

Constructive confrontation

Do I have enough inner freedom to create distance in a debate? Confrontation can clarify a relationship.

**But you do not believe because you are not my sheep.
John 10,26**

He was known as a strict teacher who did not compromise, they said. He tested every lesson and was a proponent of memorization. He demanded discipline and this for the whole nine yards. The presentation of the new Latin professor was perfectly staged and it did not fail to have an effect. We were known as a difficult class and at fourteen were in our crummiest years. First we were like one struck dumb then, indignant, we practised for our revolt. This was nipped in the bud. When it turned out that we would not be able to keep this teacher two years later the grief was perceptible. We had grown into a creative and capable Latin class and the alleged despot, who liked to joke with us and about himself, had turned out to be the charming favourite of the pupils. Upon his departure he invited us to a barbeque in his garage. I acquired a part of my love for ancient languages and philosophy from him. How did he manage to break our unwillingness and awaken our excitement? In his first, confrontational presentation he created an external distance while at the same time awaking our aggression; this was quickly transformed into positive energy due to the success of learning.

Jesus was also a master of the art of confrontation and creating distance. "You do not believe," he says in the face of those who are actually searching for a relationship to him and demand confessions from him; those who are, however, internally undecided. He wants to clarify the relationship. He awakens the consciousness which is required in certain phases of a decision. Do you or do you not believe? Do you want to learn something with me or don't you? With this character trait Jesus breaths the spirit of the prophets of ancient Israel who also did not spare Kings hard confrontations. Like when Jeremiah is imprisoned by King Zidkija for predicting the conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (Jeremiah 37). Today writers like Amir Hassan Cheheltan carry on this spirit of intellectual confrontation. In his new novel *Revolution Street Teheran* he allows the inner division of the Iranian society to take form. "September 11th" revealed the inner division of the world not with intellectual means but rather with terror. Pictures of airplanes flying into sky scrapers have burned themselves into the consciousness of the world public and have made this day a symbol of a destructive manner of confrontation. It called forth a crisis in the cultural world climate. Even in daily encounters the quality with which we confront one another it is decisive. This influences the emotional climate in the family and on the job.

Do I have enough inner freedom to create distance in a debate? Can I confront others in such a way that it contributes to clarification in the relationship and has a positive effect in the long run?