

## Peace through Education to heal the Patriarchal Ego

I will begin by sharing my conviction that *a common root underlies our great collective problems* and that this common source of the world's ills is not spoken of.

Previously it was called the "original sin", but this original sin is hardly mentioned in our modern secular culture, partly because this so very Christian concept is recognized today as closely associated with the error of believing in a genetic transmission of evil. Today we know that there is a cultural and psycho-social transmission of collective evil, which is transmitted from one generation to another like a plague, and I have been proposing to conceive it as the *Patriarchal Evil*, which, unlike original sin, which has been understood as disobedience to God, we can consider instead as disobedience to nature, or to our natural impulses, which have been criminalized through the institution of a violent authority that is said to be endorsed by a divine will.

Such an approach to the problem of peace is far from that of those who seek peace without understanding its necessary context, such as when peace is called for without concern for justice. This is what governments and even the United Nations do, and I think such a pretence is useless, since the pretence of peace without justice can only lead to the resignation of an enduring injustice, which we cannot consider a valid ideal. The very Christian attitude of *giving Caesar what is Caesar's* may favour some and may have been valid centuries back, but it does not seem to me the collective promise in today's world.

I have repeated many times, as others have also said, that peace in the world depends on the peace of the spirit; I have been a thirsty seeker who has learned to meditate in more than one school, and who has made himself known in part by teaching people the cultivation of inner peace. But I don't think the world's problem can be solved through meditation, and it seems to me that hardly a minority has the capacity, the interest, and the opportunity to meditate.

A more acceptable idea (and surely an indispensable requirement for the transformation of the world and the establishment of collective peace), would be the individual transformation of a critical mass of the world's population; because transformation takes place in all generations, even if "many are called and few are chosen". In each generation some make the Great Journey, and even reach the "other shore". But that there have been Saints, known and unknown, through the generations, does not seem sufficient to me for global change, which would require an even more extensive transformation, comparable to the mythical collective crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites: a collective journey to another level of consciousness.

How could it be possible to promote or encourage such a collective change of consciousness? Of course, education would be a great opportunity and a hope, since an adult doesn't change easily, and most don't even want to. Those who feel the need to change are interested in spiritual traditions, therapies, art, and make great efforts in undertaking a path of transformation, but require so much time and the opportunity to concentrate on such a purpose, that it could be compared to that of a drop that intended to go back to the source of a stream in the opposite direction of its current.

During childhood it is easier to heal, however, and pediatricians know how much easier it is to treat children than adults. They get better more easily, and so does the mind that it has not yet “crystallized”. Education could therefore be an antidote to the transmission of the patriarchal mind through generations rather than serving, as it now serves, precisely to the contrary. We are offered, then, a great opportunity to transform the education that we now have, (where we simply learn to pass tests and assimilate superfluous information) into a new education at the service of human development.<sup>1</sup> Is not childhood and youth a time worth using to learn to live as best one can?

A sick society requires a healing education, and healing is not separable from transformation, for metamorphosis is intrinsic to human nature. Only that we are today something like a world of worms that know nothing about butterflies or the existence of metamorphosis. And if we don't have the opportunity to evolve, it's largely because we've developed a culture that prevents it.

What would an alternative education be? It would basically have to understand how to heal the patriarchal mind.

Even before Roman law had made it explicit, it had dominated the institution of the “*pater familias*”, where the father dominates the woman, and in order to do so exerts repressive power over her. Because the patriarchal order is violent, women have been silenced, and today we can understand the violence of male authoritarianism as a response to historical trauma. It becomes more and more clear that violence was considered necessary for survival in a period of great famine.

Historians agree that civilization was the answer to a great challenge, and not much was known about this until we have started discovering its nature, and now it seems to us that the Neolithic period, which followed the melting of glaciers and a time of great flooding, allowed agriculture to develop in the strip that extended from the Sahara to Ukraine through the east. The human species became settled then, and at that time it seems that women constituted an important binder of society, not only for their care of the land, of food, housing, the creation of fabrics and ceramics, etc., but for their maternal and protective inclination.

There is not much data on this period, and the concept of a matrilineal Neolithic society is not universally accepted by anthropologists, nor is it transmitted through school texts. Less is known because the Neolithic period was not very extensive; due to the warming of the earth that ensued after a few millennia, the few fertile areas could no longer continue to feed the large populations in them, and this led to the beginning of vast migrations. That's when humans became “barbaric” predators by moving from the limited violence of hunters to the predatory violence toward other humans. We can affirm that we are children of those barbarians who instituted this depraved way of living through pillage; only that we knew how to rationalize it through great ideals, and especially through religions.

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<sup>1</sup> In the age of information all this is accessible through a cell phone.

It would seem that the history of patriarchy was originally benevolent with the original Pharaohs and also with the first Babylonian Kings, but after the sacerdotal patriarchy, the military patriarchy was established, and finally the economic patriarchy, which would seem not to appear so, because the personal domination of the ancient despots manages to get camouflaged in it, and the despotic will that sustains the system becomes apparently invisible. This is how today majorities celebrate democracy without knowing how much it is a rhetorical and manipulated democracy that we will one day recognize as a neo-fascism. The media, at the service of power, maintains the illusion that governments represent the people and that elections represent the popular will; but power, now embodied in companies rather than people, continues to behave not only as a rapacious scoundrel, but as someone who lies as systematically as Orwell painted it in his famous book “1984.”

Deceit has been intrinsic to this process, and we can say that it was already present in the affirmation that human beings are not good. And it is true that, if we talk about the human beings raised in our corrupt civilization, we are wolves among wolves, as Hobbes pointed out. But Buddhism, Taoism and esoteric Christianity agree that, despite what cynics believe, the human mind is inherently good. Yet, for majorities, cynicism has become a kind of second nature that perpetuates our evil.

Society’s problems are confused with our fundamental evil; and so, it is easy to say that the problem is capitalism, which is actually only the most recent form of exploitation. The problems change: overpopulation, ecology, the economic power of a minority that hegemonizes the rest of the community. Inequality simply existed in ancient times, but today injustice has multiplied, and national governments can no longer protect their populations from the decisions of a global economic empire that was previously non-existent.

But these are all just facets of one basic problem, and so I do not think it is possible to solve them separately. And I do not believe that the patriarchal mind of an adult, nor the patriarchal structure of society, can be changed without great effort. And if neither militarism or the economic system can be modified because of the institutional inertia and implicit authoritarianism of populations, the concept of the *patriarchal mind*, which reproduces from one generation to another like a plague, is important. It is this patriarchal mind that we should look to heal, and I see no other possibility of doing so apart from a new form of education.

The patriarchal mind very likely originated in the family context, where the father became the owner of women and children. And we are so accustomed to the notion of ownership that we no longer realize the extent to which it serves against the health of human relations. If we call to mind what slavery was in America, for example, we know that white people treated slaves worse than animals. Why? Because if you establish that one person owns another, he or she becomes a *thing*, and a thing is no longer a person. A relationship, on the other hand, involves two people, an *I and You*, as Martin Buber explains, and the relationship *I and You* is not the same as the relationship of *I* with a *thing*.

When man is the master or owner of women and children, then a society poor in true human relationships is generated, which can only be seen in the moments of love. Falling in love is like discovering another way of relating; as is motherhood, where the baby is for her mother another

I. But in adult life, pseudo-relationships predominate, and what we ordinarily call love is often a falsification: a voluntary behavior learned as part of the education of a “good child”. And although surely love for the father and for the mother are intrinsic to human nature, it has become gradually degraded, and in the mosaic formulation of love, it has been replaced by *respect*; and respecting the father and mother means that children cannot criticize or be angry with their parents. But when a child cannot get angry, neither does he know what he feels, and he starts deceiving himself, as psychotherapists well know, by the fact that much of therapy consists in the recovery of childhood anger and its acceptance.

The patriarchal mind includes two forms of repression, one of which is of women, and with it, of care and of love. All mammals harbor the capacity of care, collaboration, empathy, solidarity and compassion. But in history, and in our lives today, these skills become scarce as violence predominates, as well as the desire to seize, remove and take. But violent authority also exercises a repressive domain over children; and just as the repression of women militates against caring and solidarity, it militates the repression of the child in the family against the freedom of impulses in each of us. This is what I meant implicitly when talking about the criminalization of natural impulses. Civilization is characterized not so much by urban centers and temples, by its technical progress and the proliferation of the arts, but by the implicit opposition to nature, which we can define as a criminalization of our body or our “inner animal”.

The indigenous people of shamanic cultures, for whom not only animals are sacred, but also our inner animal, do not share such a vision; but the notion that instinct is diabolical is already present in the founding myth of our Judeo-Christian culture, in which God tells Eve to put her heel on the head of the serpent. There is no doubt that the serpent was originally an embodiment of nature and the instinctive in us—but how can it be conceivable that human beings may be obedient to the will of God without them deciding not to obey above all the will of their own nature? Everything tells us that humans, in establishing a patriarchal authoritarian regime, projected on their experience of the divine a more human experience of a repressive and punishing father. But the cost of the civilized world’s turn against nature is making itself felt not only in the unhappiness of instinctive repression, which requires the myth of one’s own evil and an unlove for oneself that robs us of the possibility of love for one’s neighbour, but also in the destruction of the Earth itself.

But this mastery of the father over the mother and child in the family, which has its echo in the corresponding values in society, also involves an internal echo in the mind of each of us. MacLean<sup>2</sup> conducted studies on the evolution of the brain that led him to propose that our mind is vested in three brains: the brain that we have inherited from reptiles and we can call instinctive; the one that we have inherited from mammals and that we can also call maternal and relational, and the strictly speaking human brain that resides in the neocortex and is predominantly intellectual. It is thanks to the latter that we have come to define *Homo Sapiens Sapiens*, with an arrogance that implicitly pretends that intellect is more important than love. But without love, *Homo Sapiens* has become an extremely destructive species, and without instinct (which is also our inner child and the voice of nature) we become incomplete, voracious and unhappy beings. We pride ourselves on feeling above

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<sup>2</sup> American neuroscientist (1913-2007).

nature, and for this we have put duty before pleasure; and not even Freud who invoked the “reality principle” came to realize that it was only a patriarchal reality, which originally sought to criminalize desire and pleasure in order to establish a policy of universal obedience to authorities.

Ever since we started treating the animal that is our body as an object that we own, we have been practicing a double exploitation; of the outer nature, on the one hand, and of the inner nature, on the other. And only Nietzsche and Freud questioned this criminalization of pleasure.

At the end of his life Freud met Binswanger, Heidegger’s psychiatrist disciple, who reproached him for treating humans as animals, and his only response was to claim “that we are *also* animals”; and this seems to me to be consistent with the practice of psychotherapy, which is a process that helps to decriminalize desires, by starting to recognize them and then reintegrating them into awareness, and then re-examining their validity, to allow for a greater personal satisfaction. But in our pharmaceutical age, the survival of psychotherapy is threatened, just as the commercial world is threatening religious consciousness, and so it becomes more urgent than ever that we put our understanding of human development in education.

So, according to this explanation, healing the patriarchal mind would then mean recuperating the compassionate brain and also the instinctive brain; reintegrate the reptilian brain (through the freedom to obey oneself) and also the mammalian or maternal brain that brings with it love and compassion (a potential that human beings can develop until they reach universal love). Along with the Christian spirit, the ideal of love for one’s neighbour has long entered into our culture, but how can we explain that the ideal of love has not been enough to counter the violence of the so-called Western Christian civilization?

Because in order to love others it is necessary for people to love themselves, and because even if the Christian precept says “loves one’s neighbour as thyself”, people are taught instead to reject themselves, both by implementing self-criminalization and by preaching an implicitly exaggerated altruism, which can only be compulsive but not natural. We cannot be educated in the systematic denial of animal pleasure without being deprived of love for ourselves, and we cannot conceive of a loving human being who does not love himself.

People generally don’t know they don’t love themselves because they don’t have enough self-awareness. The truth is that we disdain ourselves, blame ourselves, tyrannize ourselves like harsh commanders of ourselves. We despise ourselves, become depressed, manipulate ourselves, use our bodies as cargo mules, or as objects of vanity or as a source of money, but when do we do something in favour of our animal being?

To regain a healthy mind would require development, and education would be nothing less than the development of the potential that lies in us. But the education we give our children serves instead as a distraction, by inviting them to absorb so much information that does not lead to knowledge itself. It would suffice to conceive an education that included freedom, love, and self-knowledge, but the authorities of “public teaching” often say that such things are not relevant.

Is it too utopian to insist that they are?

This is only because teachers today do not have such capabilities, and they only know what they have been taught, which is to transmit information and perpetuate an implicit curriculum of obedience and submission—just as it is required that in order to govern it is necessary to dominate, and in order to dominate, to instill obedience.

For a humanizing and transformative education to be possible, we must first and foremost educate another type of educators; and this will require a method that works and becomes effective in a short time. And although it is not widely known, we already have this, thanks to the successful method of group training that I have been refining through more than forty years of work, now significantly acknowledged, in which hundreds of educators have participated who have come both for a personal interest in their own transformation as well as for the desire to increase their capacity to help others.

Yet, institutions, universities, governments, have not been interested. Why? I suspect that governments are no longer very interested in the common good, and that they instead represent an exploitative will that responds to the interests of a minority with great power. It's just that in these times of increasing difficulty and danger, one would think that those, who now represent the will for nothing to change, might realize that our survival depends on us knowing how to change course, adopting a “policy of consciousness”, and be interested in human awareness as the fundamental lifesaving resource for us. Although we have so far had an education for unconsciousness and a culture aimed at covering up what really happens, is it not conceivable that, through development and individual health, humanity can come to function as a great brain in which each individual, like a neuron, is part of a network capable of a thinking superior to that of isolated individuals? I think that we are not aware of the potential of an emotionally healthy and awake world, nor of the inhibition of collective dialogue, and that while it is true that direct democracy is limited to a group of people no greater than those that had fit in the agora of Athens, today, with electronics and networks we could even hold elections or plebiscites from our cell phones. Global communication between people who know what is going on, who have found themselves and who have their hearts open to solidarity, could surely allow us to set aside what is now politics and even the idea of a “world order”, since we can foresee the bankruptcy of global capitalism that is now ruling the world without having developed an alternative, and nothing can be more important than the quality of our minds for our future.

The authorities have always wanted to silence us so that no one can interfere in politics. But the hope of the world requires the recovery of the political potential of the world's members, as well as its understanding and its humanity.

Is it possible to conceive that “the system” would want to cooperate with its own transformation? Is it conceivable that the patriarchal order would welcome a new order that could emerge from self-organization?

I have held the hope that those in power can facilitate the process, but even if that were not the case, we can imagine that our greatest hope is in the sinking of our ship. It would seem catastrophic and terrible, but it would constitute nothing less than the social equivalent of the individual process symbolized by the “myth of the hero”: a process of death and resurrection lived by legendary beings such as Osiris, Christ or Krishna, which despite being universal has not yet reached a collective expression. So, let us hope for something like the universal flood myth, where what is no longer of

purpose to us is left behind, and as the ship of patriarchal order were sinking, the lifeboats may take the surviving shipwrecked to the beginning of a new era.

There's nothing like understanding to help make for a better transition.

In childbirth it is usual for there to be a little blood, but when childbirth becomes traumatic for the baby and its mother, we should be alert. And how much the birth of the transition from our patriarchal era to a post-patriarchal era can be traumatic will depend on how much we understand what is going on, so as not to cling to a lack of vision to what we should leave behind. In the Sumerian narration of the flood (also transmitted by the later version of Arcadia) Gilgamesh's poem speaks of Utnapishtim, the man who heard the voice of the wind. There was too much noise in the city, so no one else could hear it. But he lived in silence so he could hear Ea, the god of the wind, who said, "*Leave everything behind, build a ship, and go to sea.*" Let us hope that a collective consciousness of patriarchy that allows us to let go of our long-ignored evil arrives before it's too late.

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