the public sphere is concerned, it should not be overlooked that friendship in the sense described here remains an event that, for all its structural integration, cannot be planned or made available; friendships either develop or they do not. It is impossible that all members of a society are friends with each other. Individual friendships that transcend milieus, social differences and communities must ultimately act as exemplary bridgeheads and facilitate encounters. In my opinion, however, friendship cannot serve as a model for negotiating all social conflicts, but it can at least motivate an ideal.

In conclusion, it should be noted that it is not only demographic change, developments in the labour market and increasingly loose family relationships but also new formats of friendships such as those in social media that make it necessary to deal with this form of relationship.[863]

3. Reflections on the Educational Discourse within the Horizon of Virtue Ethics

In this concluding section, I aim to establish what the reflective dimension of virtue can bring to the current educational discourse and how it can contribute to an expansion of the understanding of education. Nothing conclusive can be said here, but a basic direction can be indicated.

862 For Aristotle, the friendship of mutual goodwill is the most perfect of friendships.

863 For a sociological view of the phenomenon of friendship, see Janosch Schobin et al., *Freundschaft heute. Eine Einführung in die Freundschaftssoziologie* (Bielefeld, 2016).

In terms of virtue theory, the pursuit of a successful life is linked to a person's ability to become a morally better person, i.e., to develop and practise virtues. If education refers to the human being holistically, the ethical dimension of education, which, in my opinion, is neglected, should be given the same importance as its cognitive dimension.[864] I see the basic element of this dimension in the acquisition of desirable personal qualities and attitudes that equip people to react in the best possible way. I have discussed the virtues that form the coordinating framework for the ethical dimension of education and guide people in their critical self-awareness as justice, honesty, friendship, and compassion—although other secondary virtues could certainly be mentioned under the premise of developing a moral culture of humanity.

In an educational context, the challenge for schools is to fulfil the mission of personality development by offering opportunities and assistance to develop desirable personal characteristics. The socialisation environment of the school is a good breeding ground for the development of ethically desirable character traits and therefore also the pattern of experience, which, according to Joas, is an important aspect, particularly with regard to values education.

Following Aristotle, virtues of character can best arise from familiarisation with a corresponding practice and lead to the development of subjects of integrity.[865] One impulse from the mystical tradition for the virtue theory discussion was the focus on the relationship between body and soul and, in this interdependence, specifically on body perception. It turned out that habitualisations in and on the body have an effect on the self. If they are not restricted to their practical significance, outer, especially aesthetic exercises have a formative power for the inner world due to the way they are experienced. Aesthetic exercises and the sensory experience of the aesthetic itself can therefore help to cultivate a morally competent perception of one's own self.

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864 Cf. Julian Nida-Rümelin, "Die physische Dimension der Bildung," in *Bildung im Sport. Beiträge zu einer zeitgemäßen Bildungsdebatte*, eds. Michael Krüger and Nils Neuber (Wiesbaden, 2011), 23.

865 Cf. Nida-Rümelin, *Philosophie einer humanen Bildung*, 171ff.; NE 1103a, 21–22, 23–25.

> Aesthetic education is thus based on the practice of perception and the possibilities contained therein, a practice that is just as inherent in the character of pleasure as it is in the criticism of perception.[866]

Two important insights for the understanding of education are derived from this: firstly, the indispensability of aesthetic-cultural educational processes for school education within the framework of an educational theory. The fundamental contribution from the religious field was religious practice, body practices and areas of music and art, which emphasise both the sensory and ritual and thus the physical dimension of religion and religious education and understand sensory perception as an enabling potential.[867] In principle, it can be stated that objects of aesthetic-cultural education can initiate processes of (self-)education. In view of the fact that in the virtue ethics discourse, the acquisition of virtues was mainly stimulated by aesthetic means, the composite term *virtue aesthetics* can probably do justice to this phenomenon. This concept of virtue aesthetics means a combination of two ideas: the *aesthetic ethics of virtue* and the *aesthetics of virtue*. The latter states that aesthetics forms the frame of reference in the expression of a virtue. This can be exemplified as follows using the example of friendship. If a friend wants to draw her friend's attention to something that undeniably harms her, she has many communicative options at her disposal. An aesthetic of virtue would be recognisable in a form that possesses grace, i.e., is beautiful in its execution and neither offends nor shames the other person. An aesthetic ethics of virtue implies all those media, such as literature, in which virtues are conveyed through narratives or prose, as was made clear by the example of Abī 'l-Dunyā and many other *adab* works. In this, aesthetics can express a force in which the good is practised

866 Hartmut von Hentig, "Allgemeine Lernziele der Gesamtschule," in *Deutscher Bildungsrat Gutachten und Studien der Bildungskommission*, vol. 12 (Stuttgart, 1969), 29. For more details, see Stefan Altmeyer, *Von der Wahrnehmung zum Ausdruck. Zur ästhetischen Dimension von Glauben und Lernen* (Stuttgart, 2006).

867 Making music and learning to sing can not only promote the spiritual, cognitive, social, emotional, and motor development of children and young people but also edify and cultivate them, and support the further development of their sensory abilities. Cf. Caroline Hopf, "'Das Beste in der Musik steht nicht in den Noten' – Musikalische Bildung als Herausforderung im Medienzeitalter," in *Der Alltag der Kultivierung. Studien zu Schule, Kunst und Bildung*, eds. Leopold Klepacki, Andreas Schröer, and Jörg Zirfas (Münster, 2009), 208.

and through which the good becomes externally recognisable in its aesthetic form. In other words, aesthetic virtue ethics emphasises the significance of external, aesthetic behaviour for the inner life and vice versa. The inner, beautiful, and good attitude affects the outward behaviour of the virtuous.

Accordingly, a virtuous aesthetic educational practice emphasises the perceptual and creative dimensions of educational processes. Literature, music, and the visual arts in particular can open up aesthetic spaces of experience in which children and young people can interact and generate worlds of meaning, interpretation, and feeling. In this sense, not only aesthetic-cultural but also religious education offers important potential for personality development. Engaging with the arts in the broadest sense can cultivate people. Learning to play an instrument, for example, not only trains cognitive and physical skills but also sensory and personal skills, as movement and coordination, feeling and touch, and hearing and seeing are very closely linked when making music. Mastering an instrument gradually leads to a delicate physical control, which can only be achieved through the reflective interplay of the senses. Consistently practising an instrument also trains the ability to be patient and teaches someone to persevere with something. This behaviour teaches you not to lose motivation and give up too quickly. In this learning process, people also get to know themselves better; inner resistances emerge or motives of reluctance become apparent. Constant practice can help to dissolve reluctance and inner resistance. This requires long practice and perseverance, which, over time, imparts a sense of equilibrium and balance. As a result, the musician acquires a certain degree of harmony, unison, and peace of mind. Many other qualities could be listed, such as attentiveness, level-headedness, or tact, which can be trained by learning to play.

By engaging with the world through aesthetics, children and young people learn new perspectives on the world and get to know themselves and their capabilities better. In this way, they can further develop and strengthen their perceptual and behavioural skills.

The second impulse follows on from the first and refers to a greater involvement of the body and movement in educational processes or activity-oriented teaching settings in which the mind and

body work together with the involvement of the senses.[868] Above all, emotional perceptions and changes can be trained through exercises so that unpleasant life circumstances and situations can be accepted more easily.[869] For example, the non-judgemental perception and description of events is a very important first skill of this kind. In the face of audiovisual overload, relaxation or mindfulness exercises can also enable children and young people to become aware of themselves and others, their feelings, and the variety of options for being and acting.[870]

After all, it should have become clear that value concepts or virtues such as justice, honesty or respect do not have anything authoritarian about them as long as they are not understood as instructions for action.[871] In connection with the discourse on competence, it has become recognisable that competence is a "shrunken form" of virtue and does not actually capture the most important dimension of the concept of virtue, namely the moral constitution of the person.[872] Morally desirable attitudes, convictions, and characteristics that result in right behaviour can be derived from the insight into what constitutes a good character.[873] This aspect should have

868 For a holistic education that takes into account cognitive-intellectual as well as physical and affective-emotional aspects, it is important that the different subject areas are in a balanced relationship with one another. Different approaches mark the educational theory discourse that emphasises the dimension of both subjective and objective body in education. See Tobias Haas, *Leib-körperliche Dimensionen von Bildung. Sichtweisen auf verborgene Aspekte im schulischen Kontext* (Berlin, 2018); cf. Nida-Rümelin, *Philosophie einer humanen Bildung*.

869 As explained in chapter two, feelings are important motivators and driving forces for our thoughts and actions. Until they reach school age, children are in the emotional development phase and need support in dealing with feelings and regulating them independently as well as recognising and understanding the emotional expressions of others.

870 However, these exercises or physical practices require constant training and repetition in order to develop their effect and mature into a habit. At first glance, it may seem very complicated to implement them in a school context, but there are ideal opportunities in creative arts, religion, ethics, and philosophy lessons, etc.

871 Cf. Reinhold Mokrosch, *Werte-Erziehung und Schule: Ein Handbuch für Unterrichtende* (Göttingen, 2009), 122.

872 On the term "shrunken form," see Nida-Rümelin, *Philosophie einer humanen Bildung*, 163.

873 Cf. Julian Nida-Rümelin, *Verantwortung* (Stuttgart, 2011), 171.

a greater impact on the ethical dimension of education or should reshape it constitutively.

To dismiss suggestions of the religious embedding of moral personhood in narratives as a kind of moral sermon in pedagogical guise would completely misjudge the potential of these narratives and the approach of narrative ethics. On the contrary, it is neither an appeal to values nor a direct communication of values, nor the communication of a certain moral concept, nor primarily the communication of knowledge, but rather narratives that instigate an attitude and in which value judgements in their concrete lifeworld contexts become the occasion for one's own rational reflection. Whether these learning settings should necessarily take place in ethics, philosophy, art, music or religion lessons is a question I would like to leave open, i.e., I do not want to assign these learning processes to any particular subject.[874] The entire school context, with its typical, conflict-ridden school day, is also very well suited to initiating reflection on one's own attitudes and personal characteristics—provided that trained teachers can initiate these.

The thematisation and treatment of the self in the virtue ethics discourses of Islamic traditions has made the responsibility for people and the environment recognisable as moral concepts of an *ethics of responsibility*. Without getting lost in the explications of the multi-layered concepts of responsibility, I want responsibility to be understood in the sense of the right organisation of life. Responsibility is the emphasis on the virtue *of humanity*. Responsibility is thus, in the broadest sense, the care and compassion that come to bear in a community of solidarity. Although the concept of responsibility correlates with a good way of life, it is somewhat more radical in that it prioritises others, their way of life and their well-being over oneself. The virtuous person does this for the sake of realising their humanity, because they understand responsibility as part of their aretē. In potential conflict situations, people will proceed in a solution-oriented manner, because they will orient themselves towards the good and try to find the best possible solution that makes both themselves and their counterpart happy, i.e., the responsibility factor

874 There are many accessible school projects that work with virtue (e.g. "virtue cards") that incorporate the entire school day and the school community as a whole, because the thematisation of virtues in their specific contexts is omnipresent. See www.tugendprojekt.de.

therefore trains judgement. The judge of individual responsibility is one's own conscience, which for many religious people leads to the idea of a divine authority. For the culture of togetherness, the gradualness of the ethical virtue impulses must be emphasised overall—insights that can have an impact on society from the individual and their environment.

The religiously appealing impulse to recognise oneself in order to be able to recognise God should positively counteract the difficulty in Humboldt's understanding of education that the drive must come from the individual himself: religion can be a motivating force that pulls people out of their comfort zone.[875] The Islamic faith can awaken the desire and stimulate people to realise more freedom by developing their own strengths. With this freedom, the conscious perception and consideration of circumstances, but above all of others, remains essential as the primary point of orientation in the process of weighing up "how one wants to be." One's own freedom finds its limits in the life interests of the other, whereby sincerity, friendship and respect can serve as coordinates for this. A religiously motivated ethic, which sees itself as a virtue-aesthetic way of life, invites us to do this.

4. Insights for a Contemporary Islamic Religious Education in Germany

Virtue ethics thinking in Islamic intellectual history since the ninth century offers fundamental points of reference for the conceptualisation of a contemporary Islamic religious education for the school context. Within this limited framework, I will concentrate on two insights that are closely linked. The first is a *theological-anthropological claim*, and the second pertains to *ethical dimensioning of religious education content*.

The preoccupation with the life of the soul and the concepts of its cultivation has, among other things, brought to light the ambivalent constitution of the human being. The *theological-anthropological claim* refers to this aspect as well as to the role of the caliph (*kalifa*),

875 In this sense, the topic of virtues lends itself very well to Islamic religious education.

which has already been alluded to in this work. The human being, who, due to his natural disposition, can be inclined towards both good and bad or carries a potential for error, is in need of moral education. Against this backdrop, religious education is faced with the task of setting the content of religious education in such a way that people are able to take on the role of the caliph. The position of divine successor demands a certain qualification from man, which only then enables him to take on this weighty responsibility of the so-called representation of God on earth. Following God means wanting to realise God's vision of a good and just world. To qualify for this is a process of self-knowledge. This not only means getting to know one's nature as a conditioned creature and one's own character traits but also seeking and finding ways to develop one's own talents as much as possible in a reciprocal dialogue with the world. Working towards the best form of one's being means embarking on a process of character development. This includes not only ethical virtue learning but also all the formats of working on the self that have already been brought together, in short: all cultural forms and practices of staging the self (such as in prose or narratives) play a prominent role in the everyday organisation and conduct of life. They serve to develop and present one's own potential. At the same time, they demonstrate the intensity with which the outsider or reader is challenged to work on themselves and their appearance. Religiously initiated learning processes can support children and young people in developing self-awareness, perception, judgement, and action skills. Qualification for the role of caliph is based on the ability to reasonably plausible ethical actions. Ethical thinking and behaviour thus become a basic element of the individual's shaping of the self and the world.

This leads me to the second impulse of the *ethical dimension of religious educational content*. The study of *adab* literature in particular has made it very clear that ethical and cultural-aesthetic education was a natural part of Islamic educational thinking. For the definition of religious educational content for today, this aspect means broadening the perspective of observation and judgement of ritual-normative educational content in order to be able to perceive both ethical and aesthetic dimensions in it. This requires the development of self-reflective sensory perception skills, i.e., it calls for an engagement with the subject matter that goes beyond the mere acquisition of

knowledge. The obligatory duty (*zakāt*) is a very good example to illustrate this. The qur'ānic commandment *zakāt* is, in a nutshell, a one-off annual compulsory monetary contribution from the wealthy to the needy; in other words, it is a social right of the needy. It is a practical act that includes a far-reaching ethical radius.[876] On the one hand, it is intended to strengthen the awareness that people give something that does not belong to them but has been given to them by God, thus actually becoming only a medium of divine giving. At the same time, the act of giving places the remaining property under the blessing of God—which is implied by the meaning of the word *zakāt*. This expression of a religious duty complements the basic form of the Islamic faith, which places solidarity with the needy and those marginalised by poverty and on the fringes of society at the centre of the faith. On the other hand, the ethical dimension of *zakāt* extends from the idea of social justice to an exercise in virtue ethics, which creates a motivation not to lose responsibility for third parties and thus to develop the disposition to become solidary and generous through repeated giving. However, the one-off duty to "give away" a part of one's wealth does not make a person generous. The idea can be seen in the fact that this one-off compulsory giving opens the door for people to initially develop an awareness of voluntary giving in order to gradually form the habit of giving in solidarity. At the same time, this outward act makes it possible to experience humanity and strengthen human sympathy. In this way, a ritual or a pillar of faith becomes the starting point for a fundamentally socioethical question in religious education at primary school: What would make our society fairer, more humane, more social, even *more beautiful*?

Through the ethical dimensions, the aesthetics of virtue find their way into Islamic religious education. In this way, children and young people can be given a new aesthetic approach to religion, especially to normative rituals. Under the auspices of aesthetic-ethical-religious learning, which combines physicality and sensorality, the aim is to promote a learning culture that trains the ability to perceive the diversity of reality and promotes religious design and judgement skills.

876 Isik, *Die Bedeutung des Gesandten Muḥammad*, 251.