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Abstract

Zwischen Universalismus und Relativismus - Gedanken zu einem interkulturellen Dialog mit China

Karl-Heinz Pohl

The contrary positions of China and the West concerning some of the most heatedly debated issues in the arena of international politics - human rights and democracy - can be characterized as relativistic vs. universalistic. This essay argues that these issues should not be seen from an ideological but from a historical perspective. It should be kept in mind that the present manifestations of cultures are a result of ongoing evolutionary processes of both intracultural discourses as well as intercultural exchange and assimilation. An intercultural dialogue between China and the West should be build on 1) sensitivity to other historical experiences, 2) acquisition of a core knowledge about the philosophical/religious roots of other cultures, 3) discussion of similarities and differences in the respective cultural traditions, and 4) openness and readiness to learn from one another. Hence, dialogue should not be seen as a way to lecture the partner in a student-teacher relationship but - with a hermeneutic intention - as a means to be informed by and about the other, thus leading to a process of mutual learning and to a change of views of both sides.