

# EDUCATING TOWARD HAPPINESS IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE WISDOM AND PEACE

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## THE TRUE CAUSE OF CONFLICTS

Since the dawn of humanity, human beings – regardless of their culture or religion, political or economic system, from East to West and from South to North – have lived in a constant inner struggle between the voice of the consciousness – which alone knows their real needs and guides them toward happiness – and that of the subconscious. The latter, shaped from childhood by doubts, fears and feelings of injustice, leads people to make choices that undermine their personal growth and that of their family and circle. Unaware of this danger, and unaware that they can modify these functional automatisms, they let their emotional programming shape social norms, which in turn impede individuals from reaching an appropriate balance. Let us consider a few representative examples of these dualities that engender familial, occupational and social conflict, discrimination, racism and, in the worst case, hostilities between countries and civil war: the habit of not acknowledging one's good qualities and of subjugating oneself, denying one's needs and confusing responsibility with sacrifice, of keeping silent about what one senses (intuition) or feels (feelings and emotions) and allowing misunderstandings (a source of anger and conflict) to emerge, of being afraid of one's own strength or that of others, while refusing to understand the difference between determination and aggressiveness, etc.

A society or people has a "personality", just as an individual does, and this personality responds to specific qualitative norms and emotional programming that can be defined, developed and intensified over the course of its history, depending on its interpretation of events and the attitudes of the countries that surround it or with which it is otherwise in contact. Unaware of these risks, the society or country will pass on such norms and emotional programming from generation to generation.

As an example, we may point to a form of emotional programming of adults in many Western societies. Their fear of imposing an overly restrictive upbringing on younger generations education leads them to confuse respect for the individual with excessive permissiveness, and ultimately makes their children selfish, indifferent and weak, incapable of the civic-mindedness and long-term view needed to ensure the sustainable development of their societies.

Some developing countries and war-torn countries are subject to other emotional problems that lead them to submit to oppression or to oppress others. This situation will generate a feeling of injustice and suffering, engendering a defensive attitude that leads a people who have been victims to become the oppressors in their turn. Relations with neighboring clans or countries will thus be tainted by hatred and resentment, which engender repression and fear.

## THE ENTAILING CONSEQUENCES

If they ignore or refuse to recognize this, the powerful nations, developing countries and countries emerging from conflict will suffer many adverse consequences. Generally speaking, they will suffer from a lack of clarity about their needs and those of humanity, and will be at risk of destroying their cultural, economic and spiritual assets by adhering to misleading and chimerical values.

## THE POWERFUL NATIONS

The powerful nations will develop a narcissistic view of themselves that gives rise to a feeling of superiority and contempt for other cultures. The assurance of impunity and a paternalistic, demanding attitude with no respect for differences will lead them to believe they are acting for the good of other countries, whereas in fact they will oppress them and block their accession to material and spiritual independence. The powerful nations will be feared and will foster dissimulation, opportunism, dishonesty and hatred in other countries.

## THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Developing countries and countries emerging from conflict will feel two contradictory emotions: a sense of weakness and inferiority, leading to a backlash and a feeling of aversion toward the unjust attitude of their neighbors or the protectionist, calculating stance of their Western economic partners. Constantly in a state of failure, they will inevitably feel fear and discouragement regarding their future, while trying to live in isolation or to (re)take by force an independence for which they are not prepared. Appearances will also encourage them to consider the well-off countries as models. Their only goals will be the egoistic, illusory ones of wealth and power, which make them subject to the contempt and manipulations of the great powers. These factors will undermine their desire for peace and will expose them to injustice, violent clashes, civil war, economic problems, etc.

## COUNTRIES IN CONFLICT OR POST-CONFLICT SITUATIONS

Countries in conflict or post-conflict situations will suffer all the more that their emotional programming – fears and mistrust, feeling of being isolated and misunderstood, despair and disillusioned ideals, and above all feeling of injustice – will worsen and lead them, from generation to generation, to be unable to forgive and genuinely reconstruct. The hate towards those whom they will consider as their enemies and the refusal to open up in a trustful way to people that surround them will lead them to inner withdrawal.

As for the younger generations, some will be disillusioned and look down on the innocence of youth, the others will find refuge in a permanent control of their feelings by expressing violence and contempt for life or discouragement and sadness.

## ACCEPTANCE OF THIS REALITY

If, on the contrary, they acknowledge this reality and set out on the task of awareness-raising and openness concerning the responsibilities of a nation or an individual, a society and its elected officials will develop a clearer judgment concerning their own needs and those of their partners and adversaries. They will also express without fear or ambiguity what they want and what they cannot tolerate, while acting in accordance with their words. They will select honest, courageous and efficient associates who are aware of their own value but also of their responsibilities with regard to their decision to serve a common cause.

They will feel love and compassion for their constituents, cultivating neutrality, trust and determination – three qualities that will ensure the soundness and success of their undertakings. This state of mind will enable them to create situations and attract partners that meet the needs of their countries. The resulting material, cultural and spiritual balance will give all citizens a sense of importance and worth within a society that recognizes them, respects them and regards them as partners.

Interestingly, refusal of this approach will undermine the development of both the great powers and developing and post-conflict countries, in different ways and through different emotional attitudes (victims and oppressors), whereas acceptance of it will lead them to embrace the same choices and the same attitudes, regardless of their economic policies or religion, and will enable them to share a new vision of humanity in full knowledge of its powers and responsibilities, which require self-respect and solidarity with others – two qualities that are vital to the growth of our society and to a balanced distribution of wealth.

## LASTING CONFLICT RESOLUTION THROUGH EDUCATION

We thus can see that, regardless of the context, lasting resolution of conflicts depends on an educational effort beginning in childhood that can identify, not the symptoms of conflict, but rather the true causes, which are forms of emotional programming at both the individual and societal levels. It also requires the availability, on a daily basis, of specific educational techniques that meet the concrete needs of human beings functioning in a society. Lastly, it offers genuine forgiveness based on the replacement of feelings of guilt by an acceptance of and indulgence toward one's own errors – along with an understanding of one's responsibilities, of course.

It is imperative that this educational effort be directed to both young people and adults. The latter will learn to play their role of wise elders and guides who must initiate future generations by their example, their advice and a determination to build a better, worthier world. They will also encourage young people to recognize their strengths and gifts, to identify their difficulties without being assailed by doubts or feelings of failure, and to assimilate the difference between mastery, which brings assurance and calm, and the need for control, which elicits fear and aggressiveness.

## EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

Regardless of age, the educational approach is based on the same principles and the same stages, although the teaching methods and language used are adapted to each personality and each situation. The general principles are as follows :

- Learn to decrypt one's gifts and good qualities, to identify and accept one's true needs, to recognize one's fears, doubts and anger.
- Explore the feelings emanating from the conscious mind, which indicate the best choices for an individual with respect to others and to society (e.g. the need to be happy, to be worthy, to be understood, to love oneself).
- Accept without shame the fact that fear and anger have been programmed into one's subconscious by one's interpretation of events and what one experiences unconsciously since birth (e.g. the impression that one is not understood, fear of being neglected or losing one's freedom, self-punishment through lack of love, indifference stemming from selfishness, opportunism or cowardice).
- Accept to change one's conventional attitudes and habitual way of doing things, relying on the reality of one's free will and power.
- Learn to use educational techniques that are suited to each situation concerning a people or an individual.
- Display strength of will, perseverance, determination and patience, in the knowledge that educating an individual subconscious or a collective unconscious takes time and experience. It is natural to encounter difficulties and obstacles in changing emotional programming, but such programming is after all only a habitual way of doing things – it is in no way part of one's fate.
- Lastly, feel recognition, gratitude and pride with respect to the results achieved in various areas of endeavor through one's willpower and work.

## TRAINING PROGRAMS

**For adults :** (see Appendix 4: "Mediator Training" program)

Initial mediator training (basic concepts and working techniques) lasts 9 days. Most trainees subsequently elect to take further training of 4 days a year, which may be supplemented by retreats on (re)structuring or mediation between opposing parties.

**For children :** (see Appendix 5: “Philosophy School” program)

The course is taught by instructors who have taken the mediator training course, along with a two-day specialized supplement and follow-up throughout the year. In Switzerland, the courses are currently given outside the school system, with two hours of class per month. The participants are grouped by age: 6-11 years, 12-15 years, and 16-21 years.

#### SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

These two programs and their content can be adapted according to the social and cultural context as well as to immediate and future needs. The philosophy courses for children and teenagers can be taught in schools.

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