

On the stubbornness to protect ones dignity

External challenges threatening ones lifeline. What helps me remain innerly upright?

**Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him.
John 10,31**

"Oh God, how badly you shoot!" It is said that Andreas Hofer called this out to the firing squad that was executing him on the 20th of February 1810 -- as he was still alive after twelve shots from the six French soldiers. At any rate Julius Mosens passed these words on in the song "Zu Mantua in Banden" composed in 1831, which went on to become the provincial song of Tyrol in 1848. Its popularity is due not least of all to circumstances; it expressed the needs of the Tyrolean singers to never ever give up patriotic pride, even in light of unavoidable defeat and mortal threat. Gallows humour or irrational triumphalism? At any rate a healthy portion of stubbornness to never surrender to a greater power at any cost, even in the face of defeat, and to retain ones own honour even if only through the means of derision. Perhaps it is this character trait that makes the mythical Hofer so likeable, so that even in the context of a post-modern 200-year celebration of Tyrolean primary school pupils dressed in leather trousers they allow themselves to be carried away to sing, "oh how badly you shoot" in the sixth stanza with special gusto. Even if "we Tyrolean men" have long since become brothers with our Bavarian and French guests.

It is not my intention to compare Andreas Hofer with Jesus. But the character trait of a certain stubbornness that insists on ones own dignity is admittedly not unknown to John's Jesus -- as long as one forswears seeing him in a romanticised picture in the style of the Nazarene. With his claim to be "one" with God, Jesus provokes his Jewish brother in faith so much that they arm themselves with stones in order to kill him. They don't only act out of blind rage, but probably in reference to the Biblical religious injunction to stone a blasphemer from ones own people (Leviticus 24,16). The conflict has escalated, the threat is deadly. How to react? It would be easy to call forth humility and modesty, to say it wasn't really meant like that. But Jesus remains upright, counters the furious men standing around him by saying he has done good works among them, why then should they stone him? He didn't want to hurt their religious feelings, but explains from where he draws his exceptional powers. The men change their mind and accept the arguments. The de-escalation has been successful.

We are normally protected from deadly threats from our social surroundings. But are psychological dynamics which we also have to master in everyday life mirrored in these scenes? Expectations from all sides, the flood of needs, the much-acclaimed atmosphere of crisis, a lack of respect or simply the fear of failure can threaten our lifeline. What do I feel threatens me? How do I deal with it? In what patterns do I react? Do I have an inner shelter to protect my dignity?