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Religious Orientation of Muslim Girls and Young Women between Particularism and Universalism

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Abstract

The appeal of contemporary radical interpretations for young Muslim women and men poses a new challenge to Islamic theology and education. While attention has been given to the radicalization of young men, Muslim women remain marginalized within academic research. This article discusses gender-sensitive issues concerning radicalization. Based on the results of a pretest-study that inquires the success of ISIS regarding the recruiting of young women, aspects of universalism are approached, as constructions of gender, religion and education are discussed. Here, reconstructions of Islam between ideological, systematic and functional references of religion are taken into account.

Introduction

Muslim youngsters who join ISIS or other groups in their radical world-views are in the spotlight of media, public and political discourse. Whereas motivations of young men on their way to radicalization have been under focus for a long period of time, gender-sensitive motivations, backgrounds and needs of Muslim girls and young women have so far been faded out. Furthermore, the potentials of gender-sensitive aspects linked to Islamic theology and religious instruction are still underestimated. Why do young Muslim women and girls give up themselves to religious and ideological rigidity? Which kind of resources grounded on Islamic theology and education are at hand? How do scientists and actors have to react to this? What are the masks by which the increasing religious particularism and societal disintegration are disguised as presumably universalist post-modern Islamic thought?

This contribution looks at these topics and gender-sensitive approaches based on a pretest-study that was conducted between October 2014 and De-

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ember 2015 (Behr / Kulaçatan 2015).¹ Neo-Salafist groups support their concepts and religious understandings with their brands of Islamic universalism. As the results indicate, contacts with Neo-Salafist groups (via social media and personally) are the first step inside this hermetically bolted cosmos of radicalization. Universalist notions, based on Islam and its scriptures, are misused and actually solely abused for aims that are related to particularism. Particularism operates here as a main factor behind social engagement which lends an open ear to young people – a finding that does not only apply to radical groups but in the same way to regulative measures in some countries, some of them Muslim, others not. The gender-sensitive attempts and approaches discussed here at first hand try to figure out the interdependence of personal motivations, psychological effects and the supply of radical Muslim rhetoric and worldviews. This leads to a more complex amalgam behind the mere dichotomy of particularism vs. universalism. It is more or less a post-modern phenomenon of religious exclusivism in the shape of social, cultural and political demands that hides behind an alleged brand of *universal* Islam (the psychological attributes will be discussed below). It should be kept in mind that this points to non-Muslim dynamics, too. Gender-sensitive particularities are one of the results of the pretest-study that lead to the conclusions and recommendations with regard to Islamic theology and education in the last part of this contribution.

The pretest-study

Significant numbers of Muslim women and girls have joined ISIS and similar radicalized groups. Their motivations raise gender-related questions which need sensitive treatment both in the fields of pedagogy and theology. Neo-Salafist and Islamist networks offer concepts which specifically address gender equality (Mohaghehi 2015). At first glance, this seems to be ambivalent, since rigorous expectations based on gender roles and gender relations are addressed to both, females *and* males.

¹ This study was conducted in collaboration with the International Nuremberg Principles Academy. It comprises media analysis and qualitative interviews with protagonists and parties involved in young Muslim women's jihadist aspirations in Germany. It has been released as an internal report and will be published in a slimmed version in 2016. It figures out the need for individual gender-sensitive spirituality and Islamic religious orientation.

This article is based on a pretest-study that scrutinized the lack of gender-sensitive issues in German media when reporting about young people who join ISIS. The media coverage focused on the motivation of young men, regardless of the increasing numbers of young women and girls, who are attracted to radicalized groups. Turkish media, in comparison, have reported about girls and women much earlier due to the fact that Turkey is a transit country on the way to Syria and Iraq. However, German girls of Turkish origin who joined ISIS caught the attention of the media beginning around May 2015 (Behr / Kulaçatan 2015). The public perception of young women and girls as active players has changed so far. Media reports and public debates on this issue lead to questions linked to gender issues. Both the *topic* as well as the *cautiousness* have been neglected and disregarded in many ways.

Radicalization has been under an exclusively *masculine* focus for a very long time. This one-sided perception inherent to the media seems to be rooted in gender-related stereotypes: Women and girls are shaped as beings with a more sensible nature than boys and men, especially in the period of adolescence (Behr / Kulaçatan 2015). The German reports on radicalized girls and women focus on a kind of *romantic momentum* which tries to convince readers that female persons are presumably more easily addicted to romantic phantasies – thus more easily attracted by the promise of relationships with male marriage candidates. Though having an element of truth, this explanation hardly suffices. The interaction of psychological preconditions and social processes of religious radicalization still are, besides the familiar self-centeredness of scientists or journalists, a blind spot within academic research. Religious approaches to coping with the imponderabilia of juvenile spiritual adolescence, as will be described in the following sections, are neither an integral part of school education nor of programmes of deradicalization. The current ideology of social work bears mistrust against any impending religious overprint of the post-modern society. Thereby it suppresses the potential dynamic of religiousness as a resource within client-orientation. On the contrary: Religion in general and Islam in particular are almost exclusively identified as the trouble-makers – a structural prejudice that has come more and more under self-critical focus by contemporary psychotherapists (Pargament 1997).

One major effect of these blind spots within the discourse is the structural disregard towards issues of giving birth and maternity. Central cognitive, emotional and aesthetical aspects of being a girl and becoming a woman are left unspoken. Following the results of this study, the attrac-

tion of reevaluating maternity and pregnancy and their link to spiritual growth are still underestimated. To take a short-cut to religious radicalization, Muslim girls and women are promised to obtain stable roles and positions in a *real* and *Islamic* community (*umma*). The propaganda promises them protection, love and care by a handsome and pious man who is a *real* Muslim. This is a vision their actual social surroundings would hardly ever achieve, especially when these girls face patronal and misogynic intransigence wherever they turn.

Still the media do not cover these religious aspects. They have not yet understood the need for gender-sensitive theological expertise (Lampthey 2014) and for spiritual and religious orientation addressed to these young women and girls. It is the secular structures of the public sphere that seem to influence the marginalization and near-to invisibility of gender-oriented religious approaches (Göle 2015). Based on the results of the study, different overlapping items within the manifold typology of Muslim girls and young women can be described. There are those of a somewhat *Islamic* origin in the cultural or geographical sense, or girls that have undergone some kind of mental and spiritual transformation in terms of religious awakening or inner conversion. They may be girls and young women of native German descent or other origin. All these items may unfold their active parts during the process of radicalization as well as the mobilization of other family members for joining ISIS, though not necessarily. There is hardly any indication that one of these items exclusively stands up for the phenomenon of religious radicalization. As it seems, it is rather the individual modality of mediating between such factors that results in the surprising variety of religious positioning. In the end, religious radicalism seems to be fired up by social and psychological dynamics that lie outside religion itself but at the same time affect the cognitive and emotional reconstruction of the personal religiousness.

One of the most significant factors on the way to radicalization of young women and girls of Islamic origin is their experiences of being discriminated against in daily life, especially in the education system. The self-perception of being victimized by structural discrimination, e. g. during their search for an apprenticeship, strengthens the inner need for separation from what they would call *the non-Muslim society*. Wearing the headscarf for example has always been seriously expounded as a major challenge. It has been experienced as an integral feature of the othering at schools or working places. Female Muslim students in our university seminars have burst into tears when reporting the hate they face in public schools. They are told

to take off their headscarf. They are free to put it on again when leaving the schoolyard or the working place.

These issues are far from being settled; the tensions are rising. In their personal views, the pluralistic and liberal values of Germany, as a country with factual immigration, still seem to be out of reach in their daily life. One reason for this is the deficient interpretation of the term *integration*. Individuals with biographical connections of migrational experience have to *obtain* integration as their *achievement*. With regard to social, cultural and economic integration, the burden of proof is solely on them instead of the society as a whole. All this still applies to the third generation, whose grandparents were former guest-workers. Contemporary debates seem to focus on the relation of islamicity and ethnicity, linked to these issues. Deconstructing the discourse not only in the media but also within the realm of the academia, the term *ethnicity* has all but replaced the term *race* (Lentin 2004, 2015). Young Muslim girls and women are confronted with singular events of discrimination, aimed at their religious identity. In fact, they are confronted with structural racism – a topic that has not yet been picked up as a matter of their life-worlds and everyday situations. Besides, gender equality seems to be solely addressed to white and native girls and women, following the depictions of the social realities of girls with Muslim origin.

A situation like this makes it easy for female actors inside radicalized networks to kidnap these girls and young women and use them for their own aims. It is not only the promise of protection and motherly care mentioned above. They very quickly and profoundly acquire a language that enables them to defend themselves (Behr / Kulaçatan 2015). Instead of cutting their social ties, they have strengthened and expanded them via social media like WhatsApp, using these channels to recruit their friends and relatives. The actors, whether female or male, tie their arguments up to the widespread notion that Muslims are to be latently blamed for being unable to live peacefully in Western European societies. The promise of salvation gains territorial shape by ISIS depicting itself as the true Caliphate in terms of Allah's promised land (*baldatun tayyibatun wa-rabbun ghafūr*; 34:15).

As a matter of fact, deviant constructions of *islamicity* (a term that will be described in more detail in the conclusions) cushion the bitterness of being set back by society, refused by the near members of the personal life-world and cut off from one's own future. The fact of being a Muslima subject to such islamicity brings about a strong impact on the empowerment of girls and young women. This has different effects in the given context

where girls and young women are becoming more aware of the differences in Islamic religious practices. The construction of islamicity may occur as a definite *brand of teaching* on the one hand or as a phenomenon of *Muslim expressionism* on the other. Both contain their specific gender aspects that are based on interpretation and habitus, being individually composed and linked to virtuousness and prudish-mindedness.

Girls and women of non-Muslim origin mainly come in touch with Islam via the Internet which brings about one major problem: How can the depersonalized trait of a contingent medium support the quest for spiritual and religious knowledge without defining the nature of such knowledge on grounded expertise? The virtual rehearsal of putative religious questions and the juvenile search for answers about Islam lures them to websites with radical worldviews.

Based on the results of the study, women between the age of 23 and 30 are mobilized clearly sophisticatedly. Political visions are prioritized, for example building a new society or practising *real* Islam within a *real* Islamic state. The promise of personal salvation and the millenarian vision of the end of days are twined into a sacred imagination, attractive to all young people, whether female or male. The psychological effects that stem from such imaginations are still underestimated. They are constructed on the surface of *real* duties that are fulfilled in the name of God. However, the perspective of a heavenly ordained duty has deeper roots. The materialized framing of violently radical Islam provides young Muslims with a kind of emergency exit out of their *virtual* domains into the realm of *real* life, turning the former escapism around. This carries an extremely stimulating and luring power into the young souls who lack the necessary life experience to get wind of the dangers. The more young people feel like being cut off from real life within society, void of designs of their future that could convey an alternative to the saturated middle-class expectations of a good life, the more liable they might be to get trapped. Here especially Muslim girls are in twofold danger since they are more likely to feel alienated to *both* the outer circle of society and the inner circle of their own Muslim solidarity-group.

Gender-sensitive particularities

The aspects of female emancipation and gender equality belong to the most significant foci. This leads to questions referring both to religious and educational needs. Young girls and young women are more liable to be attracted by

radical groups (grounded on Salafist ideologies) when they feel approached and understood on grounds of their identities as girls and would-be women. The issue of equality finds its expression by the propaganda alerting both woman and men to be pious and modest. Girls and women in traditional Muslim families often are confronted with separated gender spaces. Female family members are expected to stay home while male family members can roam free. The space outside is limited to boys and men in radical ideologies too, which appears to be a gender-paradoxon. However, many Muslim girls are very much acquainted with these authoritative structures. They have never had the chance to get to know an alternative to the authoritative habitus they are subjected to. Hence, they look for alternatives only *within* the authoritarian regime of paternalism within their minds.

Stereotyped expectations linked to maternity and marriage are conceived as emancipated, concealing the structural violence this brings about. Radical Islamist and Neo-Salafist groups abuse the experiences of daily racism and discrimination in favor of their own goals. They construct stereotyped narratives and notions. The topics of daily racism, discrimination and attacks, recently increasingly against Muslim girls and women, are one of the underestimated agents of their radicalization. One might get the impression that the lack of public esteem for religious life-style diversity and public inattentiveness towards racist attitudes and mechanisms still constitutes a major area of work in the German society. According to the results of the given study, spirituality as a central trait of the *forum internum* and visible religion as part of the *forum externum* remain vague or unwritten and unspoken, sometimes even demonized as a symptom of the process of radicalization itself. By contrast, Muslim girls and young women are searching for spirituality and religious bindings, offered by female experts.

There is another gender-sensitive issue, too, which has not received proper attention: girls and young women of Muslim origin are hesitant to speak about issues linked to sexuality, pregnancy and abortion. Overlooking their socialisation, they are very often left alone with their curiosity in issues of sexuality. Based on the results of the study, they seem to be educated and raised in divergent ways (if not deviant against human nature) fostering physical and psychological tensions. Bodily needs and changes, e. g. during menstruation, are faded out. Female sexuality is subjected to male control and is often denied and demised while male sexuality is not. Gender asymmetries like these are justified by patriarchal traditions falsely labelled as *Islamic* (El Feki 2013; Ahmed 1992). There still is a huge lack of knowledge about the meaning of sexuality in the tender connection be-

tween woman and man in Islamic religion. German-speaking Islamic female theologians and religious pedagogues can contribute to more clarification and consultation here, bringing the spiritual and aesthetical aspects at least to eye-level with the legal and morale ones.

Periods of radicalization are often equalized to the processes of outer or inner conversion to Islam, which is most probably an incorrect conclusion. Young people, male and female, are converting to radical ideologies in terms of a conversion to violence and violation of law. It has much to do with the powerful impression to position oneself above the law – a kind of diabolical self-empowerment that is exemplified in the Qurʾān: There it is depicted as a basic dangerous trait of the human nature that has the potential to override one's own conscience and thereby above all violate oneself (*abā wa-stakbara wa-kāna min-a l-kāfirīn*; 2:34; *qālā rabbanā ẓalamnā anfunā*; 7:23). The result is the violation of the *humanum* and the traumatization of the soul. Islamic theology and education have to be reformulated to address this, taking gender-based arguments into account.

Conclusions with regard to Islamic theology and education

The phenomena described above may be summarized in a way that young Muslims, especially girls and younger women, reveal categorical characteristics of their Islamic-religious construction of the personal self. This makeshift brand of Islam is to some extent uncertain because it is at the same time particular *and* universal. For the combination of the interdependent shaping of Muslim identity and personalized Islamic teaching the term *islamicity* is being used here. This unstable kind of islamicity is fed by an increasing social intricacy. Furthermore, it is characterized by a strengthened reconstruction of the religious self along the othering of non-Muslims by erecting an intransigent counter-horizon. The challenge given here is conceptual as well as educational. It lies in facing such precarious efforts of accomplishing spiritual and social coherence. They show three basic traits of coping with contingency, shifting the ethical disposition of the subject from *responsibility*-orientation towards *attitude*-orientation as well as the framing of Islam from its original critical tolerance² towards essentialistic intolerance (Behr 2015):

² Ibn ʿAbbās (quoted by Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, Bukhārī) reports: “Once we asked the messenger of God, what kind of religion God loves most. He replied: The original and the tolerant (*al-ḥanafiyya al-samḥa*).”

- reducing the complexity of Islamic teachings and contemporary Muslim life-styles to monolithic religious reconstructions of Islamicity,
- transforming diffuse social roles into simple-minded reconstructions of religious social-group affiliation and exclusion, and
- replacing the functional and pragmatic feature of Islam with regard to problem-solving by an Islamicity as a comprehensive and essentialistic ideology of obedience towards the rule.

This entails the danger especially for Muslim girls to get trapped in inner conflicts of loyalty. Finally this indicates major changes in both the ways Islam is being *thought* and *taught*. These changes have to be fundamental with regard to a new formulation of Islamic universality. Both Islamic religious studies (theology) and Islamic education (especially when understood as religious habitualization within the regulations of German constitution) need to take the *humanum*, the essential idea of human mankind, into a more thorough consideration. What seems to be paradoxical, taking into account that Islam nowadays pops up as a contingent and self-referential system of symbols, interactions and interpretations, is indeed rooted deeply in the philosophical traditions of Islam itself.

Theological universalism

As a matter of fact, Islamic theological schools have often brought the religious and the secular momentum into an intelligent and pragmatic equilibrium that points towards a third scheme between the religious and the secular – with its declination of spiritual and legal pragmatism, religious pluralism, conventional wisdom and universal instead of particular standards of ethics and morale. This third scheme shines through emblematic Qur'ānic texts like 2:177³, underlining the motive of love, as well as through Arabic theological technical terms like *ma'rūf* – the non-negotiable code of good conduct everybody knows: goodness towards the parents, not

³ “It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards east or west. But it is righteousness to believe in God and the Last Day and the Angels and the Book and the Messengers. And to spend of your substance, *out of love*, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves. And to hold on regular prayer and regular charity. And to fulfil the contracts which ye have made. And to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people who make things come true. Who look forward to meet God.”

turning one's cheek away from people in false pride, not walking haughtily and in a boastful manner on earth, being modest, lowering one's voice and refraining from harshness and violence (compare the profiles of Jesus and Luqmān in 19:32 and 31:12–19).

The *humanum* within Islam is based on the idea that mankind actually finds itself set free from religious determination. What might be understood as the *divine* setting of life is restricted to the existential sphere. In 17:70 the Qur'ān depicts mankind as *honoured* (*la-qad karramnā banī ādama*) and *carried* (*wa-ḥammalnāhum fī l-barri wa-l-baḥr*) and *taken care about* in the deepness of the souls safe from cognitive manipulation (*wa-mā tašā'ūna illā an yashā'a llāhu*; 76:30, 81:29). With regard to questions of truth, faith, conscience and religious life-style (which sums up in the Arabic term *dīn*; 39:3; similarly to Jewish Torah-traditions before the medieval Rabbinic teachings, there is no definite term for *religion* in Islam), the individual must be understood as a spiritually autonomous subject. It is inclined to discover his *personal pace* in religion (*inna sa'yakum la-šattā*; 92:4). Spiritual learning does not happen from paper to mind but from heart to heart. This presumes communication, which is based on encounter, and there is no encounter without movement. This is a lesson the ISIS-propaganda seems to have grasped quite well.

These arguments point towards two corresponding aspects of religious dynamics: spiritual *movement* (which is multi-directional; *innanī hadānī rab-bī ilā širāṭin mustaqīmīn dīnan qiyāman millata ibrahīma ḥanīfan*; 6:161) and spiritual *growth* (*takmīl, takāmul*) as two existential components of the Islamic theological anthropology. Mankind is on its way, it is both *mover* and *being moved* – as a physical, religious and social individual, woman or man, whose actions bear effects in his life-world (*bi-ta'thīr*). Both the *dynamic* and the *qualitative* aspects are represented by the Arabic term of *tazkiya* which is near to competence-orientation. *Tazkiya* would be the more suitable word to describe Islamic education instead of the widespread term *tarbiya* which connotes to a more systematic understanding. Thus, the change being discussed here to some extent marks an anthropological turn. Given that Islamic theology and education want to address the critical implications of contemporary deviant islamicity on the grounds of religious normativity, they are well advised to take Muslims in particular and people in general as well as the situations they live in as the starting point of theological expertise. Islamic thought must neither be reduced to rehearsing the tension of *old versus new traditions*, nor to counter-speaking negative by positive prejudices.

Universal pragmatism

Such tactical discourse is being practised by predominantly *Western* Muslim authors at the moment. They stage themselves as the would-be masters of Muslim progressiveness, imputing everyone else as retrograde. The result of Muslim counter-propaganda on the grounds of non-scrutinized positive prejudices leads to nothing except the conflicting reification of Islam: *Regressive* islamicity as a system of mere obedience to the divine versus *progressive* islamicity as a makeshift school of disobedience to traditionalism. For sure, even within the religious territory a healthy amount of disobedience (*fa-lā tuti'humā*; 31:15) is always welcome, but this leads to the question of the hermeneutical algorithm according to scientific standards. These standards have to be formatted more offensively by Islamic theologians. Today, they must take more courage to reconstruct and reformulate Islam under plausible functional and pragmatic precepts instead of the widespread reduction of Islam to its essentialistic substantivism. The latter emerges especially within the realm of diverse cultural items, framings and encodings, notably under the auspices of migration. Thus, Islamic theology must be decisively anti-migrational in terms of its emancipation from post-migrant Muslim pressure groups to be spiritually and intellectually attractive and pluralistic.

The Muslim girls and young women that were part of our empirical research tend to position themselves within a meta-identical reconstruction of having something like a *Muslim identity* – doing so with a kind of resolute decidedness. Their cognitive reconstruction of Islam as a body of symbols and teachings reminds us of an almost subcultural kind of shaping of identity by inventing traditions claiming *universal* truth – a confusion of *universalism* with ideology, which is a state of mind. This alludes to the criteria of religious dynamics as were thrown into debate for example by Rodney Stark's central theses: a more successful *healing* of emotional breaches, a more convincing *economical idea* and a more attractive *sub-culture* (Stark 1985). Thus, Islamic theology needs not turn away from the phenomena of migration since scriptures like the Qur'ān pick up the topic. From the viewpoint of academic theological research, it might need to free itself from the phenomenological Husserl-like reduction of self-hermeneutics and develop broader approaches with regard for example to the relevant-structures-approach of Alfred Schütz. Such relevance, however, preferentially unfolds within the personal realms of looking at the world – within the inward cognitive and spiritual maps. As concerns the impact of female identities, the psychoanalytical and psychotherapeutical concepts of *imagination* (Irigay

2007; Lacan 2007; Singer 2006) could turn out be helpful when thinking of educational strategies of coping with deviant religious orientations. Such imaginations allude more to the *modalities* than to the *constellations* within the analysis of the conditions of female religious orientation and life-style decision. However, they in effect threaten to overlook the systematic inclinations of Islam.

Islamic theology, for starters, could therefore formulate universal aspects of human migration within the physical and spiritual topography. Otherwise the persistent orientalizing of Muslims (including their self-orientalization in the West), the increasing Islamization of general social constraint and the penetrant ethnicity of *German* versus *Foreign* Islamic theology will continue. This might turn Islam into a clot of post-migrational identity-shaping marked by one major deficiency: The decline of normality in everyday life and the inclination of Muslim self-discrimination as a structural minority of what can be called *particular righteousness* (something we witness even within societies where Muslims are in the demographic majority, for example in Malaysia or in Turkey). These processes of Muslim particularism pose a major threat to democratic and open societies. Here Islamic theology as an academic discipline has to carry out cultural and political responsibility within civil society as a whole.

Islamic education, in a somewhat complementary addition to this, should take some kind of balance between scientific *analysis* and spiritual *synthesis* into consideration, putting the discourse-oriented and pragmatic approaches, for example that of 4:82f., into practice. The majority of those students who decide to take teacher training courses tend to address questions of personal religious orientation to the seminars they are in – just the same way pupils in the religious instruction courses in public schools would do. They want *answers* right where the art and culture of putting the right *questions* (without overwhelming it by hasty answers) needs to be put forward in the didactical dramaturgy of religious instruction. The answers they are after arrange themselves around the *halalization*-paradigm of a hyper-substantial expression of Islam in terms of obedience and accuracy instead of spiritual impact. Here, everything is put into the religious indicative – questions seem to be something that needs to be overcome, very much far away from the aesthetics of philosophical curiosity towards the self and the word. The explicitly invented postmodern traditionalist normativism collides with the traditionally implicit normative potential of Islam as the *humanum*, as was mentioned above.

At this point, the desideratum of what we named *fundamental change* and *anthropological turn* must be substantiated in more detail, for example in syllabus design. Islamic theology has to come to terms with the social, political, economical and spiritual transformation. Invoking the sociology and philosophy of Alfred Schütz, Islamic theology and education have become relevant functional, topical and emotional structures of society. Muslim theologians have to initiate a change in the conceptualization, the habits and the culture in dealing with Islam (and in general with religion). What is needed is a shift from the text to the mind when dealing with the scriptural heritage, from the tradition to the situation, from community-focus to society-orientation, from the collectivistic to the subjective disposition, from the restrictive habitus of religion as a set of rules to the supportive habitus of religion as a resource, from the particular to the universal interest and from the utopistic to the pragmatic perspective. Of course, visions are the realm of religion. They are in the same way necessary as the healthy amount of disobedience mentioned above. Teaching Muslim girls how to mediate both within their life-world might be a contribution to immunize them against the hidden seduction and persuasion.

Islamic education will be able to contribute to preventive measures against ideological separatist reconstructions of the islamicity of Muslim youngsters in general and Muslim girls and young women in particular only if it teaches them how to deconstruct their own prejudices. These prejudices are spiritual, cultural, social, gender-based and age-based. The mishap lies within its potential for Muslim self-discrimination – which in the end will be addressed to the phantom of an allegedly non-believing societal majority.

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