

Der Anfang aller Dinge : Naturwissenschaft und Religion [Hans Küng]

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Proud of Tom Lüthi

Thank you for the report about Tom Lüthi. Our warmest congratulations to him as Sportsman of the Year. My father, Armin Scheurer, was the first ever Sportsman of the Year in 1950. I wasn't even born then, but of course I am now very proud of his achievements in athletics and football. We have lived in Western Australia for 18 years, but still look forward to the "Swiss Review" and are proud of what "our" Swiss people accomplish.

VERENA HAENNI-SCHEURER
AND FAMILY, GINGIN, WESTERN
AUSTRALIA

Education System

I was happy to see that the Swiss are finally going to harmonise their education system. We moved from Lucerne to Geneva in October, 1959. Overnight my daughter went from being a German-speaking kindergartner to a French-speaking first grader. In those days Lucerne began the school year in April and Geneva began in September. I spent several weeks before the move teaching her to read – in French – so she would fit in to the more advanced class in Geneva. Fortunately she handled this well, but some students would suffer from moving from a German to a French education. You're either six months ahead of your former school or six months behind. Those poor kids.

JANE BERNARD, BEAVERTON,
OREGON

Destroyed for good?

Thank you for your excellent magazine. The article "The other face of Switzerland" which states that 11 ha of land are developed every day, should read: destroyed for good. The concreting of the best farming land and scenic jewels goes on unabated. For me a train journey from Zurich to Berne after an interval of a few years makes this fact quite obvious. People in higher authority don't seem

to notice. For them it is progress, good for business and employment. J. Gotthelf wrote somewhere that if road constructions continued, peasants would have to grow potatoes on their head! Future generations will curse their ancestors for the destruction of their heritage. To replace farms with huge shopping centers and then import food might work at the moment, but for how long?

HANSRUEDI SCHMID, TASMANIA,
AUSTRALIA

The Pillars of Switzerland

I refer to the entertaining reader's letter by Eric Haywood from Dublin, and would like to join in the exchange of ideas about Swiss "Must-haves". I too am a homesick Swiss national, living near Vienna and operating an active "cultural exchange" with Switzerland. I bring my sons, who are now back living in Basle, reminiscences from childhood, and I always have a long list for Migros or Coop. However, my wants are a bit different from Mr Haywood's. I can't live without kirsch batons, plenty of Swiss chocolate, veal sausages, Buendnerfleisch, fondue mix, and Raclette, Emmental, Gruyère, Tilsit and Vacherin cheeses. And everything has to be somehow "safely stowed away", because the customs people are always so nosy. That is what annoys me most, because we are able to carry such "luxury goods" back and forth all over Europe. I would expect a bit more tolerance from the Swiss in that respect. As it is, I drive across into Feldkirch three times a year with my heart in my mouth, but everything has been fine nearly every time.

SUZANNE DYSZKANT,
MARIA ENZERSDORF,
AUSTRIA

The surprising announcement was issued by Rome at the beginning of October last year: Pope Benedict XVI, elected to the papacy just a few months previously, received eminent Swiss theologian Hans Küng for a private audience. Benedict's predecessor, John Paul II, never offered the professor of theology at Germany's University of Tübingen an audience. It was the Polish Pope who in 1979 rescinded the critical Swiss theologian's authority to teach Catholic theology. Küng had challenged papal authority and the Pope's infallibility on matters of faith and custom and questioned Catholic teaching on other fundamental issues, such as sexuality, the enforced celibacy of priests and the right of women to join the priesthood. Yet at their meeting in the Pope's summer residence in Castelgandolfo, Benedict and Küng talked for four hours "on the question of global ethics and the rational dialogue between the natural sciences and Christian faith."

Hans Küng's new book, "Der Anfang aller Dinge" ("The Beginning of All Things") discusses the relationship between natural science and religion and the rapprochement between reason and Christian faith. From the standpoint of an enlightened theology he asks such questions as: In the beginning God? Creation or evolution? Is everything random? His highly acclaimed work ranges from the Big Bang – the gigantic cosmic explosion 13.7 billion years ago – to modern research on the brain. For Küng, mathematical natural science is fully justified and no theologian can question it by citing God and the Bible. But natural science provides no answer to humanity's eternal questions: Where did we come from? Where are we going? Why is the world as it is? The ultimate reason, the eternal secret of our existence, is "God". Because: "Whoever accepts the existence of God knows about the origin and ancient mystery of reality."

Life has been evolving on earth for 3.5 billion years, but humans have only existed for the past 200,000 years. The chapter on "Creation or Evolution" is one of the most thought-provoking in the entire book. Darwin's theory of plant and animal evolution contradicts the Bible and to this day is rejected by Christian fundamentalists. Küng discusses scientifically proven evolution up to and including the structures of higher forms of plant and animal life. He can identify no special intervention by a God of creation. "The evolution of life is an event that must be explained in physical-chemical terms." However: "Man appears to be a unique product of evolution, and due to his consciousness, language and freedom enjoys a unique relationship with his environment – with "heaven and earth."

Both natural science and religion, according to Küng, have their legitimacy and unique characteristics. Religion can ascribe

a sense to all evolution which natural science cannot. "Faith allows us to recognise that the world has been created by the word of God." A serious, enlightened trust in God as the creator and ender of the world and of human beings – this is Hans Küng's key motto. ROLF RIBI



Hans Küng: Der Anfang aller Dinge. Naturwissenschaft und Religion. Piper Verlag, Munich 2005. CHF 33.40, EUR 18.90. The complete works of Hans Küng are available from Piper Verlag: www.piper.de