

Forms of Muslim self-perception in European Islam

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ABSTRACT

The growing importance of Islam in Western Europe has led to an intense discussion among Muslims on their position vis-a-vis Islamic values and the secular Western social order. Three examples have been chosen to illustrate this debate. While the Mufti of Marseille, Soheib Bencheikh, argues in favor of Muslims adopting the French concept of laïcité, the Swiss intellectual Tariq Ramadan makes a European Muslim identity dependent on preservation of traditional legal prescriptions. Finally, the Central Council of Muslims in Germany has issued a charter aimed at reflecting Muslim attitudes towards Western society.

Contemporary discussions about the role of Islam and the situation of Muslims in Europe usually focus on the societies of Western Europe.¹ Roughly 40 years ago, the first generation of Muslims came to Europe for various reasons and certainly not always voluntarily. Many of them, especially in France and Great Britain, arrived in the wake of the dissolution of old colonial empires. Others, such as was the case in Germany from the 1960s onward, were hired as “guest workers”. In more recent times, this pattern has continued, as people were driven out of their countries of origin because of civil wars and a desperate economic situation.

It was only in the second or even third generation after their arrival, when both sides started to realize that their stay in Europe was more than a temporary one, that Muslim reflection about their situation in Europe began. This is a discussion largely without precedent, as this question did not arise in classical Islamic law. Muslims were not expected to live permanently in non-Muslim countries, and when a Muslim country was conquered by non-Muslims, the Muslim population was expected to emigrate into

¹ The literature on Islam in Europe has grown immensely in the last decade. For a bibliographical orientation, see Yazbek-Haddad and Qurqmaz (2000), as well as Dassetto and Conrad (1996). For a general introduction, see Nielsen (1999) and Kepel (1994).

the *dar al-islam* (for a summary of *hijra* doctrine, see Masud, 1990; Meier, 1991). Of course, there is no denying that this provision no longer can serve as a basis for cohabitation. The debate thus does not center so much around whether it is possible for Muslims to dwell in Europe at all. While there are some splinter groups and extremists who categorically deny this possibility and preach complete segregation, going even so far as to call for a theocratic Islamic state in Europe (see, e.g., Schiffauer, 2000; Thomas, 2003), these voices can on no account be taken as representative of the Muslim community as a whole. Rather, the question is *how* Muslim presence in Europe could look in practice. How is it possible to become European Muslims instead of remaining Muslims living in Europe more or less incidentally?

This problem is the more complicated, as it is not merely one of Christian-Muslim relations. Religion in Europe has been by and large secularized and limited to the private sphere, leaving little space for public manifestations. It is therefore the question of how a much more religiously defined outlook on life may be integrated into a secularized environment, and the discussion of this concept is inevitably at the center of every attempt to shape a European notion of Islam.

This paper briefly introduces some contemporary and intensely discussed approaches to this problem. While authors such as Soheib Bencheikh or Tariq Ramadan are living and writing in Europe and therefore directly reflect the needs and the discourse of their potential readers, there are nowadays also attempts to influence the discussion within the diaspora from outside, i.e., from institutions and individual scholars in the Muslim world. The arguably most prominent representative is at present Yusuf al-Qaradawi (born in 1926); he is considered one of the most influential scholars of contemporary Islam and one of the figureheads of the Islamic (re)awakening, who also very consciously makes use of the Internet (<http://www.qaradawi.net>; for his biography, see Kursawe, 2003). Almost 30 years ago, he wrote a short but momentous book on the relations between Muslims and non-Muslims within a predominantly Muslim society (Qaradawi, 1977). In recent years, he has become a leading judicial authority for Muslims living in Western societies, being also a member of the European Council for Fatwa and Research (*Majlis Uruba li-l-ifta' wa-l-buhuth*) in London.² In 2001 (Qaradawi, 1422/2001) he published, at the request and on behalf of the Mecca-based Muslim World League,³ a book on the legal aspects of Muslims living in non-Muslim societies. Qaradawi's (ibid:30ff.) professed aim is to provide a specific interpretation of Islamic law that both takes into account the local circumstances of Muslims in Europe and guards the

2 Recently, Qaradawi was reported to have been present, also in London, at the foundation of another international council (Stalinsky, 2004; see also Gräf, 2005:47).

3 On the history and activities of the League (*Rabitat al-'alam al-islami*, founded in 1962), as well as its confrontation with Christianity and imperialism, see Schulze (1990, esp. pp. 408ff.).

principles of the *shari'a*. But since such an approach does not reflect a European self-perception proper, this book – and several other writings of the same orientation (e.g., Fadlallah, 1421/2000; Su'udi, 1408/1988) – shall remain outside the scope of the present paper.

In a sense, the most radical approach towards reconciling Islam and secularism among contemporary “official” Muslim representatives in Europe is taken by Soheib Bencheikh, the young mufti of Marseille. Originating from a scholarly Algerian family, he studied both at the Azhar University in Cairo and at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris, and is thus familiar with both types of society. In 1998, he published a book with the slightly provocative title *Marianne et le Prophète* (Bencheikh, 1998). In view of the novelty of the situation, which makes it necessary for Islam to become a sort of “church”, independent of the State, Bencheikh calls for a thorough discussion and ultimately acceptance of the concept of secular and laicist living. This, however, does not simply amount to a blind adoption of Western structures and conditions of living, but rather to an Islamic reform in light of the requirements of French society. His explicit aim is “the harmonious integration of Islam, and a search for compatibility of its re-read original message with French laicism, which has to be well understood and clearly defined” (ibid, ibid:14). Insofar, his book is not meant to attempt to prove the veracity of Islam or to defend its *raison d'être*; he does not want to depict Islam as a friend or an enemy, but merely as a possible partner in society.

Bencheikh begins by discussing the concept of laicism,⁴ which he considers to be poorly and inadequately defined. For him, it is neither a philosophical concept, a transition to purely rational metaphysics, such as was intended by positivist thinkers (whom he accuses of a “blind belief in science”; ibid, ibid:46), nor is it the expression of a struggle of the State against everything religious. Instead, he pleads to keep the definition as simple and general as possible, stating that “laicism is nothing but the public authority’s positive neutrality towards believers, on the one hand, and the legal guarantee of freedom of expression and worship, on the other” (ibid:57). As this is not an inherently anti-religious concept, it ought also to be accessible to Muslims. The fact that there had not yet been a Muslim minority in the country when the idea of laicism was formulated does not mean that the Muslims may be deprived of it. On the contrary, since positive neutrality is favorable to pluralism and defends society against totalitarian tendencies, it is even understood as a protective device for Islam. Bencheikh’s understanding of modernity is thoroughly founded in this interpretation of laicism as a privilege; a separation of religion and politics is indispensable, he maintains, because

4 There is no common English equivalent for the French word *laïcité*; I chose the loanword laicism because the usual expression “secularism” is more diffuse and does not convey the political connotations of the French concept.

“the modern state that intends to function according to reasonable and verifiable criteria cannot adopt the criteria of religion whose authenticity and practicality remain without proof by reason” (ibid:71).

However, he goes on to explain, this has not yet been adequately understood in the Muslim world. Consequently, there is not even an appropriate term for expressing the idea of laicism. Bencheikh proposes “religious neutrality” (*al-hiyad ad-dini*) or the outright neologism *la'ikiyya*, and at the same time vehemently opposes current descriptions of secularism (*'almaniyya* or *'ilmaniyya*), as suggested by thinkers such as the aforementioned Yusuf al-Qaradawi (Bencheikh, 1998:29ff.). It is for this reason also that the debate over laicism in the Islamic world inevitably falls back on the old dichotomy of belief (=Islam) vs. unbelief (=laicism), because most Muslims are not able to imagine a separation between religion and politics, given the strong social commitment of Islam. Moreover, the contemporary regimes in the Muslim world show that everything and its contrary may happen in the name of Islam: there are monarchies, republics, or even the Libyan *jamahiriyya*. But nowhere is a modern State to be found, Bencheikh says, as the idea of the modern State that has no religion is not rooted in the mentality of the people, who do not know the difference between a citizen and a subject. In his view, being deprived of laicism is tantamount to a Saudi-like political archaism (ibid:77).

Even in France, there are obstacles for Muslims to become full members of the laicist society. First of all, the State has done next to nothing to extend the laicist system beyond the Christian framework within which it originated. According to Bencheikh, France has never realized laicism with regard to the Muslims, neither in colonial Algeria nor today. He leaves no doubt that the separation of religion and politics should be imposed on *every* religion, forcefully if need be, and even goes so far as to claim a mutually enriching relationship between Islam and laicism. In his view, Muslims today are literally deprived of the benefits of laicism and are not recognized as full members of French society. The pretexts for this are manifold. On the one hand, the lack of a religious representation on the part of the Muslims is deplored, although, as Bencheikh stresses, the State at the same time refuses to acknowledge the Christian clergy as a legal entity. On the other hand, a number of points of friction are put forward in order to prove a basic incompatibility between Islam and laicism. Most of these points, the mufti explains, are either not Islamic, such as female circumcision and forced marriages of young girls, while others, such as regulations of divorce, are easily adaptable to French secular laws, if understood correctly. At no point, however, does his radical approach become more unmistakable than in the question of the veil (see also Freyer-Stowasser, 1997): True, he concedes, the wearing of the *hijab* is unequivocally prescribed by the Koran. But Islam was not the only culture to demand a certain habit. Moreover, it is not a religious symbol of Islam, because Islam refuses every symbol. If there is a conflict between this piece of clothing and laicist requirements, the latter by far outweigh the former. Moreover, there are more adequate contemporary

forms of guarding the moral integrity of women: "Today, the veiling of Muslim women in France is the laicist, free and obligatory school" (Bencheikh, 1998:145).

It hardly comes as a surprise under these circumstances that Bencheikh calls for a thorough reform of Islamic theology, which he calls anachronistic. In this sense, he pleads for a return to the only authority in Islam, the Koran, that ought to be read in light of the *ma'ruf*. Bencheikh defines this well-known Koranic concept as recognition of what the dominating intelligence at a given time and in a given surrounding has acknowledged as "good" (ibid:183ff.).⁵ It is therefore a relative concept, open to change, and provides the opportunity for Muslims to develop a theology of minority. Muslims have to understand that in today's world they are a minority among other minorities; otherwise, they are in danger of being excluded from the new global order. Only human rights, freedom of conscience and religious confession, and laicism can serve as reliable guides for the entire humanity (ibid:188ff.).

In order to counter obstruction from self-appointed, sclerotic *imams*, who try to indoctrinate believers with a permanent guilt complex, Bencheikh calls for the education of the religious staff in France in a theological and pedagogical research institute. This would also be a first step for the French local community (*jama'a*) to become independent of the Muslim community as a whole (*umma*) and to guard its autonomy. The institute that he envisages goes back to an initiative of several Muslim and Orientalist intellectuals, above all Mohammed Arkoun,⁶ and should be affiliated with the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes. This is not the only place where the reader encounters the critical spirit of Arkoun, and indeed *Marianne et le Prophète* (Bencheikh, 1998:219ff.) is reminiscent of Arkoun's (1992) *L'Islam. Approche critique*, that equally stands for a thoroughly laicist call for reform in Islam. That such an appeal may be difficult to realize is implicitly admitted by Bencheikh himself, when he complains about the prospects of an Islamic-Christian dialogue: The well-educated Muslims who belong to the academic class are suspected by many Christians of being overly occidentalized, and are therefore refused as adequate partners (Bencheikh, 1998:256f.). This, however, also holds true for the majority of mostly traditional-minded Muslims, who keep their distance from Western studies of Islam and their representatives, and from those Muslim intellectuals whom they consider Westernized and aloof from their origins. Bencheikh does not go into this dilemma, but it may be presumed that this academic and, in a way, elitist claim will hardly enhance acceptance of his thesis on the part of the ordinary Muslim believer.

5 For an excellent overview of the history and the many facets of the Koranic concept of "enjoining good and forbidding evil" (*al-amr bi-l-ma'ruf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar*), see Cook (2000).

6 The other persons involved are Jean Baubérot, Ali Merad, Daniel Gimaret, Guy Monnot, and Pierre Lory.

Soheib Bencheikh's book was intensely discussed when it appeared, but in the meantime, it seems to have fallen somewhat into oblivion. This is certainly not the case with the second spokesman of European Islam to be discussed here: Tariq Ramadan. The son of Sa'id Ramadan and grandson of Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, does not need an introduction. Public opinion is deeply divided over whether he is to be trusted as an honest broker of the Muslim cause and as an advocate of a European Islam, or whether he should be considered a wolf in sheep's clothing. In autumn 2003, his invitation to speak to the European Social Forum in Paris aroused public attention, particularly after he had published an article shortly before in which he heavily criticized French intellectuals in a way that earned him the sharp reproach of being anti-Semitic.⁷ In 2004, the American authorities revoked his visa and thus made it impossible for him to take up his professorship at Notre Dame University; lately, he has become the most controversial Muslim figure in the West at large.

The book with which Ramadan first appeared as a major figurehead of European Islam is his *To be a European Muslim* (1999), that has been translated into several other languages.⁸ In comparison to Bencheikh's virtually radical and sometimes certainly one-sided approach, Ramadan's concept is much more elusive and anything but consistent. At first glance, his main concern seems to be identical to Bencheikh's, namely to help bring about a European identity of Islam. He therefore speaks of the search for an Islamic conception of modernity, of delineating a European Islamic law and of the necessity to shape an Islam that is rooted in the universe of European culture (Ramadan, 1999:136, 138ff., 245). Islam, he maintains, has the potential for dynamic interpretation and the ability for acculturation (1999:24, 245). His aim, professed several times, is to show Muslims the proper middle path between a blind adoption of Western standards and forgetting Islam, on the one hand, and the equally blind withdrawal to a rigid and formalistic interpretation of Islam, on the other. The former would result in "Muslims without Islam"; the latter, in their living "in Europe outside Europe" (1999:220ff.). Old concepts, such as division of the world into *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb*, are therefore no longer considered feasible. Moreover, the later construct of

7 See, e.g., the furious debate in French journals triggered by Ramadan's article "Critique des (nouveaux) intellectuels communautaires", that was, according to its author, refused by the newspapers *Le Monde* and *Libération*, and was finally published on the website (http://oumma.com/imprimer.php?id_article=719; accessed December 12, 2003); regarding his French critics, see *Le Point*, October 10, 2003, p. 138; *Le Nouvel Observateur*, October 9 and 23, 2003; see also *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, November 16, 2003, and June 13, 2004, p. 27. In addition, the anti-globalization movement Attac, that was the main organizer of the European Social Forum, felt the need to clarify its relations with Ramadan (<http://www.france.attac.org/a2236>, accessed February 14, 2004).

8 For reviews of the book, see *Welt des Islams* 43 (2003): 300-302; *Orient* 45 (2004): 141-145.

defining certain parts of the non-Muslim world as *dar al-'ahd*, that had been invented to circumvent the principal prohibition of living under non-Muslim rule, is of no avail with regard to Europe. Ramadan ostensibly endeavors to be up-to-date on the discourse in the social sciences by adopting the appropriate jargon of center and periphery and combining his matter with a critique of globalization.

Ramadan's counter-concept of a modernization of Islam in the European context concentrates totally on Islamic law, and it is precisely there that some contradictions and gaps in his argumentation become most obvious. On the one hand, he pleads for the development of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) on the European level and an Islamic conception of modernity, going even so far as to stress that Muslims must not confuse a particular moment in their history with the essence of their religion (1999:65, 136, 140). On the other hand, however, he believes that renovation of the law and its application to the European environment means an uncompromising return to pristine Islam, an Islam that has to be purged of all accidental and secondary influences of its traditional interpreters. The demand for a return to the ideal state of early Islam, which is a standard argument of all traditionalist and fundamentalist (*salafiyya*) tendencies in Islam, runs through his book continually like a prayer wheel (1999:77, 137, 144, 154ff.). This he deems the more necessary, as Muslims, especially in Europe, have abandoned their collective duty (*fard kifaya*) of practicing their belief (1999:152f.). The underlying view of history and theology is a conservative one: The Koran was revealed in order to correct the previous messages that people had tampered with, and, as the last revelation, it remains the unchangeable norm for all Muslims forever (1999:79ff.). This wording reflects the thoroughly traditional concepts of the corruption of the Holy Scriptures preceding the Koran (i.e., the *tahrif* suspicion),⁹ on the one hand, and the finality of all prophethood, culminating in Muhammad, on the other hand (Friedmann, 1986). As such, it leaves little space for historizing the prescriptions of the Holy book and re-reading them in a contemporary context, as Bencheikh called for. Also, Islamic history is depicted as a chain of aberrations, starting with the Umayyads, who let several innovations blur the original purity of Islam, e.g., the introduction of new practices in public affairs under Persian, Byzantine and Indian cultural influence, the geographical scattering of the '*ulama*', the factional strife within Islam, and the deliberate falsification of the traditions of the Prophet (Ramadan, 1999:54ff.).

Koran and the normative example of the Prophet, as laid down in the *hadith*, form the strict frame for every single action of a Muslim, and, by consequence, all behavior has to be measured against this ideal. In his endeavor to describe Islamic law as flexible

9 See also Koran verses 3/78, 4/46, and 7/162. On *tahrif*, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd ed.), Leiden 1954ff., vol. X, pp. 111f.; see also Adang (1996). On the significance of this issue for the internal Islamic debate between Sunnism and Shiism, see Brunner (2001).

and adaptable, Ramadan repeatedly stresses his rejection of the *halal-haram* dichotomy (1999:23f., 96ff., 145). Yet, at the same time, he leaves no doubt that every legal prescription, every individual action, has to conform to the binding classification conceived by the jurists, who divided all human behavior into five categories: obligatory, recommended, permitted, disapproved and forbidden (ibid:96f.). Declaring the forbidden lawful and vice versa is tantamount to polygamy (*shirk*), which is the gravest of all sins. His asseveration to return to the primordial Islam of Muhammad and to skip cold formalism notwithstanding, Ramadan gets caught in wholly traditional disputes of later times, e.g., when he briefly alludes to the role of women in society. Citing his favorite scholar of reference, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, he concludes that the interpretation of Abu Hanifa, who allowed women to go to the mosque and demanded their consent before marriage, are more suited to today's needs than the interpretation of al-Shafi'i, Ibn Hanbal, and others whose restrictive views were owed to the respective social context (ibid:131). Likewise, the main reason certain forms of music are licit is because the chains of the transmitters of the *hadiths* that are cited by the opponents of this view contain unreliable persons. This again is a perfectly traditional method of jurisprudence (ibid:250ff.). Especially in these legal passages, the influence of Yusuf al-Qaradawi is not to be overlooked: Ramadan's interpretation of *halal* and *haram* is noticeably based on Qaradawi's teaching, and the latter's standard work of reference, *Al-Halal wa-l-haram fi l-Islam* (1380/1960), as well as other scriptures, are either constantly quoted (ibid:88, 100, 109, 112, 129ff.) or paraphrased without explicit reference (ibid:253, 256).¹⁰

As far as the legal classification of the European surroundings is concerned, Ramadan refutes, as already mentioned, the old terms *dar al-harb* and *dar al-'ahd*. Instead, he pleads for *dar al-da'wa* or *dar al-shahada* (1999:175ff., esp. 177f. and 185f.). *Da'wa* for him means the freedom to accept knowledge, what makes a person a believer, whereas the unbeliever is he who received knowledge but does not accept it. The inspiration for this conception comes, as he frankly states, from the notion *fiqh ad-da'wa* that was developed in Egypt in the 1930s (he does not openly address the Muslim Brotherhood) and developed into "a very fruitful sphere of thought" (1999:68). It is probably here that the difference between Ramadan's approach and that of Bencheikh becomes most visible. For Tariq Ramadan, laicism is completely beyond any discussion, and consequently the term hardly at all figures on his pages. Referring to Pope John

10 Qaradawi's (1380/1960) *Al-Halal wa-l-haram fi l-Islam* has also been translated into many major European languages: *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, London 1985; *Le licite et l'illicite en Islam*, Paris 1990; *Erlaubtes und Verbotenes im Islam*, München 1989; *Halal en Haram*, Delft 1993; *Halal i haram u Islamu*, Sarajevo 1997. A Chinese version appeared in Kuwait in 1991. Interestingly enough, Ramadan, in his latest book (2004:6, 53), distances himself cautiously from Qaradawi over the question of the establishment of a specific form of Islamic jurisprudence for Islamic minorities living in a non-Muslim environment.

Paul II, Ramadan calls laicism “as it is understood in industrial societies an umbrella, behind which in reality atheism and irreligiosity are hidden” (1999:224). Despite his constant affirmation that Islam has to find a specific and appropriate realization in the West, different from the Asian or African one, he identifies the actual foundation of Muslim identity in “the significance of being Muslim, proceeding from the Islamic principles, free from their specific cultural forms” (ibid:144, 235). Ultimately, the unspoken tension between the Europeanness of Muslim identity and the absolute and transcendental principles of the Islamic religion is solved in favor of the latter. For Bencheikh, the final goal is independence from the *umma*, for Ramadan, Muslim identity is presented as a unified one, local cultures being merely a veneer.

The conditions in France, where the State imposes an uncompromising laicism on the various religions, may be in a way unique in Europe. This is not to say, however, that things are less complicated in other countries.¹¹ As an example, consider the intense debate in Germany over the feasibility of religious instruction for Muslim pupils in secondary schools that has been going on for several years. Since the principles of public religious education are regulated by the German Constitution (in articles 7.3 and 141 of the *Grundgesetz*, this being the only school subject to be addressed by constitutional law), this question is bound to have grave consequences for the relations between the Muslims living in the country and the majority society.¹² Consequently, there has recently been an attempt to define these relations that has aroused a lively discussion in the German media. In February 2002, the Central Council of Muslims in Germany (*Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland*), one of the umbrella organizations of Muslims in Germany, published an “Islamic charter”, the 21 articles of which were to stipulate the attitude of the Muslims towards the European states and their society. Moreover, and perhaps unintentionally, it revealed a short insight into Muslim self-understanding in a Western surrounding.¹³

The charter was ostensibly created in the climate of the September 11 attacks and served the purpose of calming down public irritation. Yet, the difficulties of integration, acculturation, or at least responding to public expectations became visible from the very beginning.¹⁴ Thus, articles 3 and 4 state that the Koran as “the authentic word of God ... restored and confirmed pure monotheism as the fundamental truth not only

11 The French and German ways of dealing with Islam are examined in detail in Escudier et al. (2003). Regarding the French situation, see also Haut Conseil à l'intégration (2001).

12 On the question of Muslim religious instruction in German schools, see Rohe (2001:155-174); on the juristic background, see Heckel (1999).

13 For an English translation of the charter, see the website of the *Zentralrat*: <http://www.islam.de/?site=sonstiges/events/charta&di=en>. Regarding the organization, see also Spuler-Stegemann (2002:107-110).

14 For a more detailed discussion of the charter, see Brunner (2002); Kandel (2002).

held by Abraham but by all messengers of God". This, however, amounts to the traditional Islamic claim that Jews and Christians had more or less intentionally falsified God's message and that Muhammad's final revelation did away with these former and incomplete scriptures.¹⁵

However, ambiguity also remained beyond purely theological concepts, i.e., in questions that directly pertain to the integration of Islam into Western society. Article 13 of the charter states that "there is no contradiction between the divine rights of the individual, anchored in the Koran, and the core right as embodied in the Western Human Rights Declarations" – which automatically raises questions about rights beyond the core sphere of the Human Rights Declaration. In article 14, religious pluralism as acknowledged by the Koran is recognized – a pluralism, it should be remembered, that is restricted by the Koran under certain conditions (verse 9/29) to Jews and Christians. Finally, as regards the role of men and women, article 6 states that they "share the same task in life: to recognize God, to serve Him, and to obey His commands", which does not necessarily imply equal rights for both sexes.

Even this somewhat modest form of a pledge of loyalty, though, was too much for some members of the Central Council. One of them, a leading representative of the Munich Islamic Center that is ideologically close to the Muslim Brotherhood, publicly denounced the charter's declaration that Muslims in the West do not seek to establish a clerical theocracy (article 12). The spokesman of the Munich group, a German convert to Islam by the name of Ahmad von Denffer, called this an attempt to deceive the Western public, since there could be no doubt that striving for enforcement of Islamic law, as demanded by the Koran, has to remain the ultimate goal of all Muslims. Ultimately, von Denffer (2002:fasc.2, pp. 7f., 10-16) insisted, the charter did not serve the general interest of Muslims in Germany, as the Zentralrat had acted only on its own behalf.

It is clear that the integration of Muslims into European society is far from achieved. Reservations on both sides continue to run high, and the internal Muslim debate is anything but consistent. Therefore, complaints against the unfair Western demand that Muslims first form a single representation in order to articulate their claims are certainly more than justified. Intellectuals like Soheib Bencheikh and Tariq Ramadan are representatives of a new and young form of Islam (Bencheikh was born in 1961, Ramadan in 1962). Yet, at the same time, they show the inner variety of the discussion, certainly not without revealing second thoughts of those who claim to speak for their co-religionists. That the Western audience will consider some approaches more sympathetic than others is a different matter. But finding a *modus vivendi* between religious minorities and the secular state is certainly not a question of sympathy. It is one of necessity.

¹⁵ See note 9, above.

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