

# Tolerance, Political Liberty and Democracy: Social Recognition and Belonging

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In 2019, the Protestant and the Catholic Churches in Germany published a joint declaration with the title: “Fostering Trust in Democracy”. There, quite at the end of the text of 50 pages, it says: “Democracy can only succeed if it is embedded in a culture of mutual tolerance and acceptance.” This seems obviously true at first sounds. However, on closer inspection, some questions arise: Which kind of tolerance is meant? Is acceptance a general characteristic of tolerance or an enhanced form of tolerance? And finally, is tolerance a mere virtue of democratic citizens or can it also be established as an institutional feature of democracy? A differentiation of the several varieties of tolerance may help in answering these questions.

## *1. Four concepts of tolerance in relation to democracy*

In his magisterial study “Toleration in Conflict”, Rainer Forst distinguishes four conceptions of tolerance, which he explicitly relates to the political context. The first conception, which he calls the “permission conception”, “designates the relation between an authority or a majority and a minority (or several minorities) which does not subscribe to the dominant system of values. Toleration here means that the authority (or majority) grants the minority the permission to live in accordance with its convictions so long as it – and this is the crucial condition – does not question the predominance of the authority (or majority).”<sup>1</sup> Forst names the Edict of Nantes as an ideal-typical example for this first rudimentary type of tolerance. With regard to democracy, the permission concept of tolerance obviously is insufficient, as it does not guarantee the political and legal status of citizenship on the basis of equal rights. Minorities are only allowed to stay insofar as they do not disturb, irritate or even question the majority, but they are not accepted and regarded as equals. Under these

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1 Forst 2013:27.

conditions, democratic coexistence, interaction, and cooperation between majority and minority simply are not possible, as this kind of permission tolerance is “not reciprocal: one side permits the other certain deviations provided that the political dominance of the permission-granting side is not infringed upon.”<sup>2</sup>

As a second type of tolerance, Forst lists the “coexistence conception” of tolerance. This type is similar to the first one insofar as its main concern is to avoid conflicts in society. What changes, however, is the relationship between the different societal groups. “The toleration relation is [...] no longer a vertical one, as in the permission conception, but a horizontal one”. That means, the different parties and groups – especially in cases when they are equally strong – accept their coexistence in their own interests and “consent to the rules of a *modus vivendi* in the shape of mutual compromise.”<sup>3</sup> This concept represents a kind of an attitude of Hobbesian pessimistic liberalism, which is not primarily based on certain strong values but on a realistic world view. Forst himself relates it to Judith Shklar’s concept of a “liberalism of fear”.<sup>4</sup> Such an attitude may occur in a democracy. But, on the other hand, it is questionable if this approach provides a sustainable foundation for democracy, since a group or a party that becomes stronger may be tempted to terminate the social contract and to pursue dominance over the others. For this reason, the coexistence conception of tolerance only offers a very fragile democratic resource.

The third type, which Forst names the “respect conception” of tolerance, seems to offer a more promising basis for democratic togetherness. The respect type of tolerance is morally grounded in an attitude of mutual respect between the citizens and different societal groups. “The tolerating parties respect one another as autonomous persons or as equally entitled members of a political community constituted under the rule of law.”<sup>5</sup> This approach implies the classical-liberal separation of the private and the public sphere. The members of the community may have very different religious and cultural backgrounds as well as controversial ethical and ideological convictions in private, but they recognize one another as equal citizens in the public square. “The person of the other is *respected*; her convictions and actions are *tolerated*.”<sup>6</sup>

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2 Ibid. 28.

3 Ibid.

4 See: Shklar 2004.

5 Forst 2013: 29.

6 Ibid. 30.

Finally, Forst names a fourth type of tolerance: the “esteem conception”, which he describes as “a more demanding form of mutual recognition” since this type of “toleration means not only respecting the members of other cultural or religious communities as legal and political equals but also esteeming their convictions and practices as ethically valuable.”<sup>7</sup> This conception is similar to Markus Vogt’s and Rolf Husmann’s understanding of “proactive tolerance”, which they characterize by the term “appreciation”.<sup>8</sup> That approach is often encountered in the context of the discussions on multiculturalism and identity politics. With regard to liberal democracy, this esteem conception is not merely the enhancement of the respect conception; it is a significantly different approach that brings with it a decisively divergent understanding of liberal democracy. Charles Taylor even identifies “two incompatible views of liberal society”<sup>9</sup>.

## *2. The classical-liberal understanding of democracy and the limits of public tolerance*

The respect conception of tolerance corresponds to the classical liberal model, which Taylor names as “liberalism of rights”<sup>10</sup>. The proponents of this concept do not deny that mutual recognition between citizens is valuable in a democracy. But as they insist that all citizens are treated as equals under the law without any exception, they are of the firm conviction that such mutual recognition must not be enforced by the government through legislative or administrative coercion.

### *2.1 The right to be intolerant*

With regard to the principle of equality under the law, doctrinaire liberals demand a “difference blindness” of legislation and administration. In particular, they reject the approach to balance and to correct historically grown discriminations by legislative or administrative measures of “reverse discrimination” or “positive discrimination”, as it is, for example, established in the affirmative action policies in the USA, a landmark of which

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 31.

<sup>8</sup> Vogt/Husmann 2019.

<sup>9</sup> Taylor 1994: 60.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

was the Civil Rights Act of 1964. When Friedrich August von Hayek, one of the great liberal thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was asked in an interview about his opinion of the affirmative action policies, he answered:

“civilization rests on the fact that people are very different...and unless we allow these differences to exist...we shall stop the whole process of evolution...if you try to make the opportunities of all people equal you eliminate the main stimulus to evolution.... What you explained to me about the meaning of affirmative action is the same dilemma which egalitarianism achieves: in order to make people equal you have to treat them differently. If you treat people, so far as government is concerned, alike, the result is necessarily inequality; you can have either freedom and inequality, or unfreedom and equality.”<sup>11</sup>

Hayek makes a clear distinction between discrimination by the state and discrimination by private persons. Discriminating laws as well as discriminatory administrative action are in his view incompatible with the liberal idea of citizenship: equal freedom under the reign of law. But by the same argument, he opposes any laws prohibiting discrimination between private citizens. In his opinion, that would be an inadmissible interference in the freedom of citizens. Under the reign of liberty and the rule of law, he believes, there should be neither apartheid law nor affirmative action.

Milton Friedman, another liberal mastermind of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, sees it the same way. He writes that “the man who exercises discrimination pays a price for doing so. He is, as it were, ‘buying’ what he regards as a ‘product’. It is hard to see that discrimination can have any meaning other than a ‘taste’ of others that one does not share.”<sup>12</sup> That taste may be morally disgusting and other citizens may utterly reject it, but Friedman is of the firm opinion that the liberal state has no right to forbid it.

“I believe strongly that the color of a man’s skin or the religion of his parents is, by itself, no reason to treat him differently; that a man should be judged by what he is and what he does and not by these external characteristics. I deplore what seem to me the prejudice and narrowness of outlook of those who tastes differ from mine in this respect and I think the less of them for it. But in a society based on free discussion, the appropriate recourse is for me to seek to persuade them that their tastes are bad and that they should change their views and

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11 Quoted by Diener 2013: 33. The interview can be listened here: [http://hayek.ufm.edu/index.php?title=Tom\\_Hazlett](http://hayek.ufm.edu/index.php?title=Tom_Hazlett)

12 Friedman 1962/2002: 110.

their behavior, not to use coercive power to enforce my taste and my attitudes on others”.<sup>13</sup>

## *2.2 Power must be limited – also democratic power*

For the avoidance of misunderstandings: Friedman as well as Hayek leave no doubt that the “the struggle for formal equality, i.e. against all discrimination [...] remained one of the strongest characteristics of the liberal tradition.”<sup>14</sup> But at the same time, they are of the firm conviction that the principle of legal equality of all citizens under the rule of law prohibits any legislation that serves particular interests and benefits only certain groups. “Liberalism merely demands that so far as the state determines the conditions under which the individuals act it must do so according to the same formal rules for all. It is opposed to all legal privilege, to any conferment by government of specific advantages on some which it does not offer to all.”<sup>15</sup>

Basis of this view is a classical liberal understanding of liberty in the Whig tradition. The Whigs were the party of the Glorious Revolution, their world view was shaped by the writings of John Locke and further developed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by the philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment, above all David Hume and Adam Smith. Hayek distinguishes this classical English liberalism from the younger Continental liberal movement which had its origin in the French Revolution and its program of creating a totally new state and society. This led to an early association of the liberals and the democracy movement in Continental Europe. While the classical British liberalism, in Hayek’s words, had an “evolutionary” character, the Continental type followed a more “rationalist or constructivist view which demanded a deliberate reconstruction of the whole of society in accordance with principles of reason.”<sup>16</sup>

The chief concern of the liberals in the Whig tradition has always been the protection of individual freedom against arbitrary coercion by the state. The form of government, on the other hand, was not a focus of the Whig program. The limitation of state power is necessary in a monarchy as well as in a democracy. In Friedman’s words, “political freedom means

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13 Ibid. 111.

14 Hayek 1978: 141.

15 Ibid. 140.

16 Ibid. 119.

the absence of coercion of a man by his fellow men. The fundamental threat to freedom is power to coerce, be it in the hands of a monarch, a dictator, an oligarchy, or a momentary majority. The preservation of freedom requires the elimination of such concentration of power to the fullest possible extent and the dispersal and distribution of whatever power cannot be eliminated – a system of checks and balances”.<sup>17</sup>

The democratic and the liberal movement were most of the time closely associated and even, as Hayek writes, “often indistinguishable”<sup>18</sup>. But it is also important for him to emphasize, that limiting power is the main goal of liberalism and that democratic power must also be limited just like all other forms of power. “Democracy is essentially a means, a utilitarian device for safeguarding internal peace and individual freedom. As such it is by no means infallible or certain.”<sup>19</sup>

### 2.3 *Negative freedom and the egalitarian temptation*

In his famous inaugural lecture held in 1958 at the University of Oxford, Isaiah Berlin distinguishes two concepts of liberty: negative freedom and positive freedom. Friedman, Hayek and other (neo-) classical liberals are uncompromising advocates of a strictly negative understanding of liberty. Freedom in this sense “becomes positive only through what we make of it. It does not assure us of any particular opportunities, but leaves it to us to decide what use we shall make of the circumstances in which we find ourselves.”<sup>20</sup> Political freedom in the sense of democracy or even “freedom from” fear and want, on the other hand, Hayek strictly distinguishes from this individual freedom. Rather, he believes that these different concepts are often in conflict and contradiction with each other.<sup>21</sup>

That is also the reason why Hayek has always been regarding the egalitarian tendencies of democratic societies with great suspicion – not only the aspiration for equality of outcome, but also the concept of equality of opportunities. Good or bad luck depends on circumstances with regard to which people are – often from birth already – very differently placed. The

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17 Friedman 1962/2002: 15. Hayek describes the “state of liberty or freedom” very similar: “The state in which a man is not subject to coercion by the arbitrary will of another or others”, Hayek 1960/2001: 58.

18 Hayek 1978: 142.

19 Hayek 1944/2007: 110.

20 Hayek 1960/2001: 70.

21 See: Hayek 1960/61: 106.

egalitarian mastermind John Rawls speaks of a “natural lottery”, and he is firmly convinced that the outcome of this natural lottery “is arbitrary from a moral perspective”.<sup>22</sup> Hayek does not deny this, but – in contrast to Rawls – he firmly believes that the ideas of social justice and equality of opportunity are incompatible with the concept of individual freedom. To achieve real equality of opportunity, Hayek writes, a “government would have to control the whole physical and human environment of all persons, and have to endeavour to provide at least equivalent chances for each; and the more government succeeded in these endeavours, the stronger would become the legitimate demand that, on the same principle, any still remaining handicaps must be removed – or compensated for by putting an extra burden on the still relatively favoured.”<sup>23</sup> Hayek concedes that also for a liberal mind the demand for equality of opportunity seems to be fair and understandable at first glance. But on second thought, he is convinced that this is “a wholly illusory ideal, and any attempt concretely to realize it apt to produce a nightmare.”<sup>24</sup>

His strong advocacy for the concept of negative liberty does not mean that Hayek is not aware of the importance of civic virtues like tolerance and cohesion for a strong and vivid democracy. In fact, the opposite is the case. Explicitly Hayek writes that “it must remain an open question whether a free or individualistic society can be worked successfully-if people are too ‘individualistic’ in the false sense, if they are too unwilling voluntarily to conform to traditions and conventions, and if they refuse to recognize anything which is not consciously designed or which cannot be demonstrated as rational to every individual.”<sup>25</sup> But nonetheless, Hayek’s fear of the totalitarian menace is too great for him to make concessions to the concept of positive freedom and to the idea of promoting civic virtues such as tolerance by the state and institutionalizing them through legislation and administration.

### *3. Positive freedom, social recognition and democracy*

Charles Taylor thinks, that this fear-driven notion of freedom as an exclusively negative one, “rules out of court one of the most powerful motives

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22 Rawls 1971/2005: 74.

23 Hayek 1982/2013: 247.

24 Ibid.

25 Hayek 1948: 26.

behind the modern defence of freedom as individual independence, viz., the post-Romantic idea that each person's form of self-realization is original to him/her, and can therefore only be worked out independently."<sup>26</sup> Especially in today's pluralistic, highly diverse, multicultural societies, this kind of rigidity is becoming increasingly inappropriate.

### *3.1 Positive freedom as a precondition of living democracy*

The concepts of positive liberty and democracy seem closely related, insofar as both are concerned with the goal of people being their own masters. The difference with liberalism is seen in the fact that the aim is not to limit but to justify and to legitimize government power. And liberals like Hayek or Berlin fear that a power perceived as legitimate could threaten to become limitless, even totalitarian in the end.

Taylor criticizes this as a one-sided fixation on a caricatural understanding of positive freedom, as it could only be held up by some leftist esotericists. He instead recalls the republican tradition of classical liberalism that we find, for example, in Tocqueville and "according to which men's ruling themselves is seen as an activity valuable in itself, and not only for instrumental reasons."<sup>27</sup> Indeed, Tocqueville was already aware that mere negative freedom would be insufficient to safeguard togetherness and the common good in a society. On the contrary, he expressed his concern that people "no longer attached to one another by any ties of caste, class, guild, or family, are all too inclined to be preoccupied with their own private interests, too given to looking out for themselves alone and withdrawing into a narrow individualism where all public virtues are smothered."<sup>28</sup> Unlike the doctrinaire liberals and fanatics of the free market the French philosopher was convinced that only the value of political freedom and civic virtues could protect such a society from despotism.

"Liberty alone can effectively combat the natural vices of these kinds of societies and prevent them from sliding down the slippery slope where they find themselves. Only freedom can bring citizens out of the isolation in which the very independence of their circumstances has led them to live, can daily force them to mingle, to join together through the need to communicate with one another, persuade each

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26 Taylor 2006: 142.

27 Ibid.

28 Tocqueville 1856/1998: 87.



other, and satisfy each other in the conduct of their common affairs. Only freedom can tear people from the worship of Mammon and the petty daily concerns of their personal affairs and teach them to always see and feel the nation above and beside them; only freedom can substitute higher and stronger passions for the love of material well-being, give rise to greater ambitions than the acquisition of a fortune, and create the atmosphere which allows one to see and judge human vices and virtues.”<sup>29</sup>

This short section makes clear that Tocqueville's concept of political freedom is as well not identical with that of democracy. That is already understandable just from the circumstances in which he wrote his book *The Old Regime and the Revolution*: under the impression of the coup d'état and the authoritarian regime of Napoléon III. The French people had submitted to his dictatorship by an overwhelming majority in two referendums. In this respect, the difference between Tocqueville and Hayek lies less in the awareness of the danger of totalitarian aspirations of democratic majorities than in a different understanding of positive resp. political freedom. Hayek understands it purely formally as “the participation of men in the choice of their government, in the process of legislation, and in the control of administration.”<sup>30</sup> For Tocqueville, however, political liberty goes beyond this; it is not purely formal, but it is a republican value that is comprehensively directed towards the preservation of a free *res publica* and must be internalized by the citizens. Political freedom in this sense is not merely dependent on formal procedures such as elections, but requires corresponding republican virtues on the part of the citizens (*citoyens*, not *bourgeois*).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a liberal of this republican tradition in the line of Tocqueville was Raymond Aron, who was a critic of Hayek's doctrinaire liberalism and his one-sided understanding of freedom. Just like Tocqueville 100 years earlier, Aron was very concerned after World War II that Western European prosperous societies were losing that awareness of civic virtues. In an interview in 1981, he therefore feels compelled to remind Europeans that “in a democracy, individuals are at the same time private citizens and citizens of the state.”<sup>31</sup> He explicitly refers to Tocqueville in this passage. “There is a text by Tocqueville in which he says that Americans can be passionate about personal happiness on the

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29 Ibid. 88.

30 Hayek 1960/2011: 61.

31 Aron 1983: 238.

one hand and very patriotic, that is concerned for the public good, on the other. That is the characteristic of a living democracy.”<sup>32</sup> Under the threats of the Cold War, this was a main concern of Aron with regard to the future of liberal democracies: “When the second element is no longer present, one must ask history to be lenient with those who have forgotten the lessons.”<sup>33</sup>

### 3.2 *Esteem, social recognition and belonging*

Political freedom, then, is a matter of active citizenship, participation, and common good orientation. The willingness to embrace these civic virtues, however, has its own preconditions, especially in modern pluralistic and culturally diverse societies. Necessary is a feeling of belonging and that cannot be achieved with mere tolerance according to the respect conception. Rather, the feeling of belonging arises from social recognition, as expressed in the esteem conception of tolerance.

In modern, functionally differentiated society, an individual can no longer define his or her identity through social roles, as was the case in earlier times. Charles Taylor relates this modern concept of identity to the idea of authenticity, “which calls on me to discover my own original way of being. By definition, this way of being cannot be socially derived, but must inwardly generated.”<sup>34</sup> The German sociologist Niklas Luhmann, the mastermind of the theory of functional differentiation, expresses the same thought when he states: “The individual can no longer be defined by inclusion, but only by exclusion.”<sup>35</sup> But at the same time he emphasizes: “The fact that one no longer owes one's individuality to social inclusion but to social exclusion is a system-theoretical statement. It says nothing about causal dependencies. People can still live only in social contexts, and in modern society this is no less true than it used to be – perhaps with more alternatives and choices for the individual, but also with an immense increase in the ways in which one is dependent.”<sup>36</sup>

Taylor explains this dialectic of modern identity resp. individuality and social relatedness resp. interdependency by referring back to the studies of the social psychologist George Herbert Mead. He emphasizes that the “crucial”

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32 Ibid. 237.

33 Ibid.

34 Taylor 1994: 32.

35 Luhmann 1993: 158.

36 Ibid. 159–160.

cial feature of human life” still “is its fundamentally *dialogical* character.”<sup>37</sup> And at the same time this is the reason, why the development of an ideal of inwardly generated identity crucially depends on my dialogical relations with others.”<sup>38</sup>

### 3.2.1 *Spheres of recognition and tolerance*

Also the social philosopher Axel Honneth tries to explain the intersubjective conditions of the constitution of social identity, building on the work of Mead. The concept of recognition is thereby central to his theory. Honneth adopts and modifies Hegel's model of a threefold division of the human community into family, state and society and derives from it three essential spheres of recognition: an emotional, a legal and a social sphere. The most elementary form of recognition is love, as it is shown to one's spouse, one's own children, or even close friends. At this “first level of its practical relation-to-self, the individual is recognized as precisely this, as an individual whose needs and desires are of unique value to another person”<sup>39</sup>. Love is concern for the well-being of the loved one for his or her own sake. And although there is “always [...] an element of moral particularism” inherent in this special kind of relationship, Honneth, following Hegel, sees in it “the structural core of all ethical life.”<sup>40</sup> Only the affirmation of one's own identity experienced in love “produces the degree of basic individual self-confidence indispensable for autonomous participation in public life.”<sup>41</sup>

The second level of legal recognition refers to the modern conviction which regards all people as free and equal beings. On this level, “the individual is recognized as a person who is ascribed the same moral accountability as every other human being”<sup>42</sup>. Social identity and self-respect are here based on the acknowledgement of the legal status of civic equality. That legal status is not to be understood statically, but dynamically. What constitutes the legal recognition of a person and a citizen, Honneth emphasizes, is not finally determined once and for all, but depends on the historical and cultural state of knowledge of a community. What's

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37 Taylor 1994: 32.

38 Ibid. 34.

39 Honneth 2005: 52.

40 Honneth 1995): 107.

41 Ibid.

42 Honneth 2005: 52.

more, the “essential indeterminacy as to what constitutes the status of a responsible person leads to a structural openness on the part of modern law to a gradual increase in inclusivity and precision.”<sup>43</sup> With regard to the different conceptions of tolerance, this type of legal recognition could be related to the respect conception. It is about mutual acceptance of legal equality but not about appreciation of difference and particularity.

Finally, at the third level of social recognition, “the individual is recognized as a person whose capabilities are of constitutive value to a concrete community”<sup>44</sup>. Thus, it is about social esteem which, in regard to one’s practical self-relation, forms the basis of her or his self-esteem. The difference between legal and social recognition is that, at the second level of recognition, a person is recognized in his or her characteristics, which are common to all human beings and thus make him or her a person with fundamental rights, while, at the third level, he or she receives social esteem because of his or her special characteristics, which distinguish him or her from other persons. Honneth writes, that “for this kind of recognition, which has the character of a particular esteem, there are no corresponding moral concepts in the philosophical tradition, but it may well be a good idea to refer here to concepts such as ‘solidarity’ or ‘loyalty’”<sup>45</sup>.

The proposal made in this paper, is to make a link between the idea of social recognition and the esteem conception of tolerance, as both are about appreciation of individual particularity and of social difference.

### *3.2.2 Politics of recognition and esteem-tolerance for democratic togetherness*

The described dialectics of modern individuality and social relatedness is the reason why social recognition as well as tolerance are indispensable for the togetherness of people in today’s societies, as one’s sense of her or his social identity depends on the social network to which one belongs (or not). And the feeling of belonging does not only depend on a certain legal status, e.g. the passport, but moreover on respect, esteem, and social recognition.

That poses great challenges especially for multicultural societies. The biggest problem in this context is that in today’s Europe, a lot of members from minorities, especially from Muslim communities, feel rejected by

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43 Honneth 1995: 110.

44 Honneth 2005: 52.

45 Ibid.

the majority and therefore withdraw in parallel societies which provide warmth to them. Their feeling of not belonging is not always the result of concrete experiences of discrimination, but rather of the self-perception of being “different” from the surrounding majority, for example, because one has a different name, another religion, or a different skin color than most of the people around her or him. Although people with hybrid identities are normally no longer addressed as “foreigners” today, but rather in a politically correct manner as “people with a migration background”, even the “harmless” question “Where are you from?”, which may often derive from honest interest, reinforces the self-perception of otherness if it is repeated regularly. Children and adolescents in particular can be maneuvered into a real social dilemma by such mutually reinforcing perceptions of themselves and others.<sup>46</sup>

In Germany, this phenomenon involves e.g. a large number of people with Turkish roots. There are 2.5 to 3 million ethnic Turks living in Germany which counts about 3.7 to 4.2 percent of the total German population. Almost half of them have a German passport. Nevertheless, the feeling of not belonging to German society is widespread among these people. According to a survey conducted in 2016 among people with Turkish roots living in Germany, almost half of those interviewed agreed that Islamic commandments were more important to them than German laws.<sup>47</sup>

The American philosopher Martha Nussbaum sees the reason for this in the understanding of the nation that has developed historically in Europe. “Ever since the rise of the modern state, European nations have understood the root of nationhood to lie first and foremost in characteristics that are difficult if not impossible for new immigrants to share. Strongly influenced by romanticism, these nations have seen blood, soil, ethnolinguistic peoplehood, and religion as necessary or at least central elements of a national identity. Thus people who have a different geographical origin, or a different holy land, or a different mother tongue, or a different appearance and way of dressing, never quite seem to belong, however long they have resided in a country.”<sup>48</sup>

Traditional immigration countries such as the United States, where most people are descended from ancestors who themselves came to the country as migrants at some point, have a different concept of the nation,

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46 See: Foroutan/Schäfers 2009: 12.

47 Pollack et al. 2016: 14.

48 Nussbaum 2012: 13.

which is based less on ethnic or cultural homogeneity than on common ideals and goals. These countries see themselves less as a cultural community and more as a political community. Nussbaum advises Europe to further develop its self-image in this direction in order to achieve a modern idea of a living democracy for a highly diverse and multicultural society. This would require that even members of minorities feel that they, with their own origins, history and culture, belong to this society and this democracy. And that is the reason why modern liberal democracies need a culture of esteem-tolerance and a policy of recognition.

Such culture and policy do, as Charles Taylor points out, in no way mean compromising the basic political principles of liberalism or even denying the Christian origins of the Western culture. "Liberalism can't and shouldn't claim complete cultural neutrality."<sup>49</sup> But recognition politics takes seriously the sense of marginalization felt by many people with an immigrant background. At the same time it has to deal with the fact that a lot of them have cultural roots which may question the philosophical principles of the Western concept of liberalism and democracy to some extent.<sup>50</sup> Esteem-tolerance in this context does not mean that every other cultural custom has to be recognized of equal value or even acceptable, but that it is in any case worthy of attention and that there is no alternative to dialogue. "There must be something midway between the inauthentic and homogenizing demand for recognition of equal worth, on the one hand, and the self-immurement within ethnocentric standards on the other."<sup>51</sup>

## *Conclusion*

The classical liberalism of rights developed the idea of equal citizenship under the rule of law as one of the essential foundations of modern democracy. In earlier times of traditional and culturally homogeneous societies and states, this may have been a sufficient concept. But in today's highly individualized and diverse, multicultural societies we need a more saturated idea of democratic togetherness. This requires a strong concept of political freedom including a culture of esteem-tolerance and, at the level of democratic institutions, a policy of recognition.

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49 Taylor 1995: 62.

50 See: Ibid. 63.

51 Ibid. 72.

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