

**INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHICAL AWAKENING SCHOOL  
FOR CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS  
(6 TO 21 YEARS)**

---

Education is of fundamental importance in the development of any human being. It shapes the character of children, their ideal, their view of themselves, their family and circle, and the society in which they live. Parents and teachers prompt children to discover their personality traits, the talents from which they can benefit, and the pitfalls arising from their emotional problems.

Their work will not be finished, however, unless they inculcate self-love and self-respect in children.

Only on this condition will children be happy, motivated, and able later on to shoulder their role as adults and to help build the just, peaceful and balanced society that our world needs so badly.

Many adults who themselves had a repressive upbringing feel the need to respect the independence and the needs of their children, but they often tend to confuse freedom with permissiveness. This mindset, albeit based on good intentions, saddles the child with an inappropriate burden: that of being responsible for choices that do not correspond to his or her level of maturity. This misinterpretation of freedom does not make children responsible; rather, it makes them weak and selfish. Moreover, it deprives them of the possibility – essential to their happiness – of admiring and respecting the adults who are supposed to guide them in life.

Through her long experience of individual and family therapy, and subsequently through the results of her teaching, Martine Libertino has assembled evidence that children are capable even from early childhood of understanding their emotional difficulties and using the therapeutic techniques proposed to them. In her book “*Réflexions sur l'éveil philosophique de nos enfants*” (“Reflections on the Philosophical Awakening of Our Children”), Martine Libertino presents this evidence and explains to parents and teachers how to understand and guide children.

Alarmed by the increasing anguish of the young and by adults' feeling of incompetence, the Association organized several activities in 2002 to bring the problem to the attention of the authorities and request that courses to sensitize children to philosophical issues be given systematically in schools.

When the authorities showed no interest, Martine Libertino founded her “Philosophical Awakening School for Children and Adolescents”.

As its name indicates, the school seeks to make children aware of their ideal, of their power, and of their responsibilities with respect to their own future welfare and with respect to their families and society. For the moment, the classes (one class per month) are given in the main cities of French-speaking Switzerland, outside the framework of the school system. They are taught by instructors who have taken Martine Libertino's mediator training program, who are bound by a code of professional conduct, and who also follow a program of further training and specialization. Instructors are mandated by the association's executive committee, which is also responsible for course organization and logistics. In the future, this school will extend beyond the borders of Switzerland.

Martine Libertino



## EXCERPTS FROM MARTINE LIBERTINO'S WRITINGS ON EDUCATION

---

### THE CHILD'S PERSONALITY AND UPBRINGING

"Children are born with qualities that will allow their personalities to develop fully if they accept these qualities as genuine and fully recognize that they have a role to play. However, children must be thoroughly aware of their needs and of what makes them tick. Otherwise, there will be confusion between the child's consciousness, which knows and respects his/her needs, and the subconscious, which is the locus of his/her fears, which refuses to acknowledge the truth and seeks to justify itself by putting the responsibility on others or on life."

"...If parents are willing to push back the limits imposed by convention, if they stop giving in, letting themselves be overwhelmed by the least little doubt or by their own difficulties, which make them unable to gauge their children's needs, they will be overjoyed to find that they have resources of love, intelligence, and insight that enable them to feel and detect what is best for the mental equilibrium of their children. But for this to happen, they must first be reconciled with themselves..."

### MISUSE OF FREEDOM

Parents today want to respect the aspirations of their children, because their own parents did not respect theirs. This desire to offer their children a degree of freedom that they themselves often lacked stems not from a mature awareness of the issues but from a feeling of guilt about imposing their authority. Questions concerning their role – "Are we too strict?", "Do we respect our children's needs?" – therefore lead them to misconceptions such as: "I cannot oblige my son or daughter to do what he/she does not want to do, and I cannot act without his/her consent".

This misinterpretation of freedom leads them to offer their children more power and responsibility than the latter can shoulder without feeling the pain of abandonment and without a feeling of injustice that engenders anger and aggressiveness.

Adhering to these educational values means learning not to confuse freedom and egoism. It is chimerical to think that one can love a child or teenager without accepting to guide him/her. Without the thoughtful firmness and reliability of an adult, children will become weak and indifferent both to their own needs and to those of the people around them.

If we do not take action, we will build the society of the future in this image.

Teaching our children to discover and love their true personalities, and then helping them to discover the pitfalls of their nature and to understand their responsibilities, will be the first steps in freeing them from the shackles from which we ourselves suffered. They will then be in sight of the notion of freedom, because the ideal we will have inculcated in them will make them generous, strong and creative.

### THE DUTY OF ADULTS

Today, and for many years now, the problems of childhood are not being resolved in timely fashion, because the adult world does not understand how much our children resemble us and, more important, to what extent they suffer the same way we do. This gives rise to an increasingly widespread misconception, namely that the world of childhood can be understood only by specialists. If we accept this notion, are we not at risk of excessive

permissiveness, and will not parents, believing themselves to be incompetent, leave it to others to deal with the questioning and rebelliousness of their children? Will not teachers – unable to resolve their pupils' difficulties, mere spectators of problems beyond their control – confine themselves to dispensing their lessons, losing their enthusiasm and their desire to pass on knowledge that is so useful to the cultural development of our society? It is time to explore the causes of this problem. What is the reason for violence in schools and depression in adolescence? Why do bulimia and anorexia appear at the threshold of adulthood? Why are suicide, drugs, alcoholism, and addiction to the Internet and virtual games destroying the children of our flesh before our dismayed eyes? In short, what is the reason for the lack of understanding and the pain arising from what we euphemistically call generational conflicts?

The problems inherent in the internal violence of the young – who are subject to anger, fear, lack of confidence and love, disregard of their fundamental needs by a society that is too hard-pressed to linger over the causes of the problem, and that for too long has been treating only the symptoms – could be channeled into a joint process of exploration between educators and children. They could explore the possibility of a shared dialogue and desire to improve the skills of each person in all areas, including that of discovering the real potential of each personality. In the long term, a steady effort along these lines would help to develop fulfilled, well-balanced pupils and students who would certainly feel better motivated for life because they would have a better understanding of the path before them.

Checking the internal violence caused by suffering is a duty for parents, educators and policy-makers alike. The integrity and cohesion of our society and the fate of our youth depend on it. But doesn't the happiness of everyone depend on it? When we look today at the world of childhood, we cannot accept to see its purity tainted, to see the dream dissipate and fade. Faced with such a dismaying spectacle, any human being would feel helpless, and the resulting guilt and anguish would weaken him/her still further. Parents and educators, and indeed all adults, possess the means of making our children happy.

“... Learning to love oneself, understanding the nature of one's needs, believing in one's ideal and future, but most important, realizing that our children resemble us and have identical needs, feel the same kinds of happiness and unhappiness – this is what adults need to assimilate. Because they have been led to believe that knowledge becomes credible only after years of study, they have forgotten their intelligence in matters of life.

Listening to their heart and their consciousness, deriving energy from their fantasies and ideals, and trusting to the simple good sense possessed by every human being will lead them to a more fundamental understanding of their children, because they will understand themselves as well...”

Martine Libertino

#### COPYRIGHT

- Any reproduction, in whole or in part, of the documents relating to the initial and continuing training courses, without the consent of Martine Libertino, is prohibited. All rights reserved for all countries. “Introduction to the philosophical awakening school for children and teenagers (6 to 21 years)” and “Excerpts from Martine Libertino's writings on education” Martine Libertino © 2009