

**Jean-Marie Muller**

**NON-VIOLENCE**

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**Preface by Koïchiro Matsuura**

**Director-General of UNESCO**

I first experienced the absurdity, the horror and the futility of war at a very early age: I was living barely a hundred kilometres from Hiroshima when the atomic bomb was dropped on the city in 1945. I can confirm that what happened to the two Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki still resonates today, and will continue to do so for a long time to come, not just in my own memory, but in that of the entire human race.

It introduced a new level of conflict, with unbelievable powers of destruction capable of putting an end to the living world. A frontier, a hitherto sacrosanct boundary tacitly respected by all humankind had been crossed: an infringement that opened the floodgates to all other forms of violence.

Violence, from the mildest forms (insults, rudeness) to the most appalling (rape, murder, massacres, terrorism), some of which occasionally seek justification in the others, is deeply rooted in people's consciousness and strongly permeates twenty-first century culture.

The preventive action that it is UNESCO's mission to promote through education, science and culture is still very far from being fixed in people's minds and from finding concrete expression. Many regard the substitution of a culture of peace for a culture of violence as a Utopian ideal. Yet it is well known that violence, fuelled by common ignorance, often stems from the rejection of others and the fear and even hatred of differences. It pits individuals, groups and cultures against one another, leading to withdrawal and escalating aggression. A healthy and balanced awareness of otherness, on the other hand, can be achieved only through peaceful dialogue.

Education is therefore fundamental to peace-building. Education for peace, human rights and democracy is inseparable from a style of teaching that imparts to the young, and the not so young, attitudes of dialogue and non-violence – in other words, the values of tolerance, openness to others and sharing.

In publishing this text, *Non-violence in Education*, UNESCO is seeking to enhance knowledge of and insight into the basic concepts of peace and non-violence in many regions and countries around the world. The definitions and philosophical thoughts developed here by Jean-Marie Muller will, I am sure, be very useful to teachers — those day-to-day “builders of peace” — and schoolchildren, and also to a wider audience.

We are, in 2002, at the beginning of the United Nations' International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010). One of UNESCO's tasks throughout that decade will be to promote the teaching of the practice of peace and non-violence. I hope that distributing this book will play a part in efforts to achieve that goal, and will bring us ever closer to the objective of constructing a culture of peace.

**Koïchiro Matsuura**

## **FOREWORD**

On 10 November 1998, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the period 2001–2010 “the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World” (Resolution 53/25). The General Assembly considered that “a culture of peace and non-violence promotes respect for the life and dignity of every human being without prejudice or discrimination of any kind (...)”. It furthermore recognized the role of education “in constructing a culture of peace and non-violence, in particular the teaching of the practice of peace and non-violence to children, which will promote the purposes and principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations (...)”. The General Assembly went on to invite Member States to “take the necessary steps to ensure that the practice of peace and non-violence; is taught at all levels in their respective societies, including in educational institutions (...)”. There may well be good reason to celebrate the fact that the representatives of the Member States assembled in New York voted for such a resolution, but non-violence is still alien to the culture we have inherited. The core concepts around which our thought is organized and structured leave little room for the idea of non-violence, violence, on the other hand, is inherent in our thinking and behaviour. Non-violence is unexplored territory. Our minds have such trouble grasping the concept of non-violence that we are often inclined to deny its relevance. So a great deal of educational work remains to be done to prevent the United Nations resolution from going unheeded, and to ensure that the “culture of peace and non-violence” to which it refers really does change the mind-set of teachers and children alike.

On 14 May 1985, in a “Recommendation to Member States”, the Council of Europe had already made the case for education in non-violent conflict resolution: “Concepts associated with human rights,” it maintained, “can and should be acquired from an early stage. For example, the non-violent resolution of conflict and respect for other people can already be experienced within the life of a pre-school or primary class.” And it went on to list a number of the skills needed to understand and uphold human rights, including: (...) knowing how to recognize and accept differences (...) how to establish constructive and non-oppressive relationships with others ...” and how to resolve conflict in a non-violent manner.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In France, this Recommendation was distributed to every headteacher by the French education minister in Circular No. 85-192 (22 May 1985), published in *Bulletin Officiel* No. 22 (30 May 1985).

## A duty to teach non-violence

Civilization, according to the philosopher Karl Popper, essentially consists in reducing violence.<sup>2</sup> This, in Popper's view, should be the main aim of democracy. Individual liberty can only be guaranteed in society when every member gives up the use of violence: the rule of law calls for non-violence, which is one of its essential elements.<sup>3</sup> If any given individual uses violence against another, it becomes necessary for the government to step in to restore public safety and social peace. Popper, however, believed that the rule of law must be based not on state repression, but on people being public-spirited enough to give up violence of their own accord. Before that can happen, a culture of non-violence needs to be fostered among the citizens, and the first step to take is to teach children about non-violence. The more the "duty to teach non-violence"<sup>4</sup> is neglected, claims Popper, the greater the hold of the culture of violence over society and the greater the government's need for recourse to restrictive and repressive measures. Education consists not just in teaching the facts but also, and above all, in showing how important it is to eliminate violence.<sup>5</sup>

Children, when all is said and done, must be educated in non-violence. For that to happen, however, the education itself must first of all draw on the principles, rules and methods of non-violence: *non-violence in teaching is the first step to teaching non-violence*. Éric Prairat, echoing Georges Gusdorf's assertion that violence is akin to a below-the-belt blow to the honour of philosophy,<sup>6</sup> considers violence to be akin to a below-the-belt blow to the honour of education.<sup>7</sup> Adults must respect the child's world and not seek to invade and brutally occupy it, imposing their laws and ideologies. Writing in 1929, Janusz Korczak, a pioneer of education based on respect for the child, highlighted how children were being kept in subjection by adults: "We know the roads to prosperity, give directions and advice. We develop virtues, suppress faults. [We] guide, correct, train. The child — nothing. We — everything. We order about and demand obedience. Morally and legally responsible, wise and far-seeing, we are the sole judges of the child's actions, movements, thoughts and plans. We give instructions and supervise the execution. Depending on will and understanding — our children, our property (...)"<sup>8</sup> Nowadays, we have understood that such a domineering approach is not the best way for adults to teach little human beings about responsibility and freedom. A child has a right to respect because he or she is already a person.

The values that education must transmit to children are those underlying the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1948: "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the

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<sup>2</sup> Karl Popper and John Condry, *La télévision: un danger pour la démocratie*, Paris, Anatolia, 1994, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Karl Popper, *La leçon de ce siècle*, Paris, Anatolia, 1993, p. 72.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>5</sup> Karl Popper and John Condry, op.cit., p. 33.

<sup>6</sup> Georges Gusdorf, *La vertu de force*, Paris, PUF, 1960, p. 84.

<sup>7</sup> Éric Prairat, "Genèse du conflit", in *Pour une éducation non-violente, enjeux pédagogiques et sociaux*, Éditions Non-Violence Actualité, 1988, p. 45-46.

<sup>8</sup> Janusz Korczak, "The Child's Right to Respect" in *Selected Works of Janusz Korczak*, translated by Jerzy Bachrach, Washington: published for the National Science Foundation by the Scientific Publication Foreign Cooperation Center, Warsaw, 1979.

equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world” (Preamble); “Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” (Article 26). The ethics of non-violence and human rights, as François Vaillant has pointed out, amount to a *single general moral code*, that of respect for and the dignity of each and every human being.<sup>9</sup> Non-violent action is without doubt the most suitable means of promoting and defending freedom, justice and peace. For the first step to defending human rights is to respect those rights in the very choice of the means that one intends to use to defend them.

Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November 1989 stipulates that a child’s education should, *inter alia*, be geared to the:

- development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups...

Today, democracy is generally regarded as the political blueprint most likely to produce a free, tolerant, just and peaceful society. Education must therefore be designed to enable the child to become a responsible citizen imbued with the deep-seated belief that the only revolution capable of delivering on its promises is that which paves the way to democracy. The best educational methods for achieving that goal involve organizing the school community according to democratic values. “Teaching human rights at school means tackling the whole problem of democracy in a human community. The democratic functioning of schools is a prerequisite for the genuineness and credibility of human rights education.”<sup>10</sup> Democracy, however, basically calls for the building of a society that is free from the grips of violence. In its ultimate purpose and *modi operandi*, democracy is organically attuned to non-violence. “I believe”, said Gandhi, “that true democracy can only be an outcome of non-violence.”<sup>11</sup> Pupils could never, of course, exercise the same kind of control over their schools as citizens do over a democracy. It is not a matter of leaving schools in the hands of the children. Teachers cannot be subject to the votes of children in the same way as society’s leaders are to the votes of its citizens. But school does have a duty to teach the founding values of civic democracy: non-violence and respect.

### **Ideologies of exclusion**

The main threats to democratic order stem from ideologies based on discrimination and exclusion: nationalism, racism, xenophobia, religious

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<sup>9</sup> François Vaillant, *La non-violence, essai de morale fondamentale*, Paris, Le Cerf, 1990, p. 206.

<sup>10</sup> *All human beings... Manual for human rights education*, Paris, UNESCO Publishing, 1998, p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Gandhi, *All Men Are Brothers*, Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1960, p. 179.

fundamentalism and economic liberalism geared solely to the pursuit of profit. Efforts to promote and defend democracy, two mutually sustaining steps that need to be taken together, must begin by combating such ideologies whose seeds proliferate both inside and outside every single society. Indeed, they know no frontiers.

All anti-democratic ideologies are associated with the ideology of violence. They never hesitate to declare that violence is necessary and legitimate whenever it serves to achieve their ends. So violence is a constant threat to democracy and, hence, efforts to defend democracy involve a constant struggle against violence.

School, if it is to fulfil its mission, must remain wholly detached from community-based idiosyncrasies, especially when the latter prove detrimental to democratic requirements. At the same time, however, it has to educate the children's vision so that they can discover and respect cultural differences. School must be the place for eliminating the prejudices that fuel discrimination against "others", against those who belong to other communities, other peoples, ethnic groups or religions. When enemy stereotypes are passed on to children, it means that their minds, feelings and bodies are already being primed, that they are already learning how to make war. "Enemy stereotypes", writes Bernadette Bayada, "incite hostile behaviour. Then, in a vicious circle, they become self-justifying and give the misleading impression of truth and certainty. The most violent and destructive consequence of the stereotype is that the victims become convinced that they really are inferior. The oppressed identify with the image that is presented of them."<sup>12</sup> A crucial requirement of education, then, is to defuse the children's perception of "others", especially those whose social identity is marked by differences. Their sense of perception must be educated in such a way as to enable them to abandon all hostility towards "those others who are different", and to learn to look kindly upon them. "How", asks the philosopher Michel Serres, "can one become tolerant and non-violent without seeing things from other people's point of view?"<sup>13</sup>

### **The need for clearer thinking**

Even though they have given pride of place to violence, the traditions that we have inherited grant virtually no room to non-violence and do not even know its name. Non-violence is still a new idea in Europe and, indeed, in the whole of the Western world. The very word "non-violence" gives rise to a great deal of ambiguity, misunderstanding and confusion. What makes matters difficult from the outset is the fact that it expresses opposition and refusal. In our societies governed by the ideology of necessary, legitimate and honourable violence, it is a word that is shrouded in ambiguity. But it does have the critical advantage of compelling us to face up to the many ambiguities of violence that we are usually tempted to conceal for the sake of our own peace of mind. Non-violence expresses not a lesser but a greater degree of realism with respect to violence. Its full scope, depth and weight must be gauged.

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<sup>12</sup> Bernadette Bayada, "Préjugés et stéréotypes, sources de violence", in *L'éducation à la paix*, Paris, Centre National de Documentation Pédagogique, 1993, p. 139.

<sup>13</sup> Michel Serres, *Le tiers instruit*, Paris, Éditions François Bourin, 1991, p. 36.

Non-violence is impossible to define without first of all specifying what is meant by violence. It is especially important to point out exactly what non-violence is refusing, what it opposes and what it rejects. Even that, incidentally, will not suffice. We must furthermore specify what it is that non-violence is seeking to achieve, what it seeks to assert, its proposals and outlines for the future.

“Violence” unquestionably figures among the most widely used words in the written and spoken language of one and all. Looking at the meaning that we attach to the word, however, we see that it is used in many, very different, ways. The linguistic confusion reflects confused thinking. This dual confusion cannot help but be a source of mutual incomprehension in our discussions and attempts at dialogue. And the incomprehension is bound to be twice as great when we venture to talk about non-violence. So, from the outset, a conceptual clarification that will enable us to agree on the meaning of the words we are using is of crucial importance.

To illustrate the confused language and thinking that generally prevails in debates on violence, it is, in our opinion, most useful to visualize on the one hand the attempts made to vilify “violence” in the eyes of young people—as summed up in the phrase “violence is prohibited”—and, on the other, the thoughts on violence aired by the many actors claiming to have psychological evidence to back up their assertion that endeavours to “prohibit violence” would be a complete waste of time, given that violence is “ambivalent” and that there is “good violence” and “bad violence”.

Indeed, much has been written on the topic of “violence at school”, with slogans designed to encourage young people to give it up: “stop the violence”, “violence is mindless”, “say no to violence”, “violence is no way to live”, “violence is never the answer”, “never fight violence with violence”, “respect is stronger than violence”, “violence is not inevitable”, “we’ve had enough of violence”, “violence means injustice for everyone”, “violence always ends in tears”, “violence makes life difficult”, “gag that violence: respect has arrived”, “violence rhymes with decadence”, and so forth. Taken literally, slogans such as these clearly argue that violence is intrinsically “bad”, that it is always an “evil”, never a right, never justified.

But many writers tackling the issue of violence give the impression that it is inherent in life and that those seeking to eliminate it are merely deluding themselves. Hence the emergence of phrases such as these: “life demands violence”, “life is violent”, “life needs violence”, “violence is part of human nature”, “resorting to violence can be good”, “violence is a sudden sense of being alive”, “there is a hierarchy of violence and it takes judgement to draw the line between normal violence and pathological violence”, “violence is a thirst for life”, “violence brings both life and death”, “human beings need violence, for without it they have no life-force”, and so forth.

These two sides of the debate are utterly contradictory and cannot help but bewilder the teachers. So the concept of violence in use tends to be confused, uncertain, blurred, muddled, vague, ill-defined, indistinct and, ultimately,

unintelligible. And the confusion strips the concept of “non-violence” of any relevance. The second of the above sets of slogans largely serves to maintain the total confusion between the “aggression” that effectively amounts to a “life-force” and the “violence” that is a “death-force”. The word “violence” would, according to our working hypothesis, need to be replaced with the word “aggression” in each slogan for everything to fall into place. Slogans aimed at vilifying violence in the eyes of youth can then be taken literally. The concept of “non-violence” recovers all of its meaning and it becomes possible to “mobilize people to combat violence”.

Philippe Meirieu, questioning the purpose of school, favours the conclusion that it is to “foster humanity in human beings”. That expression, however, raises questions as to the exact sense of the term “humanity”. Meirieu himself says “humanity is, as I understand it, basically what opposes the all-conquering violence of people and things. (...)The fact that School, then, has to promote humanity in human beings means to me that its first responsibility is to enable human beings to meet in another spirit than that of violence. (...) For there is nothing above or at the root of the rejection of violence other than the very rejection of violence itself as the implacable expression of humanity.”<sup>14</sup> The particular point that this study seeks to make is that it is actually the principles and methods of non-violence enabling such a “rejection of violence” that constitute the humanity of human beings, the coherence and relevance of moral standards based both on convictions and a sense of responsibility. The “rejection of violence” can only ever be meaningful when expressed through a “thirst for non-violence”. People must cease to view education through the distorting prism of the ideology of violence and learn to see it in the mirror of the philosophy of non-violence.

In etymological terms, the word “infant” means he or she “who does not speak” (from the Latin *infans*, *infantis*, a compound of the negative prefix, *in*, and the present participle of the verb *fari*, “to speak”). Educating a young child may be said to mean teaching it to speak, not so much in its mother tongue as with others. Speaking is the foundation and structure of socialization, and happens to be characterized by the renunciation of violence.

Conflict, violence and non-violence are, of course, not as easy to place on the school curriculum as mathematics, English or geography. It is not so much a matter of transmitting knowledge as of teaching children about behaviour, ways of being. Many teachers are more than likely to say that it is beyond their field of competence and not part of their remit. Yet violence is present in schools, and those selfsame teachers have to cope with it on a daily basis. It prevents teachers from teaching and learners from learning. So if they want to teach their subject and, hence, do what they regard as their job, teachers must first of all deal with “violence in school”.

In order to clarify the concepts that allow for the founding and construction of a philosophy of non-violence, we will deliberately steer clear of issues specifically linked to education. We will adopt a “general” approach to the notions of conflict,

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<sup>14</sup> Philippe Meirieu, *L'envers du tableau. Quelle pédagogie pour quelle école?* Paris, ESF, 1993, pp. 100-103.

aggression, force, violence and non-violence. Our guess is that teachers reading these pages will be keen to make the link with the practical problems that they encounter every day in the exercise of their duties. For when all is said and done, it is up to the teachers themselves to discover and appreciate the relevance of this approach for themselves. But such an awareness cannot be left to personal initiative. Teachers must have the initial and in-service training needed to enable them to question and readjust their educational choices in the light of the philosophy of non-violence.

When the time comes for the educational project to focus on organizing school according to democratic values, we shall outline its underlying principles. Only then shall we seek to provide insight into the actual problems confronting teachers in their work. Next we shall strive to highlight the principles and methods that non-violence can offer them in order to face up to those problems.

We are aware that the problems facing teachers and instructors each and every day are difficult and complex. These pages do not claim that merely placing the principle of non-violence at the heart of the educational project would be enough to solve them with ease. It is not our intention to teach teachers how to do their job. Our only aim is to urge them to look at their daily practices in the light of the principles and methods of non-violence. Perhaps we can all agree that *when non-violence is possible, it is preferable*. If so, and if non-violence is preferable, then it is up to us to do everything we can to make it possible. This study does not claim to be offering anything other than an exploration of the possibilities of non-violence.

## 1. CONFLICT

In the beginning there is conflict. Our relationships with others form our personalities. I exist only in relation to others. An individual's existence as a human being has less to do with *being in the world* than with *being with others*. Yet my experience of encounters with others often tends to be marked by adversity and confrontation. Others are those whose wishes go against my wishes, whose interests clash with my interests, whose ambitions oppose my ambitions, whose plans thwart my plans, whose freedom threatens my freedom, whose rights encroach upon my rights.

### **Fear of others**

The appearance of others alongside me is dangerous, or at least it could be. I have no idea whether it is or not; which is why I feel it to be dangerous. Other people do not necessarily wish me harm; they may even wish me well, but I do not know. Which is why others, strangers, cloud my future; they plunge me into a state of insecurity. Other people worry me; they scare me. Even if they do mean me no harm, they trouble me. For a start, I feel crowded by another's closeness. They may not want to threaten me; they just want to ask for my help, perhaps. But even then it still means trouble. My fear of others is twice as great when they do not look like me, when they do not speak the same language, have the same skin colour or believe in the same God. These are the ones that disturb me the most. Why did they not stay at home where they belong ?

It disturbs me when others come to my home ground. They are invading my area of tranquillity, tearing me away from my peace of mind. Others, by their very existence, are forcing their way into the space I have secured for myself, as if they were threatening my own existence. I have no choice but to make room for them, maybe even give up my place. Conflict always boils down to some form of rivalry over the conquest of a single territory. Everyone is convinced that the next person wants to "take his or her place". In which case, conflict can be overcome only if the adversaries, having realized that there is "room for two", both decide to put their heads together and devise some form of territorial arrangement that allows each to "have his or her own place". It is a matter of "transforming" a conflict in such a way as to enable it to shift from the original confrontation between two adversaries to the level of cooperation between two partners where it is to be resolved.

### **Mimetic desire**

René Girard has developed a theory that sheds light on the ways in which human beings become locked into mutual rivalry. Girard's thinking is based on the premiss that everything, or almost everything, in human behaviour is learned, and that

learning always boils down to imitation.<sup>15</sup> He then seeks to develop a “science of humanity” by specifying the “properly human modalities of mimetic behaviour (...)”.<sup>16</sup> Contrary to the views of those who see imitation as a process geared to social harmony, Girard strives to show that it is basically a matter of opposition and antagonism, of rivalry and conflict. For what is at stake in the mimetic behaviour of human beings is the appropriation of an object that gives rise to rivalry because several members of a group want it at the same time: if one sees another reaching out for an object, he or she is immediately tempted to imitate that gesture.<sup>17</sup> According to Girard, conflict between individuals originally stems from such mimetic rivalry over the possession of a single object.

Individuals are jealous when another person possesses an object that they themselves do not possess. Jealousy, wanting the object possessed by another, is thus one of the most powerful sources of conflict between individuals. It is already clear to see in the behaviour of a small child coveting another child’s toy. There may be a number of other toys available, but the only one the former wants is that which he or she has seen to be the latter’s object of desire. What is really at stake in the realm of mimetic rivalry, however, is not so much the object itself as the other person and my relationship with him or her. What I really want, when all is said and done, is not so much to gain possession of the object, but to take the other person’s place.

Power over objects begets power over others. The desire for possession is profoundly interlinked with the desire for power. While competing for possession of objects, individuals are also struggling to assert their power over one another. So there is an organic link between property and power. Power is often what is at stake in clashes between human beings. Naturally, everyone has to have enough to meet his or her basic needs (food, shelter, clothing) as well as enough power to ensure that his or her rights are respected. Desiring property and power is legitimate insofar as it enables an individual to achieve independence from others. Adversaries in a conflict, however, each have a natural tendency always to demand more. Nothing is enough for them, and they are never satisfied. “They do not know how to stop themselves”; they know no limits. Desire demands more, much more, than need. “There is always a sense of limitlessness in desire,”<sup>18</sup> writes Simone Weil. To begin with, individuals seek power so as not to be dominated by others. But if they are not careful, they can soon find themselves overstepping the limit beyond which they are actually seeking to dominate others. Rivalry between human beings can only be surmounted when each individual puts a limit on his or her own desires. “Limited desires,” notes Weil, “are in harmony with the world; desires that contain the infinite are not.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> René Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, research undertaken in collaboration with Jean-Michel Oughourlian and Guy Lefort. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Simone Weil, *Œuvres complètes*, Volume VI, *Cahiers*, Volume 2, Paris, Gallimard, 1997, p. 74.

<sup>19</sup> Simone Weil, *Œuvres complètes*, Volume VI, *Cahiers*, Volume 1, Paris, Gallimard, 1994, p. 325.

### **Making a pact**

Conflict is the confrontation between my desires and reality. If I seek to satisfy my desires without respecting other people and their realities, my will enters into conflict with theirs, and we both end up struggling to make each other yield. If, however, I allow that other desire — the desire to live in harmony with the world and, above all, on good terms with my fellow human beings — to endure within me, then I will find the energy to try and build a relationship with them based on mutual recognition.

An individual cannot run away from a conflict situation without abandoning his or her own rights. He or she has to accept confrontation, for it is through conflict that a person is able to gain recognition on the part of others. Conflict can be destructive, of course, but it can also be constructive. It is a means of reaching an agreement, a pact that satisfies the respective rights of each adversary and, as such, of managing to build just and equitable relationships between individuals within the same community and between different communities. Conflict is therefore a structural component of every relationship with others and, hence, of social life as a whole. In the case of the two children competing for possession of the same toy, mediation by an adult can help them resolve their conflict through making a pact: either they decide to play together or they take it in turns. This will introduce them to constructive conflict resolution where each side emerges as a winner.

Community life always involves some degree of conflict, even if only potentially so. The coexistence of people and peoples must become peaceful, but it will never be conflict-free. Peace is not, cannot and never will be free from conflict. But it does hinge on efforts to control, manage and resolve conflict through other means than those of destructive and lethal violence. Political action must therefore be geared to non-violent conflict resolution (from the Latin *resolutio*, “untying”).

Pacifist views, be they legally or spiritually-based, are wrong-headed and wander away into idealism when they stigmatize conflict and argue exclusively in favour of right action, trust, fellowship, reconciliation, forgiveness and love. This amounts to a flight of fantasy, away from the realm of history.

Non-violence, then, does not imply a world without conflict. Its political aim is not to build a society where human relations would be based solely on trust. Such a society can only be established through relations of proximity, relations among fellow human beings. In society, any relations with distant “others that I do not know” are, as a rule, a challenge and should be approached with caution. Hence, life in society is organized not on the basis of trust but on that of justice and the respect it guarantees for the rights of one and all. Political action must be geared to organizing justice among all of the “distant others”. It involves creating institutions and drafting laws that provide practical modes of social regulation for dealing with the conflicts that could break out between individuals at any time.

### **Finding a compromise**

It is often the search for a compromise that paves the way to a constructive solution to conflicts. First of all, it allows any violence that has already broken out to be suspended and communication to be restored among the adversaries. The word compromise comes from the Latin verb *compromittere* (a compound of *cum*, “together”, and *promittere*, “to promise”) and expresses the idea of a mutual commitment to abiding by an agreement designed to settle a difference.

The word compromise is “associated with the idea of a process of negotiation where each side makes concessions to the other in order to resolve a conflict”.<sup>20</sup> The ultimate aim is to conjure up concessions that are acceptable to both adversaries so that each may deem their basic rights to have been recognized and respected. The art of finding a good compromise involves coming up with limited concessions that maximize the advantages for one side while minimizing the drawbacks for the other — and vice versa — so as to make it possible for them to find a new “way of living together”. In the field of education, the search for a compromise assumes great educational value, enabling children to learn to reconcile their desires, interests and needs, and to find areas of agreement characterized by mutual respect and recognition.

### **From hostility to hospitality**

In the final analysis, however, conflict must not be regarded as the norm in one’s relations with others. Human beings fulfil their humanity not outside but beyond the realm of conflict. Conflict may be part of human nature, but only when it has yet to be transformed by the stamp of human beings. Conflict may come first, but it must not be allowed to have the last word. It is not the primordial, but the most primal means of relating to others. It exists to be overcome, surpassed and transformed. Human beings who make an effort to ensure that their relations with others are peaceful and devoid of all threat and fear will be at peace with themselves. Human beings must not fall into a relationship of *hostility* with those with whom they come into contact, where each is the enemy of the other; they must seek to establish a relationship of *hospitality*, where each is the other’s host. Significantly, the words *hostility* and *hospitality* both belong to the same etymological family: the Latin words *hostes* and *hospes* both refer to the stranger or foreigner, who can be excluded as an enemy or welcomed as a guest.

Hospitality calls for more than justice. Justice alone, which is to say merely recognizing an individual’s rights, still keeps fellow human beings apart from one another. Wanting “to be respected” still means making oneself feared. “Being respectful” still means remaining distant from one another. Respect, by its very nature, involves a degree of distance. But it is a healthy distance that gives everyone the space they need to be free and independent. Respecting others means seeking the right degree of distance, so that people can see, recognize and identify one another with neither fusion nor confusion; a distance that makes it possible to cater more

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<sup>20</sup> François Vaillant, unpublished text.

effectively for each person's needs. In order to form a human community, human beings must maintain a two-way relationship based on giving and sharing. And it is in goodness that hospitality resides. For we must not believe Nietzsche's assertion that goodness is no more than the impotence of the weak. Violence is a weakness and goodness is the strength of the strong.

## 2. AGGRESSIVENESS

Violence is so central to human history that we are sometimes tempted to think it must be inherent in human nature; that violence is accordingly “natural” for the human being; and that it would therefore be vanity, flying in the face of the law of nature itself, to form any expectations of non-violence. Yet in fact it is not violence which is written in human nature, but aggressiveness. Violence is not aggressiveness itself, but just one expression of it; and it is not a necessity of nature that aggressiveness should be expressed by violence.

Humans can become rational beings; but first of all they are instinctual and impulsive ones. The instincts are a bundle of energies: when the bundle is properly tied, it gives structure and unity to the individual’s personality, while if it becomes undone then the whole individual loses structure and unity. Aggressiveness is one of these energies; like fire, it can do good or harm, destroy or create.

### **Self assertion in the face of the other**

Aggressiveness is a power of combativeness; is my self-assertion, a component of my own personality that enables me to face others without flinching. To be aggressive is to assert oneself in the face of something other by moving towards it. The word “aggression” comes from the Latin *aggredi*, whose roots, *ad* + *gredi* give it the meaning “to step towards”, “to advance towards”. Only in a derivative sense does “aggression” mean “moving *against*”: it comes from the fact that, in war, to march towards the enemy is to march against it, in other words to attack it. In its origins, then, this word “ad-gression” no more implies violence than does the word “progress”, which means “to move forwards”. To show aggressiveness is to accept conflict with another without submitting to domination by that other. Without aggressiveness, I should constantly be running away from any threats with which others might menace me; without aggressiveness, I should be unable to overcome the fear that paralyses me and holds me back from contending with my adversary and struggling to have my rights recognized and respected. It takes boldness and courage to move towards another, since this is always a move towards the unknown, an embarking on an adventure.

Fear is there, within each individual; the point is not to drive it away by refusing to acknowledge it but on the contrary to become aware of it and make efforts to get a grip on it, tame it and overcome it, all the time knowing that this effort will have to be renewed again and again, without end. Fear is not shameful, however; merely human. Fear is the emotion that signals a potential danger, that triggers our survival instinct and gives us an opportunity to protect ourselves. Fear alerts us when we are crossing hazardous terrain: “Warning, danger!” It calls on us to organize measures to face the dangers which may threaten us. However, if we do not know how to tame it, fear can be a snare engendering in a human heart, sometimes unknown to the owner, an anxiety, hurt or pain which can become rooted as an attitude of intolerance and

hostility towards others. An irrational factor then affects the development of interpersonal relations, and may even become predominant. Fear may give us bad advice, both when counselling submission and when inciting to violence. From earliest childhood, the small person knows many fears, and needs to be educated to recognize them, name them, express them and move beyond them. An accompanying adult, and the injunction combining firmness and gentleness, "Don't be afraid!", do much to help reassure the child and create confidence. But this injunction must not attempt to deny the child's fear: the meaning must be: "It's OK to feel fear; but don't let the fear stop you being brave, or drawing on other energies you have inside yourself as well."

To tame one's fear, to admit and master the feelings it provokes: this is what makes it possible to express one's aggressiveness by other means than destructive violence. Once that is achieved, aggressiveness becomes a fundamental constituent of one's relationships with others, in which mutual respect can replace domination and submission.

### **The opposite of passivity**

As things are, passivity in the face of injustice is a more widespread attitude than violence; and people's capacity for resignation is considerably greater than their capacity for revolt. One of the first tasks of non-violent action is accordingly that of "mobilization", or stirring the victims of injustice into action, rousing their aggressiveness so they are prepared to resist and to struggle: provoking conflict. While slaves submit to their master, there is no conflict; on the contrary, it is at such times that "order" is at its most firmly established and "social peace" prevails, uncontested by anything or anyone. Conflict only arises from the moment when the slaves show enough aggressiveness to "move towards" their masters, dare to look them in the face and claim their rights. Non-violence presupposes capacity for aggressiveness before all else; and in this sense we should say that non-violence is the opposite of passivity and resignation, rather than of violence. But collective non-violent action must allow the channelling of individuals' natural aggressiveness in such a way that it finds expression not in violent destruction, which is liable to lead to further violence and more injustice, but in fair and peaceful measures suitable for building a more just and peaceful society. Violence is, in the end, nothing but a perversion of aggressiveness.

The anger that can take hold of a person with the loss of all self-control is an overflowing of aggressiveness. Anger is what I feel when my plans are brusquely thwarted, when I bump into reality, when I feel a deep-down sense of injustice. Once again, what I must do is tame my anger without rejecting the aggressiveness contained within it, in such a way that it can express itself constructively. To let it explode with violence is a sign of weakness of character, not strength. "*Ira brevis furor est*", wrote Horace: "Anger is a brief frenzy." He goes on: "He who cannot learn to master his anger will come later to regret acting on the advice of resentment and passion, looking to violence for a ready satisfaction for his unassuaged hatred. (...) So govern your passions, for they will rule where they are not ruled; keep them on the curb; keep

them on the chain<sup>21</sup>.” Transforming one’s anger into words that can be heard and acts that can be understood, with determination and coherence, is the sign of true emotional intelligence.

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<sup>21</sup> Horace, Epistles Bk. I, epistle II, 59-64.

### 3. VIOLENCE

It is important to establish from the outset a clear distinction between “force” and “violence”, for otherwise the usage of one or the other of these two terms is in great danger of losing its point. If we use “force” for a power that humiliates, oppresses, injures and kills, we shall be left with nothing to signify a force which does not humiliate, oppress, injure or kill. The moment these concepts, force and violence, are identified with each other, we lack words with which to consider whether there might not be a force which is non-violent. [Translator’s note: The French “force/fort” can equally mean “force/forceful” or “strength/strong”. They are here translated as either, depending on the sense.]

In the moral sense, strength is the quality of someone who has the courage to refuse to submit to the rule of violence. The strong person is not the one who possesses the means of power and violence, but the one who can exercise self-control, who resists being swept away by personal or collective passions, and who stays in charge of his or her own destiny. Here, the opposite of strength is just that weakness which consists of the inability to resist the drunkenness of violence.

This “strength of soul”, this spiritual force cannot effectively set about opposing the force of injustice, for the two are not of the same realm. Only the force of an organized action can actually be effective in combating injustice and righting wrongs. It is therefore mere self-deception to aim to disparage “force” by contrast with “right”, since, when it comes to deeds, rights can have no other foundation than force, nor any other guarantor. It is a characteristic of idealism to endow right with its own special force, operating in history and said to be the true foundation of progress; but, on the contrary, all the evidence is that such a force does not exist. In the same way, it is by and large a delusion to think that there is a “force of justice”, a “force of truth” and a “force of love” – forces which might by themselves constrain, or “force”, the powerful and violent to acknowledge and respect the rights of the oppressed. No; if they are to win freedom, they must come together, mobilize, organize, and act.

Every struggle is a trial of strength. In a given social, economic or political context, all relations with others can be viewed as a balance of forces; and injustice is the result of an imbalance of forces, in which the weaker are dominated and oppressed by the stronger. The function of struggle is to create a new balance of forces, the aim being to establish a balance in which everyone’s rights are respected. It follows that action for justice, being the re-establishment of a balance of forces, is something that can only be done by applying another force which sets a limit to the force occasioning the imbalance.

The case against violence cannot be made if force has not first been rehabilitated, given its proper place and had its legitimacy fully recognized; and we must at one and the same time reject both the self-proclaimed “realism” which justifies violence as being the very foundation of all action and the self-proclaimed “spirituality” which refuses to recognize force as an inherent element in any action.

And since force exists only in action, it is not possible to denounce violence and to struggle against it except by offering a method of action which, although it owes nothing to the violence of killing, is nevertheless capable of establishing a balance of forces that can guarantee rights.

### **A process of murder**

The exercise of aggressiveness, force and constraint makes it possible to move beyond conflict by looking for rules whereby each of the contending parties may be given what is their due. Violence, on the other hand, is characteristically an instant de-regulation of conflict with the result that it can no longer fulfil its function of establishing justice between adversaries.

Let us return now to René Girard's thesis on mimetic rivalry. Two people are contending for the same object, which is the more desirable to each for the other's desiring it. These two individuals, now adversaries, will very swiftly turn from the object itself to concentrate their attention entirely on the rival. And they will fight, not to have the object which from this moment on is increasingly left out of the picture and forgotten, but to eliminate this rival; they may even prefer its destruction to its becoming the other's property. Their contention becomes "pure rivalry"<sup>22</sup>, and from this moment on, the mimetic relationship between the two rivals will be dominated by the logic of violence. "Violence", writes René Girard, "is a perfect mimetic relationship, and therefore perfectly reciprocal. Each imitates the other's violence, repaying it, "with interest"<sup>23</sup>. If the mediation of an adult cannot bring about an agreement between the two children squabbling over the possession of a toy, then the rivals will quickly come to blows, even at the risk of breaking the toy.

Violence occurs when one person refuses to let his or her desire be circumscribed by reality, or thwarted by another's existence. "I have the right", observes Simone Weil, "to make any thing my own – but other people get in the way of that. I have to take up arms to get these obstacles out of the way"<sup>24</sup>. "Violence stems from a boundless desire colliding with the bounds set by the desires of others".

It is essential to define violence in such a way that it cannot be qualified as "good". The moment we claim to be able to distinguish "good" violence from "bad", we lose the proper use of the word, and get into a muddle. Above all, as soon as we claim to be developing criteria by which to define a supposedly "good" violence, each of us will find it easy to make use of these in order to justify our own acts of violence. In its essence, violence is denial: every manifestation of violence, whatever its amount or purpose, belongs to a murderous process, of which death is the implicitly accepted end. The process may not in fact go all the way, the transition to the final deed does not necessarily take place, but violence always seeks the death, the annihilation, of its

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<sup>22</sup> René Girard, *Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde*, [Things hidden since the beginning of the world] op.cit. p. 35.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 234.

<sup>24</sup> Simone Weil, *Œuvres complètes* [Complete Works], Tome VI, Volume 1, op.cit., p. 297.

object. “For make no mistake”, Paul Ricœur would have us observe, “the aim of violence, the end it has in view, implicitly or explicitly, directly or indirectly, is the other’s death – at the very least; or maybe something even worse.”<sup>25</sup> Every act of violence is an outrage perpetrated against the humanity of the object. To act with violence is to harm, to do harm; to make someone suffer. But to act with violence is also to harm oneself, to do oneself harm; to make oneself suffer, by denying oneself a relationship of mutual recognition which any person needs in order to exist. The desire to eliminate one’s adversaries – to get them out of the way, rule them out, shut them up, suppress them – becomes stronger than the will to come to an agreement with them. From insults to humiliation, from torture to murder, the forms of violence are many, and so are the forms of death. To compromise a person’s dignity is itself to compromise that person’s life. Silencing them is already an act of violence; for to deny the right to speak is to deny the right to life. Unjust situations which keep human beings in conditions of alienation, exclusion or oppression are also instances of violence, known as “structural violence”.

It is wrong to speak of “violence” as if it existed on its own among people, in a sense “outside” them; or as if it were an independent agent, when in fact violence exists and operates only through people; it is always some person who is responsible for violence.

### **Turning a human being into a thing**

If we put ourselves, when defining violence, on the side of the person exercising it, we run a serious risk of mistaking its true nature by embarking instantly on those procedures of legitimation which justify the means by the end. We must therefore in defining violence place ourselves first on the side of the victim. Here, the perception is immediate; it involves a mindset which considers the means used, and not, as before, the end sought. According to Simone Weil, violence, “is that which turns any person subjected to it into a thing”. “When it goes all the way”, she explains further, “it turns a person into a *thing* in the most literal sense: a corpse.” But violence that kills is a crude, summary form of violence. There is another violence, far more varied in its procedures and surprising in its effects, and this is “the one that does not kill; or rather, that has not killed yet”. “It will kill in the end, for sure; or perhaps it will kill; or, again, it is just hanging over the person, ready to kill them at any minute; anyway, it turns the human being to stone. Out of the power to turn a person into a thing by killing arises another power, quite equally remarkable: the power to make a thing of a still-living person.”<sup>26</sup>

It seems to us that a definition of violence could be formulated using Kant’s second imperative in the *Foundations of the metaphysics of morals*: “act in such a way that you treat humanity, in your own person as well as in that of any other, always as an end too, and never simply as a means<sup>27</sup>.” According to Kant, the basis for this principle is that, unlike *things* which are only instrumental (“means”), *people*

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<sup>25</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Histoire et vérité*, [History and truth] Paris, Le Seuil, 1955, p. 227.

<sup>26</sup> Simone Weil, “L’Iliade ou le poème de la force”, [The Iliad – the epic of strength] in *La source grecque* [Greek origins], Paris, Gallimard, 1953, p. 12-13.

<sup>27</sup> Emmanuel Kant, *The Foundations of the metaphysics of morals*, Paris, Librairie Delagrave, 1952, p. 150-152.

exist as ends in themselves. “Humans, and in general all rational beings”, he asserts, “exist as ends in themselves, and not only as means which this person or that may make use of as they will; in all the actions of a rational being, whether self- or other-regarding, any other rational being must always be considered also as an end<sup>28</sup>.” The person, accordingly, who uses other humans as mere instruments is violating their personhood, and doing violence to them. We can therefore define violence in this way, by taking Kant’s suggestion literally: to be violent it is “to use another person simply as a means, disregarding the principle that other persons, as rational beings, must always be considered as ends as well”.<sup>29</sup>

### **The abuse of force**

Violence, we are sometimes told, is the abuse of force. But there is more to it than that: violence is by itself an abuse; the very use of violence constitutes abuse. To abuse someone is to violate them; all violence against a human being is a violation: the violation of the body, of the identity, of the personality, of the humanity of that person. All violence is brutal, offensive, destructive, and cruel. Violence always affects the face, deforming it because of the suffering inflicted; all violence is disfiguring, a defacement. *Violence wounds and bruises the humanity of its victim.*

But people do not only feel the violence they suffer; they also find out by experience that they themselves are capable of being violent to others. Upon reflection, or turning their gaze inward upon themselves, they discover that they are violent. *And violence wounds and bruises also the humanity of the perpetrator.* “Striking or being struck”, says Simone Weil, “the befoulment is one and the same. The chill steel is fatal at the handle and at the blade alike.”<sup>30</sup> So whether we practise violence or undergo it, “its touch is petrifying in every way, and turns a person into a thing”.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>30</sup> Simone Weil, *Écrits historiques et politiques* [Historical and political writings], Paris, Gallimard, 1960, p. 80.

<sup>31</sup> Simone Weil, *Intuitions préchrétiennes* [Pre-Christian intuitions], Paris, Fayard, p. 1985, p. 54.

#### 4. NON-VIOLENCE

It was Gandhi who gave the West the term “non-violence”, as an English translation of the Sanskrit *ahimsa* which appears frequently in Hindu, Jain and Buddhist literature. “Ahimsa” is composed of the negative prefix *a-* and the noun *himsa*, which means the desire to harm or do violence to a living being. *Ahimsa* is therefore the recognition, the taming, the mastery and the transmutation of the desire for violence which is to be found in human beings and which leads them to want to push aside, shut out, eliminate and bruise their fellows.

If we were to follow the etymology faithfully, one translation of *a-himsa* might be *in-nocence*, for the two words have in fact analogous etymologies: in-nocent is from the Latin *in-nocens*, and the verb *nocere* (to hurt or harm) itself comes from *nex, necis* meaning violent death, murder. So innocence would quite literally be the term for someone who is free of all murderous or violent intent towards others. The word “innocence” nowadays, however, evokes rather the somewhat doubtful purity of someone who is harmless much more from ignorance or inability than by virtue. Non-violence must not be confused with that form of innocence – yet this distortion of the word’s connotation is significant: as if not doing harm somehow revealed a sort of impotence... Non-violence is in fact innocence rehabilitated as the virtue of the strong and the wisdom of the just.

##### **The law of egoism**

For Gandhi, non-violence is not primarily a method of action, but an attitude; essentially, a benevolent and generous way of looking on one’s fellow humans, especially those who are “other”: the stranger, the foreigner, the intruder, the importuner, the enemy. When he tries to define non-violence, Gandhi offers first of all this entirely negative proposition: “Perfect non-violence is the total absence of ill-will towards anything that lives.” Only then does he go on to say: “In its active form, non-violence expresses itself by goodwill towards everything that lives<sup>32</sup>.” The first requirement of non-violence is therefore negative: it demands that we give up any ill-will towards our fellow; and to formulate the requirement in this way is to recognize that there exists in human nature an inclination to show ill-will towards one’s neighbour.

But how comes it, then, that humans are tempted to be violent to one another in the first place? The most serious question we face as humans is that of understanding this inclination, which is inherent in our nature and leads us, if we are not on the watch for it, to show ill-will and the desire to be violent to others and to will their deaths. As he examined himself on this natural human leaning towards ill-will, Kant finally answered that it is determined by egoism, meaning exclusive self-love, in which the care of oneself leaves no room for the care of others. When we act, “we

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<sup>32</sup> *Young India, 1919-1922*, Madras, S. Ganesan Publisher, 1924, p. 286.

always come up against our own dear selves, which never fail to make their appearance in the end<sup>33</sup>”.

When two beings meet, each wanting to make his or her own needs, desires, and interests prevail, confrontation inevitably follows, and is dangerously liable to cause violence. Violence is the mutual shock of two egoisms, the confrontation of two narcissisms. Everyone resembles Narcissus, the youth in the Greek story who, looking at his reflection in the water, falls in love with himself and from that moment loves only himself and loses interest in everyone else, except to despise them. Of our very nature, in our relationship with others, we humans are spontaneously jealous of others, and never stop weighing our own happiness by comparison with somebody else's. Self-love forces humans to be constantly comparing themselves with others in the desire to be doing better than they.

### **The moral law**

However, according to Kant, our human reason causes us to discover within ourselves another law besides that of egoism, and this is “the moral law”. As rational beings, we humans have to act with the will to comply with the prescriptions of the moral law. This law reduces to nothing the claims of egoism, and rejects its demands. The will must therefore be determined only by the moral law, while our natural inclination or first prompting is to form our will according to the law of exclusive self-love. The moral law can be kept only at the expense of this natural leaning towards egoism. Hence, “the moral law presents itself first as a *prohibition*”.<sup>34</sup> The defining feature of the moral duty to which humans are bound is the desire to show goodwill to others, even though our first feelings tend towards ill-will.

### **The truth of humanity**

Gandhi's non-violence is a *principle*: “I believe”, he says, “in the principle of non-violence”.<sup>35</sup> According to him, it is specifically the principle of searching for the truth, and he affirms directly that it is the only path which leads humans towards the truth. “Non-violence and truth”, he wrote, “are so closely entwined that it is practically impossible to untangle them and separate them from each other. They are like the two faces of a single medal, or rather of a smooth and unmarked metal disc: who can say which is the front and which the back?”<sup>36</sup>

But when Gandhi says “truth and non-violence are just one and the same thing”<sup>37</sup> he is not talking in the realm of ideology, but in that of philosophy, that is to

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<sup>33</sup> Kant, op.cit., p. 113.

<sup>34</sup> Kant, *La religion dans les limites de la simple raison*, [Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft, Religion within the bounds of bare reason] Paris, Vrin, 1983, p. 84.

<sup>35</sup> Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Ahmedabad, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1965, Vol. 18, p. 265.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., Vol. 44, p. 59.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

say spirituality, thought and wisdom. And at the same time as asserting that non-violence is the truth of humanity, Gandhi is concerned to make it clear that no one can claim to “possess” this. “Perfect non-violence whilst you are inhabiting the body is only a theory like Euclid's point or straight line, but we have to endeavour every moment of our lives”.<sup>38</sup> This is why Gandhi always introduced himself as a “seeker after truth”.

### **The human being – between reason and violence**

Among all the definitions of humanity on offer, Eric Weil's most widely-adopted one runs like this: “humans are animals with reason and language, or, more precisely, with rational language”.<sup>39</sup> Admittedly, humans do not naturally express themselves or act in compliance with the requirements of reason; but they must strive to do so if they are to become fully human. It is this human effort to think, speak and live rationally which is the characteristic of philosophy. But at the same time as our philosophical humans decide to opt for reason, they become aware of that within themselves which prevents them from becoming rational. Philosophers are not afraid of external dangers, not even of death, but of “the unreason within themselves”<sup>40</sup>; they have a “fear of violence”<sup>41</sup>. This violence discovered by philosophical humans within ourselves, this impulse towards an irrational attitude, is an obstacle to the realization of our own humanity. The violence within is what “is not in agreement with that which makes us human”.<sup>42</sup> The philosopher fears violence, therefore, because “it is the obstacle to becoming or being wise”.<sup>43</sup>

So the would-be philosopher, at the very moment of wanting to become rational, stands self-revealed as a creature of needs, interests, desires, and passions, and, as such, naturally impelled towards violence to others. But we can only discover that we are violent because we are also endowed with reason. Violence is only understood upon re-flection; that is to say, after we have turned back from our own violence. We only discover and comprehend violence (in ourselves, but also in society and its history), because we “already have the idea of non-violence”.<sup>44</sup> Humans are violent, but understand that they are so only because they bear within themselves an imperative of non-violence which is the imperative of reason itself. “Reason”, writes Eric Weil, “is one possibility for humans. (...) But only a possibility, not a necessity; and it is a possibility offered to a being which has another possibility open to it. We know this other possibility is violence<sup>45</sup>.” But violence is not merely “the other possibility” for humans; it is “the possibility realized in the first instance”.<sup>46</sup>

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38 Gandhi, *All Men are Brothers*, Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1960, p. 119.

39 Éric Weil, *Logique de la philosophie*, [Logic of Philosophy] Paris, Vrin, 1967, p. 20.

40 Ibid., p. 19.

41 Ibid., p. 20.

42 Ibid., p. 47.

43 Ibid., p. 20.

44 Éric Weil, *Philosophie morale*, [Moral philosophy] Paris, Vrin, 1992, p. 20.

45 Éric Weil, *Logique de la philosophie*, op.cit., p. 57.

46 Ibid., p. 69.

## The choice of non-violence

Humans are therefore capable of reason *and* of violence, and must choose between these two possibilities: “Freedom chooses between reason and violence”<sup>47</sup>. The demands of philosophy, though, lead us to choose reason over violence: “Violence, violently felt”, asserts Eric Weil categorically, “must be driven out *once and for all*”.<sup>48</sup> This, then, is “the secret of philosophy”: “The philosopher wishes violence to disappear from the world, but recognizes needs, acknowledges desires, agrees that the human being remains an animal, albeit a rational one: what matters is to eliminate violence.”<sup>49</sup> This established, the philosopher can proclaim a moral rule – for herself or himself, but also for the others – which shall determine the attitude to be taken in all circumstances: “It is right to desire that which lessens the quantity of violence in human life; it is wrong to desire that which makes it greater.”<sup>50</sup>

Because reason is a defining feature of humanity itself, both in each individual human and in all, “it is the main duty of (moral human beings) to respect the rational in every other human being, and to respect it in themselves as they respect it in their fellows”.<sup>51</sup> And this immediately implies that they must forbid themselves any violence to any person: “They may not forget (...) that they have no right to will certain consequences (of their actions); for instance, those which would turn other people into *things*.”<sup>52</sup>

Someone who has chosen reason, in order that the coherence of their inner commentary may inform and transform their life, submits their decisions to the “test of universality”<sup>53</sup>: “Each person must behave in such a way that their manner of acting and deciding can be thought of as a manner of acting for anyone and everyone; in other words it must be such that it can be universalized.”<sup>54</sup> Now the “primary contradiction”, which destroys all coherence of inner commentary and of life, is “that between violence and universality”<sup>55</sup>. This is why no-one can ever make progress towards universality except by choosing non-violence, for “this is the universal”<sup>56</sup>.

Violence always remains, however, another option for those who have chosen reason, universality and, accordingly, non-violence. The philosopher will never, therefore, come to the end of this self-transformation through reason. Furthermore, and above all, those who choose reason do so in a world where others have chosen violence; they must therefore also make efforts to educate those others in reason, and to transform the world so as to put an end – so far as possible - to the rule of violence.

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47      Éric Weil, *Philosophie morale*, op. cit., p. 47.

48      Éric Weil, *Logique de la philosophie*, op.cit., p. 75.

49      Ibid., p. 20.

50      Ibid.

51      Éric Weil, *Philosophie politique*, Paris, Vrin, 1984, p. 31.

52      Ibid.

53      Éric Weil, *Philosophie morale*, op.cit., p. 52.

54      Éric Weil, *Philosophie et réalité*, Derniers essais et conférences, [Philosophy and Reality; Last essays and lectures] Paris, Vrin, 1982, p. 269.

55      Éric Weil, *Philosophie morale*, op.cit., p. 53.

56      Éric Weil, *Logique de la philosophie*, op.cit., p. 64.

For this reason “non-violence is philosophy’s point of departure, as well as its final goal.”<sup>57</sup>

Eric Weil, then, is no less adamant than Gandhi that violence can only keep a person away from the truth. “The *opposite* of truth”, he writes, “is not error, but violence”<sup>58</sup>. In other words, *error is violence* and, consequently, any doctrine which claims to *justify* violence, to make violence a human right, is essentially mistaken. For as soon as violence has gained a person’s intellectual complicity it has made the rules: it has already won.

History bears witness, and everyday experience confirms, that the truth becomes a vehicle for violence as soon as it is not founded on the imperative of non-violence; for if truth does not of itself entail the uprooting of any supposed legitimacy for violence, then there will always come a point at which violence offers itself naturally as a legitimate means of defending the truth. Only an acknowledgement of the imperative of non-violence allows us to reject, once and for all, this delusion – the very one purveyed by all ideologies – that we are having recourse to violence in defence of the truth.

### **“Thou shalt not kill ”**

It has often been said that the term “non-violence” is an ill-chosen one because it is a negation, and on its own admits a number of ambiguities; but in fact it is our relationship with violence that is ambiguous. The term does indeed raise a question – but the question it raises is exactly the right one: the question of violence. To reject the term “non-violence” is to duck that question of violence. And yet the question is of the essence: it affects the very meaning of our existence. It is an irksome one, though; for it forces us to look squarely at our own record of complicity with violence. It cross-examines us, this term “non-violence”, and puts us on the spot; if we reject the term, we refuse to accept the imperative it sets before us; we slink away from it.

The very negativity of the term “non-violence” is decisive: it, and it alone, enables us to remove all legitimacy from violence. It is of all terms the most appropriate, the most precise, and the most rigorous for expressing what it means: the rejection of any process of legitimation whatsoever which would make violence a human right. The choice of non-violence is the immediate presence in our own existence of that universal imperative of the rational conscience which is expressed by the prohibition (also cast in negative form): “Thou shalt not kill.” This prohibition of murder is essential because the desire to kill is there inside each of us. Murder is forbidden because it is always possible, and because this possibility is inhuman. The prohibition is imperative because the temptation is imperious; the more imperious it is, the more imperative must that prohibition be.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 59.  
<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

## **Violence is not a human right**

Humans are legal-minded animals: that is to say, they need to reason and justify their attitudes, behaviour and actions, in their own and in others' eyes. But since they are also violent animals they will want to convince themselves that violence is their right as humans. Animals are only violent from a human point of view, for they are incapable of thinking acts of "violence". True, the big fish eats the little fish; the wolf devours the lamb. But animals are not responsible for these acts of "violence". Only humans, having awareness and reason, are responsible for their actions – including their acts of violence. Violence is uniquely human, because reason is so likewise. Unique, also, is the ability to use the power of reason in the service of one's violence, which is why humans are the only living creatures that can show cruelty towards their own kind. "We sometimes compare man's cruelty to that of wild beasts", observes Dostoyevsky's Ivan Karamazov; "but that is unfair to them. Beasts never attain the refinement of humans."<sup>59</sup> *Violence is not a mark of bestiality, but of inhumanity, which is far worse.*

Once it is clear that human nature is at one and the same time inclined to violence and disposed to non-violence, the question arises which part of that nature we shall decide to *cultivate* in ourselves, in others, and most especially in children. The decision to be taken here involves both a philosophical and an educational choice, and the two are indissoluble. There is thus an essential link between education and philosophy. The dominant culture in our societies does ostensibly put out a rhetoric disparaging violence, it is true; but it maintains violence at the same time, constantly whispering to individual minds that when faced with conflict they have only two alternatives: cowardice or violence. And so this culture of violence furnishes the individual with a number of ideological constructs that offer justifications for violence, provided there is a claim to be defending a just cause. According to the popular saying – which among nations passes for wisdom – "the end justifies the means", or the defence of a righteous cause justifies violence; moreover, "the" righteous cause is of course "my" cause: my rights, my honour, my family, my religion, my nation, and so on. So the principle of "self-defence" comes to provide each of us with a justification for "my" violence.

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Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, Paris, Gallimard, 1948, p. 221.

## 5. DEMOCRACY

“Education”, says Federico Mayor, former Director General of UNESCO, “is what gives each human being self-control, the means of saying “yes” or “no” in accordance with personal judgement. This self-control allows participation; and participation means democracy. Education is the cornerstone of citizenship.”<sup>60</sup> At school, children must have space to exercise themselves in democracy, and be empowered to use that space, which can be extended as pupils grow older. This apprenticeship in democracy, though, needs to remain subject to the authority of adults who must set limits, non-negotiable ones, for the children.

For many centuries, societies’ organizing political principle has been that of command; and the obedience of individuals to authority – the power of the Patriarch, Chief, Prince, King, or God – has correspondingly been the foundation of the social bond which guaranteed collective unity. This meant that individuals’ situations lacked any real autonomy; and only over the course of a long historical process have societies come to offer each citizen the opportunity of self-government, of becoming free and sovereign. This process is known as the rise of democracy.

The very idea of democracy is cloaked by a fundamental ambiguity. According to its etymology, the word democracy means “government of the people, by the people and for the people”. But the word “democracy” has a more basic meaning: a government which respects human freedoms and human rights, those of each individual and of all the people. True, these two definitions are not contradictory; but to achieve real democracy, a people must harbour within itself the ethical imperative which is the basis of the democratic ideal. Democracy is a gamble on the wisdom of the people; and unfortunately a people’s democratic wisdom has not always risen to every political occasion. A people can become a mob, and a mob can more readily be captured by passion than by reason.

### **Citizen government**

True democracy is in fact not government by the people, but by the citizenry. Democracy is meant to be the government of the citizens, by the citizens and for the citizens; and it is based on the citizenship of each woman and each man in the city. It is the exercise of citizenship which gives a public dimension to the individual’s existence. Humans are essentially creatures of relationships, capable of allying themselves with one another by words and in action; they attain full existence only by means of this relationship, based on mutual recognition and reciprocal respect. These are what make it possible to build a society founded on freedom and equality. The democratic ideal implies an “equal” distribution among all the citizens not just of power, but of ownership and knowledge also. This is an ideal of perfection; and though it has the major drawback of being unrealisable, it does, however, indicate a direction, create a basis for educational theory, and provide impetus.

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Federico Mayor, Opening speech at the Forum on the culture of peace, Bamako (Mali), 24 March 1997.

The body politic is born when people, acknowledging themselves as equals and of similar nature to each other, decide to unite and live together; that is to say, to talk and act together to build a common future. It is these two, “talking together” and “acting together” which make up political life: what begins and establishes political action is discussion among the citizens: free discussion, public deliberation, democratic debate, conversation. To found a society is, literally, to create an association. This finds expression through a constitution, a social contract whereby the citizens decide on the political project they intend to carry through together. The foundation of politics is not, therefore, violence, but its diametrical opposite: human discussion. The mark of a totalitarian regime is the utter destruction of every public space in which citizens might have the freedom to talk and act together.

The very essence of politics, then, is the dialogue of people among themselves; and the success of politics is therefore the success of this dialogue. Because violence appears among human beings only with the breakdown of their dialogue, violence always means a breakdown in politics. The essence of political action is common action with others. When the individuals act one against the other, they undermine the very foundations of the body politic.

When all the individuals in one society aspire to liberty and self-government through insisting on their legitimate rights, conflicts will necessarily arise, which is why democracy is a matter of conflict. It is accordingly important that the conflicts arising among the citizens do not degenerate into violent confrontation. One of the main tasks of democracy is to find institutions designed to regulate such conflicts in a constructive way by using the methods of non-violence.

In representative democracies, citizens’ views have scarcely any importance except at election time and, sometimes, in referendums. The public space, in which the citizens exercise their right to speak, tends to be confined to the voting booth. If the essence of democracy is public discussion, then nothing is less democratic than a society where the isolation of the voting booth is the only place where the citizen in fact has any opportunity for self-expression. Of course, we should never underestimate the decisive role that the organization of free elections has played in the people’s long struggle to liberate themselves from tyranny and despotism. Free elections are a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition of democracy.

### **The rule of law**

Democracy claims to base its legitimacy on the rule of the majority; but it can happen that this does not correspond to the rule of law. The majority principle does not guarantee respect for the ethical imperative which is the basis of democracy, and a majority may exercise a dictatorship more pitiless than that of any single tyrant. What is to happen when the will of the greatest number, that is to say “the will of the people”, is opposed to justice and countenances tyranny? For a citizen and democrat, there can be no doubt: the ethical imperative must come before the will of the

majority; the right must prevail over numbers. In a true democracy, the rule of law is infinitely more binding than obedience to universal suffrage.

The exercise of authority must not aim at the subjection of individuals, but seek to educate them in their responsibilities. Citizenship can never be based on the blind discipline of all, but on the responsibility, and therefore the personal autonomy, of each. And this means that citizens can and must appeal to their individual conscience and oppose the rule of the majority when it gives rise to a manifest injustice. There is a civic virtue in dissent, a civic dissidence which refuses, in the name of the democratic ideal, to bow to the law of the majority. "Civil disobedience", says Gandhi, "is the inalienable right of every citizen; to give it up is to cease to be human. (...) To put down civil disobedience is an attempt to imprison conscience"<sup>61</sup>.

History teaches us that democracy is far more often threatened by the blind obedience of citizens than by their disobedience. State power rests essentially on the citizens' passive obedience, which is why the most effective form of resistance to the power of the State is civil disobedience. "If people simply became aware", wrote Gandhi, "that it is contrary to their nature to obey unjust laws, no tyranny on earth could rule them. That way lies the true path of autonomy. (...) Human enslavement will last just as long as the superstition that says people are obliged to submit to unjust laws."<sup>62</sup>

### **Taking the risk of disobedience**

"We may observe", wrote Hannah Arendt, "that the instinct of submission to one who is stronger has at least as great a place in the human psyche as the will to power; from the political point of view, perhaps even greater."<sup>63</sup> The moment individuals find themselves part of a hierarchically-arranged organization, they risk losing the essence of all they personally have achieved; their intellectual, moral and spiritual life can undergo a major regression. The individual is placed in a situation of dependence in relation to the other members of the group, and still more in relation to the leader. According to Freud, "man is not a herd animal, but rather, he is a horde animal, an individual creature in a horde led by a chief",<sup>64</sup> He goes on to explain: "the individual gives up his *ideal of himself*, in favour of the ideal embodied in the leader."<sup>65</sup> In the individual's submission to authority, there is both a measure of constraint, which is the result of manifold pressures, and a measure of consent - and it is very hard to tell exactly how great is the measure of each. The individual's propensity for submission is often strongly reinforced by rewards for obedience and punishments for disobedience.

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<sup>61</sup> Gandhi, *Tous les hommes sont frères* [All Men are Brothers], Paris, Gallimard, 1969, p. 235-236.

<sup>62</sup> Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj, or Indian Home Rule*, 1938; Fr. tr. Denoël *Leur civilisation et notre délivrance*, Paris, 1957, p. 142-143.

<sup>63</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Du mensonge à la violence*, Essais de politique contemporaine, [From lies to violence; essays in contemporary politics] Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1969, p. 148.

<sup>64</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Essais de psychanalyse*, [the individual essay is "Group psychology and the analysis of the ego", 1921] Paris, Petite Bibliothèque Payot, 1981, p. 34.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

Citizens choose the easy way when they give their unconditional submission to the State in exchange for personal security and tranquillity. They must have the courage to disobey the State whenever it orders them to participate in an injustice. "Civil disobedience", writes Gandhi, "is a revolt, but without violence. Those who commit themselves thoroughly to civil resistance simply take no account of the authority of the State. They become outlaws who have taken it upon themselves to go beyond all laws of the State which are contrary to morality. In this way they may, for instance, find themselves refusing to pay taxes. (...) In fact, they put themselves in a position such that the State has to put them in prison, or find other means of coercing them. They act in this way when they consider that the physical freedom they appear to enjoy has become an intolerable burden. They argue from the fact that a State grants personal freedom only to the extent that the citizen submits to the law. This submission to the decisions of the State is the price the citizen pays for personal freedom. It is a fraud, therefore, to barter one's own freedom against submission to a State whose laws are utterly or to a great extent unjust."<sup>66</sup>

Disobedience to the law is, however, the exception which proves the rule of obedience. In the face of injustice, the duty of disobedience is prescribed by obedience to an unwritten law higher than the laws of the polity. Those who engage in civil disobedience to an unjust law do not dispute the necessity of law; their intention is to remind everyone that the law can have no other foundation or justification than justice. Far from advocating the abolition of all law, they demand the establishment of another law, one which no longer upholds injustice, but justice.

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*Tous les hommes sont frères*, op.cit., p. 251.

## 6. MEDIATION

One of the methods of non-violent regulation of conflicts which needs to be fostered is mediation. Mediation is the intervention of a third party, interposed between the protagonists in a conflict and placed in the middle of two adversaries (from the Latin *adversus*: one who is turned against, who is in opposition), who may be two individuals, two communities or two nations facing and opposing each other. The aim of mediation is to bring the two protagonists from adversity to the conversation (from the Latin *conversari*: to turn oneself towards); that is, to bring them to turn and face each other for the purposes of discussion, mutual understanding and, if possible, finding a compromise which can open the way to reconciliation. The mediator tries to be a “third party peacemaker”, whose interposition is aimed at breaking the “two-way” relationship, that of two adversaries who blindly confront each other in a dialogue of the deaf, and setting up a “three-way” one in which they will be able to communicate through an intermediary. The adversaries’ existing two-way relationship consists of a confrontation of speech against speech, two reasonings, two thought-processes in which there is no communication that might allow mutual recognition and understanding. The idea is to move from a two-way pattern of competition to a three-way process of cooperation.

### Concluding an armistice

Mediation can be undertaken only if both adversaries agree to involve themselves voluntarily in the procedures of conciliation. Of course, mediation can be offered, suggested, or recommended to them – but it cannot be imposed. To choose mediation is, for each of the two adversaries, to understand that the further development of their hostilities can only be to their disadvantage, and that they have everything to gain by trying to find, in amicable agreement, a positive way out of the conflict in which they are opposed. Embarking on mediation implies the concluding of an armistice by the two parties (from the Latin *arma*, arms and *sistere*, to stop): each undertakes to desist from any act of hostility to the other while the mediation lasts. Here again, the mediator’s essential role is to facilitate expression and encourage listening on either side so as to re-establish communication, dispel misunderstandings and allow mutual comprehension. Confrontation in the presence of the mediator is designed to replace the confrontation of two monologues, where each side hears only itself, with a real dialogue in which each listens to the other. Little by little, this dialogue, if each side is willing to pursue it, must reveal the possibility of untying the knots of contention and finding a compromise which essentially respects the rights and safeguards the interests of each. Jean-François Six puts it well: success for the mediator is to “enable each of these two who have been so very distant to come closer, to move towards the middle ground where they will be able to shake hands without either being humiliated or losing face.”<sup>67</sup> The success of mediation may take concrete form in an agreement, written and signed by the two parties. This

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<sup>67</sup>

Jean-François Six, *Brèche* [The Opening], N° 40-42, p. 118

“peace treaty” has the value of a pact binding on its signatories; and the mediator may monitor each side’s compliance with the agreement.

The “third party” mediator strives to create an “intermediate space” putting a distance between the adversaries so that each may take a step back from the former position, from the other party, and from the bruising conflict. The creation of this space separates the adversaries – just as a pair of fighting men are separated - and this separation can make communication possible. The intermediate space is a space for “re-creation”, in which the two adversaries may be able to rest from their struggle and recreate their relationship in a more peaceful and constructive process. Mediation, then, aims to create a place within a society where the adversaries may learn – or re-learn – to communicate, so that they may reach an agreement which enables them to live together, if not in real peace, at least in a peaceful coexistence.

### **Taking both sides**

It is not the mediator’s function to sit in judgement or to pronounce a verdict. The mediator is neither a judge who finds for one side against the other, nor an arbiter who awards damages to one party against the other, but an intermediary who tries to re-establish communications between the two in order eventually to reconcile them. The mediator has no power to force agreement or impose a solution on the protagonists; and the primary precondition on which mediation is based is that the resolution of a conflict must be mainly the work of the protagonists themselves. Mediation aims to enable the two adversaries to take possession of “their” conflict in order to be able to cooperate in tackling, mastering and resolving it together. The mediator is a “facilitator”, facilitating communication between the two adversaries so that they can express their own points of view, listen to each other, understand each other and reach an agreement.

The mediator must, as François Bazier stresses, “side with one, then side with the other; not be impartial”<sup>68</sup>. This observation leads us to reject the notion of “neutrality” which has often been used to describe the mediator’s position. The mediator is not, in fact, “neutral”. According to its Latin roots (*ne*, “not” and *uter*, “one of two”), the word neutral means “not the one or the other, neither of the two”. So, in the case of an international conflict, a neutral country is one which joins neither of the two opposing sides, which gives its support and assistance to neither of them and stays out of the conflict. Now a mediator is precisely not someone who joins “neither of the two adversaries”, but someone who joins *both*, giving support and assistance to both the parties involved, and taking sides first with one, then with the other: committed twice over, two times involved, and on two sides. However, this double partiality is never unconditional; on each occasion it a partiality of discernment and fairness. In this sense, the mediator is not neutral but *equitable*, striving to give to each side its due. This is how the mediator can win the confidence of both adversaries, and foster the dialogue between them.

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<sup>68</sup> François Bazier, "Allo, le service de médiation?" [Mediation Service here ...] in *La médiation*, Montargis, Éditions Non-Violence Actualité, 1993, p. 20.

### **Disentangling the conflict**

Mediation generally begins with separate preliminary meetings with each of the two parties. These meetings allow the people involved in the conflict to put their point of view in a climate of confidence. The mediator does not conduct a cross-examination, but asks questions respectfully, with the aim, not just of understanding the party but also (and above all) of reflection and self-understanding in terms of his or her own attitude to the conflict. Mediators practise, in a sense, the art of maieutics (from the Greek *maieutikê*, “the art of midwifery”); for they assist their clients in “giving birth” to their own truth. The quality of the mediator’s listening proves the determining factor here in the success of the mediation: a person who feels listened to is well on the way to feeling understood, and can then confide and not only give the facts (or at least one version of them), but also, which is more important, convey their own subjective experience. To disentangle a knotty conflict, it is not enough to establish the objective truth of the facts; it is above all necessary to grasp the subjective truth of the people involved, with their feelings, desires, frustrations, resentments and sufferings. Then all parties can put a name to the feelings that are motivating them, and the mediator’s active listening has already, by itself, had a therapeutic effect which begins to heal the confiding party’s pain, assuage their fears, calm their anger and mitigate their latent violence: it can then proceed to disarm the hostility to the adversary which that party has been nourishing.

These preliminary meetings have the function of preparing the two parties to accept the notion of embarking on the mediation process. When they have understood and accepted the principles and the rules of mediation, the mediator or, generally, the mediators can then suggest that they meet.

## 7. ILL-TREATMENT

The world of school is at the intersection of three worlds: the family, economic life and politics. The task of children's upbringing undertaken by teachers/educators must never be based on the supposition that the world of school is a sanctuary: it would be pointless to build high walls all around school so as to shelter its children from the dangers outside. And yet the world of school must have well-marked boundaries, to protect its special character. Ideally, the practices which function as educational in each of these worlds would all be based on the same principles and have the same values. In actual fact, though, things may easily be very far from this ideal, above all if we are aiming to base our scheme of upbringing on the principles and values of non-violence. The child may be confronted by situations of violence within the family itself, or in the neighbourhood. The children who come to school bring with them all the problems they encounter elsewhere. Of course, the teachers are not being asked to solve all these problems by putting right what is wrong with the family or society; but at the same time they cannot fail to recognize them. Where else but at school will children be able to meet adults who can listen to and take notice of the difficulties they have in their families or neighbourhoods? Whenever possible, therefore, teachers must establish a way of working with parents and those with social responsibilities.

It is nowadays a well-established fact that the way people are treated by those closest to them throughout infancy strongly affects the way they will approach and deal with others once grown up. Now abuse or ill-treatment of children is one of the most widespread categories of violence in our societies. All over the world, children are hit and beaten by their parents – it is remarkable that in democratic societies, smacking is forbidden at school but not, usually, within the family. Corporal punishment – smacks, slaps and beatings – exercised on children as innocent victims are considered a legitimate instrument of upbringing, used “for their own good”. It is generally considered that the parent or guardian who hits a child is only providing “proper” correction. “Spare the rod and spoil the child”, says popular proverb. But we urgently need to break with this tradition; for it is responsible for the sufferings inflicted on children being not only hidden, but actually denied: all our societies are still thoroughly “in denial” when it comes to children's suffering. Parents and all the others responsible for their upbringing are exonerated from the acts of violence they inflict on them, and the blame is put on the children. It is they, we say, who are “bad” or “naughty”.

### **Serious trauma**

In reality, the violence done to children causes serious trauma in them which will leave a lasting mark on their affective and psychological lives. The first relations an infant human has with its nearest and dearest contribute decisively to the construction of its identity, and to a great extent foreshadow the relations it will establish later with others. The child who has experienced violence is highly liable to become a violent adult. The child who is despised and neglected is at serious risk of

being unable to respect others. Such children will tend to treat others as they themselves have been treated, as if in revenge for what they have undergone. They are not condemned to be violent, but they will be strongly predisposed to become so; and they will accordingly be easily led astray by ideologies which teach contempt for others, and will be easy prey for propaganda which incites them to murder.

If, on the other hand, the infant has been respected and loved by those around, it will be predisposed to respect and love others, as if in gratitude; and will have, accordingly, the greatest of chances of finding within itself the strength to resist being carried away with the crowd to despise, to hate and to murder.

Of course the child is already a being with needs, impulses and desires. The child's nature is an early version of what adult human nature will be, and by their nature humans are both inclined to evil and disposed to good, capable of both generosity and malice; it is precisely here, in this ambivalence, that human freedom and, therefore, human responsibility, are to be found. Both this natural leaning of human beings towards ill-will and this no less natural disposition to goodwill are independent of the treatment received by the child. The adult's inclination to violence is not one of the sequelae of childhood trauma; and in fact we cannot really say that the child is utterly "innocent". The converse is likewise quite untenable: that provided only the infant is respected and loved by its parents, it will be in some sense programmed to do good and will have no inclination towards evil. The mystery of evil, which makes the human condition a tragedy, cannot be explained away so easily.

However much a child has been loved and respected, the resulting adult is a being with appetites, lusts and wants, and will always find it difficult to rise above these deadweights on human nature and have the strength to show a generous spirit towards others. The ideologies that are based on exclusion of "the other" find in every individual a natural complicity, deeply rooted in that individual's "impulses".

To structure a personality, children need to be faced with the authority of adults who set bounds and establish prohibitions; but this authority has gone astray when it tries to assert its power by violence, whether in the form of blows or of humiliation. Violence is not educational, and is in itself a backward step, pedagogically. It must be an inviolable principle that to strike a child under the pretext of proper upbringing is never permissible, nor is subjection to humiliating treatment. Eradicating violence against children is a real challenge, and it is the very future of humanity which is most decidedly at stake.

### **The duty to report**

The child who is abused at home comes to school with the trauma and suffering of that abuse; both necessarily have repercussions on its behaviour. School naturally has a major part to play in detecting instances of child abuse. In the case of France, the departmental circular of 15 May 1997 states that "the national school system has a crucial function in this domain. Its staff are in constant contact with the children, and have a duty of vigilance; they must be trained in the indicators of abuse, ill-treatment

and sexual abuse, and in the behaviour to adopt when cases present themselves. It is also the task of school to contribute to their prevention, by taking measures to ensure that pupils are properly informed.” As part of this, teachers have a duty to report such matters, and any dereliction will expose them to prosecution for failure to assist a person in danger.

These directives lay down clear and simple principles; their application, however, turns out to be extremely complicated. Faced with a child whose behaviour seems to present symptoms of abuse, a teacher may have suspicions, but will find it very hard to arrive at any certainties. Abused children generally do not speak out. Shame, fear, or guilt keep them quiet; if questioned by suspicious adults, they deny everything; they protect their families. Furthermore, teachers are reluctant to make a report which they know will have extremely grave consequences for the family concerned. Nevertheless in emergencies, when it clearly seems that a child is seriously at risk of mental or physical harm, after agreeing on a course of action with the medical and social staff, it is necessary to alert the court authorities so that they can give the protection that is vitally needed.

## 8. DELINQUENCY

School cannot be regarded as a place insulated from the urban neighbourhood around it. Some of the violence that takes place in school has been imported from outside. Coming to school, the child brings along all the problems experienced in the family and in the neighbourhood, and there is no point in teachers pretending not to know this. The school community therefore finds itself directly affected by the delinquency in which its pupils may be caught up outside the school gates.

Delinquency causes a breakdown in the social bond; but often it is a consequence of such a breakdown in the first place. The moment an individual, especially a young one, can find no place to put down roots in society, no means of structuring his or her personality or giving a meaning to existence, there is going to be some kind of breakdown between society and that individual. If the school career is likewise unsuccessful, there is a strong risk that unemployment will be superimposed on an effective denial of citizenship: the individual is caught up in the machinery, and will undergo an identity crisis. One specific consequence of being deprived of citizenship is anti-social behaviour.

### **“I am violent, therefore I am.”**

Violence is liable to present itself as the ultimate means of expression for those to whom society has refused all others. Violence seems to be the last resort of individuals debarred from taking any part in the life of the community, and in such cases it expresses a will to live: “I am violent, therefore I am.” Those whose every link with society has been broken have no further opportunity to communicate with others, except others in the same situation. They accordingly form a “gang” on the margins of society; and they will see no reason to abide by the laws of a society which has failed to respect their rights.

The more violence is forbidden by society, the more valuable it is for exacting recognition, since now it symbolizes the transgression of a social order that does not deserve respect, and it is precisely this transgression which is the object of the violent person. To one excluded and unacknowledged by the law, violation of the law offers the surest means of securing acknowledgement. Moreover, the violence of transgression brings a malign pleasure and real enjoyment, in that it destroys the symbols of an unjust society and tramples the attributes of a hated order. Hence, violence has a fascination for those who feel the frustration and humiliation of being excluded; for them it is a desperate attempt to regain the power over their own lives which has been stolen from them. Surely this is, in its degenerate, deviant and clumsy way, a means of access to one form of transcendence, and any attempt to “moralize” about it is doomed.

## **The need for boundaries**

At the same time, we must understand this violence as a provocation, or (according to the etymological meaning of this word), an appeal (“provocation” is from the Latin verb *provocare*, from *pro*, “before”, and *vocare*, “to call”). Violence has its roots in pain; its function is a cry for help. Violence is that which cannot find speech, but manages at least a scream; we need to hear it, then, rather than condemn: if we heard it properly there would scarcely be time for condemnation. What we have to do, therefore, is be prepared to respond to that appeal; for ultimately the violence is an expression of a desire to communicate, of a need for dialogue. Those who turn to violence are rejecting a society which has itself rejected them, and it is the task of that society to hear their cry.

To strive to understand does *not* mean that “anything goes”. On the contrary, to understand violence is also to forbid it. This violence is the sign that those who give themselves up to it are not able to find any boundaries; they are at the same time demanding that limits be set. Children and adolescents need to come up against boundaries established by the authority of the adults; for these boundaries, which are also landmarks, provide them with the security they vitally need to let them structure their personalities. The absence of boundaries plunges them into anxiety, and anxiety generates violence. The response to violence, then, must be an attempt to re-establish communication; and the worse possible reaction would be to answer violence with violence, for this would be a terrifying confession of powerlessness on society’s part. We must respond to this violence by putting into operation a non-violent strategy aimed at creating places where it is again possible to meet, middle ground where mediators may restore communication between society and those it has excluded. Then it will be possible to make respect for the law prevail; but the adults will only be able to mark the boundaries forbidding violence once more if they themselves have an attitude of non-violence. Measures of constraint implying some deprivation of liberties should not be ruled out: they may be necessary, to ward off the most acute emergencies and make it possible to avoid the worst in the short term; but they do not, in so doing, solve the problem.

## **Putting violence into words**

If violence is the expression of something that has not managed to get said, then for the violent person to be able to speak their violence in words will already represent a considerable distance travelled towards mastering and transforming it. Speech delivers us from violence, and it must be the aim of mediation to allow delinquents and the excluded to regain ownership of their lives by means of speech. Talking works: to put something into words – to “verbalize” – one’s sufferings, fears, frustrations, and desires, is to gain that distance which allows a situation to be tamed by reflection.

It is important, then, to build bridges between the educational institution and the community so that, as far as possible, a single world is created for the upbringing of children. For this to happen, teachers must be able to work together with the various

individuals and bodies which have their part to play in the neighbourhood, particularly those that have a social role of mediation. When downright offences are committed in school, it will of course be right to call in the police and the court authorities. Here again, though, it is vastly preferable not to fall back into a merely repressive way of thinking, but to be consistent with the educational project as carried on in school. So we need to go through all the possibilities for mediation in the handling of offenders. "Mediation", stresses Jean-Pierre Bonafé-Schmitt, "thus represents a new form of joint action, which calls for a rearrangement of the relations between the State and civil society, and the establishment of new common ground for the regulation of social relations."<sup>69</sup>

An alert teacher can be aware, as early as primary school, of the behaviour of a child who is wandering in the direction of "infantile delinquency". Such behaviour must not be "passed over in silence", as if the adults were taking no notice, pretending to believe that "it's a passing phase". More likely than not it is, on the contrary, only "a first stage", and it is accordingly important to stop the rot this early, to prevent the violence which later on might otherwise carry the adolescent away. Children's anti-social behaviour<sup>70</sup> – rudeness, verbal aggression, provocative behaviour – are already instances of a breakdown of the social bond, and open the door to delinquency.

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<sup>69</sup> Jean-Pierre Bonafé-Schmitt, "La médiation scolaire : l'apprentissage d'un rituel de gestion des conflits", in *Violence et éducation : de la méconnaissance à l'action éclairée*, [Mediation in school: an apprenticeship in the ritual managing of conflict], in *Violence and upbringing: from failures of recognition to enlightened action*] Paris, L'Harmattan, 2001, , p. 351.

<sup>70</sup> On this subject, see the article by Bernard Seux, "Civilités et incivilités scolaires"[social and anti-social behaviour in school], *Alternatives Non-Violentes*, N° 114, Spring 2000.

## 9. EDUCATION IN CITIZENSHIP

Teaching in school is directed at children who, in the first place, have not chosen to come and who are there, in a sense, “under duress and by force”. This alone makes going to school liable to be experienced by the pupil as “violence”, as a system that demands submission. The pupil is there to “learn”, that is to say, to “take” the knowledge which is administered. To be “good” pupils, children must “learn their lessons” and “do their homework”. We impose on these pupils “obligations to perform” which are imposed on very few adults. To “succeed”, the child must “work”, that is to say, “make an effort” and “take trouble”. This means “suffering” – and in the knowledge that poor results will bring punishment. The child is therefore not only “forced” to learn and to work, but also placed under an obligation to succeed. Do the teachers not seek to “inculcate” knowledge, which the pupils call “subjects”? And does not “inculcate” mean “force in”, or more precisely “force in with the heel”? (from the Latin verb *inculcare*, from *calx*, *calcis*, “heel”). There is an irreducible element of constraint in this apprenticeship, as experienced by the child.

Michel de Montaigne strenuously denounced the methods of intensive instruction which pupils had to undergo: “Our ears are never free of their Nagging”, he exclaims in revolt; “they would pour their learning into us as with a Funnel; and all our task is but to regurgitate what has been dinned into us.”<sup>71</sup> In his view, the pedagogue who only aims to make a child learn lessons to recite by heart has missed the point, which is not so much to exercise the pupil’s memory as to draw out the pupil’s intelligence: “That is not knowledge which is known by rote, but merely keeping what has been committed to memory. That which is properly known is at our service without we turn our eyes towards the book.”<sup>72</sup> The educator must have the ambition not merely of instructing, but of educating the child: “So let there be question, not of the words of a lesson only, but of the Sense and of the Substance; and let the benefit thereof be judged, not by the testimony of present recollection, but by the life lived thereafter.”<sup>73</sup>

### The “bad pupil”

For the “bad pupil” whose school career is faltering, school and its constraints will be a bad experience, and will feed a deep sense of injustice. To call a child a “bad pupil” is to label her or him a “bad child”. “This potent anthropological background”, emphasizes Bernard Lempert, marks out the one who is in difficulties, the sufferer, as being the bearer of evil.”<sup>74</sup> To treat a child in this way is to make a value judgement which shuts that child up within a negative self-image, bringing both humiliation and guilt. Along the same lines, Bernard Lempert denounces the confusion between mistakes and faults. Indeed, why do we speak of “faulty spelling”, when it is only a

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<sup>71</sup> Michel de Montaigne, *Essays I*, Paris, Gallimard, Col. Folio/Classique, 1997, p. 222.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

<sup>74</sup> Bernard Lempert, “Changer de regard sur les enfants”, [Changing the way we look at children] *Non-Violence Actualité*, March 2000.

matter of an utterly inconsequential technical mistake? The child who has not managed to spell a word as the grown-ups insist it should be spelled is in no way “faulty”; only a rule of grammar has been broken, no moral principle. The mistake may be corrected, but the pupil must not be censured. School is a place where, if anywhere, the “right to make a mistake” must be recognized. “Here”, observes Alain, “you make mistakes and have another go; here, getting a sum wrong never ruins anyone.”<sup>75</sup> To learn is to put one’s mistakes right. “*Errare humanum est*”, meaning not merely that making mistakes is human, but also that it is “humanizing”: it is by correcting our mistakes that we enhance our humanity, and the process of understanding a mistake enlightens and organizes our intellect. To punish a mistake is an abuse of being in the right, and a negation of justice; and this is all the worse because a bad mark given as a punishment is inflicted in public, where all the other pupils see and know about it. Similarly, the child has a right not to understand; when a pupil has not understood something, this is an indication that a better explanation is needed. “Of course”, Alain goes on to note, “the easiest course is to stick to the summary judgement: “This child is not very bright”. But that is precisely what we may not do; on the contrary, there is a fault, and a very serious one, and it is the adult’s: it is the essential injustice.”<sup>76</sup> Through “failure at school” this place, which ought to be the ideal site of socialization, itself contributes to social exclusion; and selection at school is one of the strongest factors generating the social divide.

The challenge to teachers is that of getting the child to understand that this kind of work is “worth the trouble”, instilling a “desire to learn” so that the child can make the material offered its own and finally feel the “pleasure of understanding” and know the immense joy of intellectual achievement. And indeed children are quite capable of realizing that the transmission of knowledge by adults is an essential stage in the construction of their own personality, at which stage it will be possible to reduce the “institutional violence” which school makes the pupil undergo.

### **Instructing and educating**

Any entire project for upbringing must be organized around two central features: instruction and education. Instruction is the transmission of the elements of knowledge; its concern is with facts, its aim objectivity. Instruction is the giving of information, scientific or technical, and targets essentially what is useful: it is utilitarian, conveying knowledge which makes it possible to know *how*. Yet however useful they may be, the technical disciplines have nothing to do with the values that give life its meaning. Such knowledge does not equip us mentally to deal with violence, suffering or death; nor does it help us work out non-violence, generosity, or happiness. Science, to put it generally, is no use when we are working out how to live.

The verb “to educate” means etymologically, “to bring to the outside” (*educare*, from *ducere*, “to lead”). In ancient Greece, the pedagogue was a slave who took the child from the family home to the community school (the Greek *paidagōgos* is from *pais*, *paidos*, “child” and *agein*, “to lead”). This “educational” step, this

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<sup>75</sup> Alain, *Propos sur l'éducation*, [Views on education] Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, Col. Quadrige, 1998, p. 77.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

“pedagogic” journey which leads the child outside the family to go to school, is a good expression of the purpose of education: to transmit to the pupil the moral values conducive to good citizenship. School is an intermediate space, a place of transition between the family circle and the great world outside. Once the family has done its best to ensure a child’s emotional security, it is one of the duties of school to provide an opportunity for discovering the society of others and “living together” with them. School is thus *the* special place for political and civic socialization. School is not the world, but education must prepare the child to live in the world; and in the first instance it must protect the child from the world.

Education must have as its main ambition the preparing of children to become philosophers and citizens. There will then be time enough to acquire the professional knowledge that will enable them to become workers. To educate is to transmit values which carry meaning. Here we must not be put off by grand words, but dare to say that to educate is to allow a child to build his or her *humanity*. “Our children”, says Alain, “have each this ambition to be a grown-up human being; we absolutely must not let them down.”<sup>77</sup> The only way to avoid letting them down is to enable them to achieve freedom: to educate is essentially to educate for freedom. We have to acknowledge that the difficulties are immense; there is the great paradox of education: we educate our young for freedom, while we subject them not merely to our influence, but even to our constraint. For education is constraint; and freedom is gained not, indeed, by undergoing constraint as such, but by overcoming it. As Saint-Exupéry’s lord puts it in *Citadelle*: “This I quite fail to grasp, this distinction between constraints and freedom. (...) Do you call it “freedom” to have the right to wander in the void? (...) And does not the sad child who sees the others playing, long above everything for the imposition – “me, too!” – of the rules of the game, for they alone are the means of becoming?”<sup>78</sup> But it is not enough to suggest that not every constraint is a form of violence; we must also assert that only non-violent constraint can be educational.

While instruction teaches “how to do”, education conveys “how to live”. And while knowledge is important in order to know “how to do”, it is the very essence of knowing “how to live”. School is the place where children must be initiated into the art of “living together”, and education is the teaching of the grammar of that life. In the case of instruction, the learners’ role is predominantly passive: they must be content to “follow” a course which is “given” them, memorizing and storing up inculcated ideas. They have in principle no need to reply (unless the instructor makes a mistake), but need only repeat: the instructor is a drill-master. In education, the learners have an active role; their input is vital. Education relies on an interaction between teacher and pupil. While instruction stresses apprenticeship in knowledge, education stresses its relationship to the learner. The instructor speaks to the pupils; so does the educator, but time is also made for conversing with the pupils, and listening to them, too.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>78</sup> Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Citadelle*, Paris, Gallimard, 1948, p. 219.

Now, just because it is useful to distinguish between instruction and education, this does not mean they are to be separated, still less portrayed as opposites. A good instructor already does a great deal of educating, and a good educator provides instruction as well. Especially in the realms of philosophy, literature and history, the teacher should never stop at instruction, simply communicating objective knowledge. What is at issue here is no less than the meaning of human existence, and it is this which must be discussed with the pupils.

It is well worth emphasizing the importance of mathematics in children's intellectual training. Instruction in mathematics plays a direct part in education of the intellect. Mathematical knowledge, based on the logic of non-contradiction and the principle of deduction, teaches the rigorous reasoning which is essential to thought. When he set about "evaluating those exercises with which schools busy themselves", Descartes wrote: "I enjoyed Mathematics above all, because of the certain and self-evident nature of its explanations."<sup>79</sup> He went on to make it clear that he hoped these "certain and self-evident explanations" which mathematicians had managed to discover in their proofs "would accustom [my] spirit to feed with delight upon truth, and never be content with fallacies"<sup>80</sup>. And this brought him to the point of thinking that the mathematical method not only must be of service for the "mechanical arts", but might also be extremely useful in discovering "all things that can fall within the scope of human understanding."<sup>81</sup>

Michel de Montaigne felt the neglect of philosophy acutely, and deplored the fact that it was not taught to children at all: "It is a great shame", he complained, "that things have come to this in our present age: that Philosophy should now, even to persons of understanding, be but a name empty and fantastical, used of none, prized of none. (...) It is much wronged, to be described as inaccessible to children."<sup>82</sup> According to Montaigne, of all the arts that should be taught a child, first place should be given to the art of right living: "For it seems to me", he writes, "that the first propositions with which the child's understanding should be watered ought to be those which shall govern the manners and the sense, those which shall teach self-knowledge, and the Elements of a good death and a good life"<sup>83</sup>. And since it is philosophy which "teaches us how to live", it is important to communicate this to the child; only afterwards will it be time for learning science: "After that which tells how to act with wisdom and virtue, then let the child be shown logic, physic, geometry, and rhetoric."<sup>84</sup>

In the design of the education system generally prevalent in societies described as "modern", instruction has a far bigger place than education. The primary objective is to enable young people to arrive on the labour market with the technical skills needed for the best chances of finding a job: hence a close collusion between the education system and the economic system. It goes without saying that school must

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<sup>79</sup> Descartes, *Discours de la méthode*, Paris, Éditions de l'école, 1965, p. 16.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>82</sup> Michel de Montaigne, *op.cit.*, p. 235.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 233.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 234.

enable the young to gain an occupational qualification with which they can find work or, better still, be able to choose the occupation which best suits their aptitudes. Before that stage, the first requirement expressed by the families is utilitarian: they are concerned above all with their children's "academic success" of a kind that will give them a ready entry into the employment market. This is quite understandable; and yet, in a democracy, the parents are *not* the school's customers and it should *not* be up to them to decide what is to be taught their children. The school's mission, which is to transmit the basic values of its particular culture, of civilization and of democracy, are not a matter to be bargained over with parents. Parents cannot claim the right to control the schools; but this does not mean they must be kept out of the process of education; on the contrary, they must be associated with it by being as fully informed as possible and consulted as necessary through their representatives.

There is also a temptation for teachers to think of themselves as instructors rather than as educators. "Each to his trade" runs the wisdom of the ages; it mutters about the "Jack of all trades, and master of none". And the teacher's trade is to communicate knowledge: a subject, a discipline. However, it would be a betrayal of their mission if schools were to limit their role to the inculcation of knowledge: they must aim to educate their children. In Saint-Exupéry's *Citadelle*, the lord summons his educators and says to them: "You were never told to kill the person in the infant, nor to turn them into ants, to live the life of the anthill. (...) What matters to me is [their] humanity, whether it is greater, or less<sup>85</sup>." And that, in the end, is exactly what should matter to the teacher.

"The Republic", writes Blandine Barret-Kriegal, "needs men and women who prefer goodness<sup>86</sup>." But if it is good women and men who make up the Republic, then who is going to educate the Republic's children in goodness? Who will teach them the philosophical and moral requirements which must be the foundation of citizenship? Where, essentially, but at school? A democratic society must of course be humanist, but this secular quality should not only be defined negatively by its rejection of all religious and ideological influence. It must first of all be defined in a positive manner, and not just by its respect for the religious convictions of each, but also by the teaching of a moral and political philosophy which treats the universal rights and duties of the individual and of the citizen as fundamental. All too often, the model of humanism referred to in the design of education suffers from a serious shortage of philosophical criticism. It is not a principle of the democratic conception of humanism that "all ideas are worthy of respect". Those ideas which disparage the values underlying the Universal Declaration of Human Rights not only fail to deserve respect; they must be actively rejected and combated. In a text entitled "*Against violence*", the National Committee for Combating Violence at School, set up by the French Minister of Education, states that the education policies of academic institutions must have as their foundation "a *universal morality* based on respect for the dignity of the person, ensuring that everyone feels a member of a human community and, as such, bound by certain duties, which include the rejection of violence, racism and humiliation under any circumstances, and of doctrines which lead to such abuses".

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<sup>85</sup> Antoine de Saint Exupéry, op.cit., p. 99.  
<sup>86</sup> *Libération*, 25 March 1992.

Violence is indeed a radical perversion of humanity; therefore, education must aim at the eradication of violence. “Education along these lines,” writes Philippe Meirieu, “and at school most particularly, involves a meticulous attachment to everything that can liberate people from violence and teach them the love of knowledge and the patience to understand. It is also handing to them the means of escape from all forms of violence – social or intellectual – which may be deployed against them, even on the part of the school institution educating them; and the means of escape also from all that invites them to be violent to others.”<sup>87</sup>

### **Setting up rules together**

The pupils in a class have not chosen to live together. They are not volunteers, and it is chance that has assembled them. They have not chosen, either, to put themselves under the authority of the teachers. School is not a community, but a society, or more accurately a society in the making. It will therefore be necessary, from the very first day of the new term, to organize the “life in common” of these pupils and teachers. All life in society implies the existence of laws. As soon as individuals live together within a group, they have to develop rules; and life in common is possible only if everyone respects these rules. It would be hopeless, therefore, in the name of some abstract ideal of absolute non-violence, to set about designing a society where justice and order might be assured by the voluntary behaviour of each member, and without any need for obligations imposed by the law. The law fulfils an undeniable social function, that of obliging citizens to behave rationally, in such a way as to avoid giving free rein to arbitrary behaviour or violence. It would not be fair, then, to regard the constraints of the law merely as obstacles to freedom; they are primarily its guarantors. Just laws are the very foundation of the rule of law. In school, rules must introduce children to living together with mutual respect. One of the essential tasks of the educators is to develop within the school a *culture of respect*, the only way of keeping at bay the culture of violence which is liable to take over.

The children’s “civic education” must not be something taught separately, an “extra”, as it were; on the contrary, it must be at the centre of the scheme of upbringing. Citizenship must not become “a subject” on the same footing as the others. To initiate children into citizenship, they must be taught the proper use of the law. The obedience required of citizens is not a passive, unconditional submission to the orders of a higher authority, but the considered and consenting observance of a rule whose legitimacy they themselves recognize. The social rules imposed on the pupils in order to construct their life in common must correspond to moral principles which they can make their own; and in view of this, one essential dimension of education must be to arrange for the children to take part in the setting up of the community rules which they are going to have to keep, by providing the opportunities for them to learn by experience that these are necessary if they are to be able to live together in mutual and general respect. “The mission of the educator is to give children and young people the ability to determine rules among themselves, or to negotiate with the adults certain rights of proposal. (...) To turn children into autonomous beings is to give them access to all three aspects of rules for life in

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Philippe Meirieu, op.cit., p. 166-167.

common: making the rules, applying the rules, and rendering justice.”<sup>88</sup> The idea is not to collect votes, but to reach a consensus. It is also advisable to define from the outset what is “negotiable” and what is not. No rule should be decided on without the teacher’s consent; but it goes without saying that the rules bind teachers as much as children: the force of the law is a check on the adults’ omnipotence. As a matter of principle, the law is something that evolves, and may be amended to bring it more into line with the requirements of life in common.

As a foreshadowing of the laws of society, these rules must lay down the rights and duties of each with respect to the others and be aimed at denying violence any legitimacy at all. The laws must specify the terms of a “contract” that binds together the members of the school community; they must set up constraints and prohibitions which fix boundaries for the children – for children need to come up against the law’s constraint if they are to structure themselves.

Not only, then, is “forbidding allowed”, but in fact “forbidding is compulsory”. And the very first, primordial prohibition, the one that is the basis of the culture (and indeed of civilization) is *the prohibition of violence*, which finds expression as the *requirement of non-violence*.

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<sup>88</sup> Anne-Catherine Bisot and François Lhopiteau, "La résolution non-violente des conflits" [Non-violent resolution of conflicts], in *L'éducation à la paix* [Education for Peace], op.cit., p. 213.

## 10. AUTHORITY

A non-violent education does not entail the abolition of all adult authority. For the structuring of the personality, a child needs to come up against that authority, and it is the responsibility of the person with authority to “exact obedience”. Education must teach obedience to the law, but that obedience should not be the result of a relationship of domination and submission between adult and child. We need to establish and maintain a distinction between *authority* and *power*. Power wants domination, while authority seeks consent. If the teacher expected only subordination from the pupil, then insubordination would be the latter’s only means of self-expression. The authority of the adult must prevail, but through a process of communication and dialogue, which must enable the child to feel that the world of the school is its own, a place where it has the right to speak, where its views are heard and taken into account.

“All those actions are violent” writes Emmanuel Levinas, “in which the agent behaves as if he or she were the only active person; as if the rest of the universe were there only to be acted *on*; it follows that all those actions are violent in which we are acted on without an all-round contribution from ourselves.”<sup>89</sup> This thought can help us define the pedagogic relationship between educator and child with greater precision. We may likewise suggest that all education where the teacher speaks as the only active speaker, as if the children were only there to be spoken *to*, would be violent education. So would all education undergone by children wholly without any contribution from them. This means that the educator must agree to enter into dialogue and discussion with the pupils. We do have to acknowledge that the traditional model of pedagogy was one which gave the teacher virtually absolute power over the pupils, who had no right to express themselves at all; when they spoke, it was only to answer questions at the teacher’s command, and only one answer was allowed: the one the teacher expected of them.

Education must try to foster autonomy rather than submission, a critical mind rather than passive obedience, responsibility rather than discipline, cooperation rather than competition, and solidarity rather than rivalry.

The educator should at all times bring out the relationship between the law and justice. The prohibitions of the law have no other purpose than to guarantee justice, that is to say, respect for the rights of each and for those of the community as a whole. Children must feel, personally, and learn by personal experience, that their own obedience to the law makes it possible for the school community to live together in harmony. They must internalize the “golden rule” recommended by all spiritual traditions: “Do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you”.

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<sup>89</sup> Emmanuel Lévinas, *Difficile liberté* [Hard Freedom], Paris, Albin Michel, Le Livre de Poche, Série Biblio-essais, 1990, p. 18

## The “golden rule”

When Kant wanted to define the moral rule incumbent on humans as rational beings, he put forward the following principle: “Act only in accordance with a maxim which you can simultaneously desire should become a universal law.”<sup>90</sup> So, for instance, if the maxim according to which I act is one giving me the right to use violence against others for the purpose of satisfying my own needs, this is a maxim I cannot at the same time wish to become a universal law; for I shall quickly realize that, though I can quite possibly wish to be violent myself, I cannot possibly wish that there should be a universal law enjoining violence – if only because, quite simply, I *cannot* want others to use violence against me for the purpose of satisfying their own needs. I *can*, on the other hand, wish for the maxim of non-violence, which requires me to act with respect for the humanity of others, to become a universal law. From this it clearly follows that non-violence *is* the universal law, that is to say the moral principle which any rational being must observe. Nor does it take a post-graduate course to induce a child to understand this teaching of Kant’s: you just should not steal or damage another child’s things for the good and simple reason that you would not want the other child to steal or damage your own; and, in the same way, you must not hit your playmate, because you would not like to be hit. Along the same lines of thought, children can perfectly well understand that, if they would like to be respected by the other pupils, they must first respect them. Respect is thus a duty because it is first a right: I owe respect to my fellow because I have the right to my fellow’s respect; and if I violate other people’s right to be respected, I can no longer claim the right to their respect. This mutual respect is the very foundation of a peaceful life in common. The basis of human community life is not love, but justice, or the respecting of everybody’s rights.

The defining feature of obedience to authority is that it involves consent. It is what the person with responsibility says which has to “carry authority”. However, authority may fail to carry conviction, and it will then be necessary to have recourse to a measure of constraint, though without using violence. For a person in authority, recourse to violence is a confession of weakness; and violence will lose them all their authority. For authority is essentially non-violent: firstly, violence is incapable of generating authority and, secondly, it is only when power is deprived of authority that it resorts to violence. To identify the recourse to violence as the proper exercising of authority is therefore to lose oneself in a most serious muddle. Violence can exact obedience, admittedly; but it cannot be a substitute for authority, being never anything but its negation.

## Educational sanctions

When the authority of the educator fails to persuade a child to respect the obligations of the law, then recourse must had to measures of constraint. It is advisable, therefore, that every transgression of the law should have some appointed sanction; but this must be consistent with the scheme of upbringing as a whole. The purpose of the sanction is not punishment (from the Latin verb *punire*, which means

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Emmanuel Kant, *Métaphysique et des mœurs*, Tome I, Paris, GF-Flammarion, 1994, p. 97.

to exact vengeance), but, as always, further education. It must enable the child to understand that it has broken the contract it had itself accepted, and give it the opportunity of putting something of itself into making amends. The sanction is justified in the first place negatively, in that its absence, which we call “impunity”, would encourage the recalcitrant child to become an established law-breaker. The purpose of the sanction is to re-establish, not the educator’s authority, but the primacy of the law.

The educational sanction<sup>91</sup> is designed to enable transgressors to become aware of their responsibility for their actions – responsibility to themselves as well as towards others – so that they may be reconciled with themselves and with the group. The sanction aims to emphasize that only if each respects the law can all live together. To sanction is not to condemn, shame, or humiliate; it is to uphold responsibility. For that purpose, it is disapproval of the act of transgression which is required, not the condemnation of the person of the transgressor. Hervé Ott stresses the importance of “distinguishing between the judgement of persons and the judgement of behaviour”. He has an admirably relevant formula to illustrate this distinction: “Saying to a child: that was a silly thing to do! is utterly unlike saying: you’re a silly child”<sup>92</sup> – though it is even better, in fact, to convey one’s own reaction to the naughtiness by saying “I’m not happy with that”, so as to make clear the relational aspect of this transgression of the law. Even so, there must be reparation for every act of naughtiness.

The reparation will enable the child to be made part of the group once more. “To make reparation”, Eric Prairat points out “is of course to repair something; but it is also to repair someone. The reparation is directed towards another person; and to have recourse to a procedure of reparation is to introduce a third party, the victim, the person to whom the reparation is addressed. That other person is the recipient, but also the mediator, the path by which the wrongdoer can restore his or her integrity. The need to make reparation is also the desire to restore oneself.”<sup>93</sup>

The educator must show *firmness* – insisting on the law’s prohibitions, refusing to let transgressions pass – but not *severity*. To be severe is to inflict violence on the recalcitrant child (“severe” is related to the Latin verb *sævire*, to use violence); and “a sanction is not an answering violence somehow supposed to cancel out an original act of violence, but a bringing up short, designed to break the cycle of doing/suffering harm.”<sup>94</sup>

In the school setting, once the motive for the transgression has been brought out, and once the rule has been upheld and reparation made for the damage, that can be “the end of the story”. Every sanction must be expunged after a while, never more than one year. It would be seriously prejudicial to the child if a “court record” were to

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<sup>91</sup> On this subject see Éric Prairat, “La nécessaire sanction”, *Conflit, mettre hors-jeu la violence*, [Necessary sanctions/Conflict: ruling out violence] under the direction of Bernadette Bayada, Anne-Catherine Bisot, Guy Boubault and Georges Gagnaire, Lyon, Chronique Sociale, 1997.

<sup>92</sup> Hervé Ott, “Du conflit destructeur au conflit créatif in l’éducation” [From destructive to creative conflict in education], *Violence and education*, op.cit., p. 330

<sup>93</sup> Éric Prairat, “L’introduction du droit à l’école” [The introduction of law in schools], *Non-Violence Actualité*, April 2001.

<sup>94</sup> Éric Prairat, *Conflit, mettre la violence hors jeu*, op.cit., p. 63.

accompany him or her throughout the school career or even beyond. It must be an essential principle of a non-violent upbringing that a child shall always have another chance.

Education must not convince the child that obedience is in all circumstances a duty and a virtue and that consequently disobedience is in all situations wrong. The child gains a “sense of fairness” very early on, and can experience a strong feeling of injustice when confronted by something he or she regards as an “abuse of authority” on the part of an adult, including instances when it is some other child who is the victim of such an abuse. Whether for oneself or on behalf of another, the child must be able to express these feelings without its being a matter for reproach or occasioning any fear of punishment. At the very least, the child has the right to further information, and an explanation.

Education must prepare children to acquire real personal autonomy by enabling them to make certain rules of conduct for themselves, on the basis of certain moral criteria chosen by themselves. It must teach them, that is, to judge the law and refuse to submit to it when they regard it as unjust. “Pity the children”, said Janusz Korczak, “in whom all will to insubordination has been successfully extinguished!”<sup>95</sup>. The adult that the child is to become must have the strength to refuse unconditional obedience to the orders of the “leader”. Gandhi found it regrettable that an essential and most often decisive part of upbringing rested on the duty of obedience to authority and thus conditioned the child in such a way that it became a subordinated citizen, not a responsible one. He castigated schools “where children are taught to think obeying the State a higher duty than obeying their conscience; where they are corrupted with false notions of patriotism and a duty to obey superiors; so that in the end they easily fall under the government’s spell.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Janusz Korczak, *Comment aimer un enfant* [How to love a child], Paris, Robert Laffont, 1958, p. 200.

<sup>96</sup> Quoted in Jean Herbert, *Ce que Gandhi a vraiment dit* [What Gandhi really said], Paris, Stock, 1969, p. 133-134.

## 11. CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Because of the asymmetrical, and in this sense non-egalitarian, situation between teacher and pupil, their relationship cannot avoid conflicts. It is the adult's responsibility not to suppress these conflicts by gaining the child's submission at any price. Nor, for that matter, can a responsible upbringing be based on such an absence of direction as to approach total permissiveness. Faced with conflict, the teacher must certainly neither plump for permitting everything nor for punishing everything. Each of these choices reveals a lack of authority; and in either case the teacher loses credibility, and becomes incapable of commanding respect, or even a hearing. The classroom atmosphere quickly becomes intolerable; for either one of these methods leads both teachers and children to an impasse. Thus, nobody benefits.

The educator must look for a constructive solution to the conflicts which arise, by allowing some room for the needs and requests expressed by the child; this helps build self-confidence. This building of self-confidence is not only the end of education, but is also the means. A positive solution to a conflict requires both sides' participation and cooperation. It is therefore important that the teacher involves the pupils in the search for a solution. It must be recognized that it is not a matter of the adult having the solution and needing to impose it on the pupils, but rather of looking with them for a way out of the conflict. The teacher must appeal to the pupils' creativity, and dare to ask them what solution they themselves recommend. To do this is, admittedly, to give up some power over them – but at the same time it brings with it some authority with them. The best way to ensure, as an adult, that children will listen to you is to listen to them. This interactive relationship between the two parties must allow a solution emerge which is acceptable to all. In this way, everybody benefits.

Educators must themselves learn to make “object lessons” out of the inevitable conflicts which arise among children, so as to enable them to discover that these occasions of opposition to others have to take their place in the process of their personality's development. Teaching children how to find a way through conflict is teaching them not to run away from it and helping them understand that it is possible to experience and handle conflict in a constructive way. “Once we accept”, writes Eric Prairat, “that conflict is not coterminous with violence, but that violence is only one possible issue for conflict, then we open up between the two an ideal opportunity for the educator: not, of course, to obfuscate or dress things up, but to teach children, or rather learn alongside them, how to live through the confrontations that are bound to crop up in our social life, and resolve them in a positive way.”<sup>97</sup>

### **Refocusing the conflict on the object**

Let us now take up again René Girard's idea that the origin of conflict between two adversaries is to be found in a mimetic rivalry which sets them contending for the

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Éric Prairat, "Genèse du conflit" [The Origin of Conflict], in *Pour une éducation non-violente*, op.cit., p. 46

ownership of an object. Non-violence aims to break this copy-cat element whereby each of the two rivals imitates the other's violence in giving blow for blow, fracture for fracture, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. The very principle of non-violent action is the refusal to let oneself get carried away in this unending spiral of violence. The idea is to find a way of shattering the endless mechanism of tit-for-tat by refusing to imitate the violence of the aggressor, of the one who "started it". To decide not to copy our violent adversary is to decide to keep oneself unpolluted by such violence.

To break the vicious circle of violence, what is needed is a constant refocusing of the conflict on the thing that caused it, as opposed to letting it degenerate into pure personal rivalry. People have the right to get and have the things they vitally need; and it follows that they have the right likewise to defend those things from others who seek to take them away. Conflict resolution, then, must establish a situation of fairness between the two rivals, one which guarantees the rights of each concerning the object; and to do this, it must keep coming back to the object itself, so as to allow negotiation about it. However, this particular attention to the object must not lead to a denial of the feelings of either party, for the acknowledgement of those feelings is what reveals the issues that are frustrating and bothering each of them, and the recognition of this is necessary to the transformation of the conflict.

Personal rivalry can only embitter a conflict and lead it towards the impasse of violence. Furthermore, violence is very liable to destroy the object at issue itself. Violence is often a policy of despair, a scorched-earth strategy. Not infrequently we find that each of two rivals would rather see the object destroyed than left in the hands of the other.

It is better, then, to negotiate about the object by looking into who has what rights over it. It may be that both adversaries are maintaining a legitimate interest in the object; is it, perhaps, possible to conciliate those rights? Might the object perhaps be fairly shared? Are there other objects available that might satisfy the claims of one party or the other?

### **Breaking the law of silence**

The school playground is the first place where violence first arises among children. If the adults just let them get on with it, the playground rapidly becomes a lawless area, where "anything goes". When a child is attacked physically, the adult's instinctive reaction is often to say: "Don't let them get away with it", "Stand up for yourself". If advice like that is not accompanied by details of *how* to do this, then they will be interpreted, given the dominant culture, as meaning: "Fight", or: "Hit them back". This kind of attitude leads to an endorsement of violence as rule of conduct in relations with others. Obviously, we are not suggesting that children should be encouraged to let themselves be pushed around without doing anything about it; quite the reverse: they need to be convinced that they must refuse to be victims; they must break the law of silence. When his daughter wanted to know how she should react to aggression, Jacques Sémelin explained that the thing she must do, above all else, was

refuse to keep quiet: “There can be no non-violent solution to a conflict if you, the victim, don’t take charge yourself. Deciding not to be a victim any more, no longer accepting the role of whipping-boy for others: this is the beginning of non-violent action. Refusing to be a victim is breaking off a relationship in which you are the loser. You don’t want to play the game they want you to play, not any more. You say: I’m not doing that again; I’m never going to do that again. You get to be the subject of your own life, the heroine of your own story. (...) To stop the violence and the bullying, it’s always important to find the courage to say no – a good, strong no, that will let them know you don’t accept what they’re doing to you.”<sup>98</sup>

Jacques Sémelin advises his daughter to talk about it, straight away, to an adult she can trust. And indeed, “it is important that there should be adults around at such times, to uphold the rules of the playground, to separate fighting children, to stop the violent actions, to log the origins of conflicts and discuss them with the parties, to enable every child to feel protected and to understand what is going on in play outside the classroom. The work of non-violent resolution of conflicts starts here.”<sup>99</sup> However, the child who has experienced violence is very likely not to pluck up the courage to talk about it to anyone – not a family member, not a teacher, not even a friend – for fear of bringing upon themselves still more violence from the aggressor(s) because of “telling”. Everything must be done, by the whole community responsible for upbringing, to convince these children that, whatever threats they may have heard, they must not be afraid to speak out. If they keep quiet, they play into the bullies’ hands, and the bullies will be able to continue to harass them with utter impunity. To overcome their fear, they need to gain the strength to refuse to be the victim, imprisoned within a negative self-image. To yield debases the person being bullied and exalts the bully; and to keep quiet is to collude with the aggressor. Talking about it enables the bullied child to regain ownership of his or her life, whereas acquiescing in violence to oneself amounts to a lack of self-respect. Self-respect entails requiring respect from others. Telling is in itself an act of refusing to play along with aggression, and in itself causes aggression to fail in its object. Telling identifies the bullies, so that everyone sees and knows them for what they are; then fear can change sides. Also, it is very seldom that a child is the only victim of the bully’s violence, which means that to speak out is to encourage other victims to speak out as well.

Once unmasked before the adults (teachers and parents), the bullies know that they will be called to account and incur sanctions. Behind all their bravado, they may very well not be indifferent or insensitive to this thwarting of their game. They may understand that it is in their interest from now on to keep the peace. For now, these aggressive children must remain fully within the institution’s scheme of upbringing: they, too, must be listened to, must be able to express their distress and suffering. If there must be sanctions, these must not be aimed at condemning or excluding them, but at bringing them back fully within the group.

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<sup>98</sup> Jacques Sémelin, *La non-violence expliquée à mes filles*, [Explaining non-violence to my daughters] Paris, Le Seuil, 2000, p. 27.

<sup>99</sup> Claudine Braun, Fabien Pujervie, Alain Refalo, Booklet accompanying the video “La non-violence dès l’école” [Non-violence starts at school] produced by the Institut de Recherche sur la Résolution Non-violente des Conflits (IRNC).

Those children who have witnessed acts of violence will certainly be tempted to keep quiet. They, too, will be intimidated by the thought of the bullies' reprisals if they tell. They dare not break "the law of silence". Nor is it always certain that, when trouble breaks out in their school, sympathy for the underdog is always what they feel; their behaviour may be more like that of voyeurs who enjoy watching the show put on for their benefit. Even those who do not agree with what is going on can just tell themselves it would not be a good idea to squeal on their fellows. Keeping quiet is part of a "code of honour" which confirms their membership of the group. If they tell, they are quite likely to be ostracized from the group and regarded as traitors and renegades. Here again, there is a major task for the pedagogue, who has to convince the witnesses that to keep quiet is to be the bullies' accomplices, and that they have a duty to assist "people in danger". Janusz Korczak set himself the task of rehabilitating the "tell-tale": It's mean to tell: where does this time-honoured principle come from?" he would ask. "Did the pupils learn it from bad teachers? Or was it the other way round, the teachers getting it from bad pupils? For this principle suits only the worst of either; it accepts that the defenceless child may be attacked, exploited and humiliated without having any right to ask for help, without being able to appeal to justice. The bullies triumph, while the bullied suffer in silence."<sup>100</sup>

Teachers and educators must draw up a code of behaviour for the bullied child by setting standards, establishing rules and spelling out what to do; and these principles must be made known to all the pupils and all the staff. It must be "the rule" that any child who is attacked or threatened should come and talk about it to a member of the school community. Such arrangements should be able to play a part in dissuading potential bullies, and this can change the whole atmosphere of the establishment, and reduce violence considerably.

### **Mediation at school**

Mediation finds a particularly fertile field of application for its methods in the school playground, where it can seek constructive solutions to the conflicts which arise. The aim is to allow the children to be introduced to non-violence as a rule of life. Mediation aims at creating a process of cooperation between the adversaries, so that they can become partners in a joint search for a creative and constructive solution to their conflict, one in which both participate, and which allows in the end for two winners.

"Role play" can be suggested, in the course of which the children act out conflict situations chosen by themselves. The actors play the various characters involved in this conflict, doing their best to "experience as real" what they are "acting". The object here is to allow all of them to feel the emotions and feelings they would feel if they found themselves confronted with a similar situation in reality. In this way, the participants can get to know more about the way they personally behave in interaction with other people, by becoming aware of their own feelings, reactions and attitudes in the way they relate to others. This must give them greater self-confidence. The role-play method also makes it possible to "act out a conflict",

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Janusz Korczak, op.cit., p. 197.

looking for features conducive to a positive solution, experimenting with new modes of behaviour, and “trying out non-violence for themselves”.

It is important that the playground and the classroom should form a single area for education. For this to happen, meetings of all the children in the class with the teacher must be organized regularly – this “class council” might take place twice a week – so as to review any problems arising either in or out of class, and consider any solutions that could be tried. This meeting must be a place of free speech, freedom of speech being in itself a curb on violence. Each child must be able to express his or her problems with the assurance of a sympathetic hearing from the whole meeting. “Analysing the conflicts that arise among pupils enables them to understand the processes at work; it gives them the words, the vocabulary and the concepts, to express by other means than violence and insults their own fears and sufferings.”<sup>101</sup>

Mediation in school may be carried on by pupil volunteers, after they have had some training for this. It is then known as “peer mediation”<sup>102</sup>. Such a programme of mediation must be the work of the whole community responsible for upbringing, and families also are brought in. The task of providing information and raising awareness must be carried out with the whole student body, so that everyone knows the principles and rules of this mediation, and so that the status of the pupil mediators is acknowledged. They may be identified by a distinctive sign (a badge or armband), and provide, in pairs, a presence in the playground, being on hand to intervene with other pupils when conflict situations occur. An adult (teacher or parent) is always present, and a room is made available for the mediators where they can meet the children involved away from the gaze of the others. “In line with the mediation procedure, [the mediators] meet with each party separately, in the first instance, to explain mediation to them, to get to know their point of view on the affair, and to reduce the tensions between them and create a climate of trust: all necessary preconditions for trying to settle their problem. (...) The role of the mediators is above all to re-establish communication between the conflicting parties, to allow each to set out his or her point of view and to help them find a solution together.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> On this subject, see "Organiser la médiation scolaire" [Organizing mediation in school], in *Conflit, mettre hors-jeu la violence*, op.cit.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, p. 119.

## 12. TOWARDS A CULTURE OF NON-VIOLENCE

At the closing session of the International Conference on Violence in School and Public policies”, organized in Paris on 7 March 2001, Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, spoke of the practical solutions which should be implemented for the problems caused by violence in school, and said: “I remain convinced that these solutions will only be viable if they are accompanied by a general world-wide movement towards a real culture of non-violence. The word comes to us from Gandhi: it is the translation of the Sanskrit *ahimsa*, and reminds us that we are heirs to traditions which have given an inordinate place to violence. (...) This is why UNESCO ceaselessly argues for the widespread teaching of human rights and the transmission of the values of tolerance, non-violence, solidarity and mutual respect through the redesign of syllabuses and school text-books.”

Culture is always the culture of nature. There is no point in placing nature and culture at opposite poles, for nothing can be cultivated which has not been offered to us, given to us, by nature, whose seeds are not already there in nature. Human nature is not a given, but a suggestion: nature proposes, and culture disposes.

Humans are by nature neither violent nor non-violent; they are capable of being both violent and non-violent. It follows that, in their nature, humans are at one and the same time inclined to violence and disposed to non-violence, the important issue being which part of ourselves we decide to *cultivate*, both individually and collectively. At present, we have to acknowledge that our societies are dominated by a culture of violence.

### **Violence is not inevitable**

The ultimate tragedy of violence is that it is exercised by people on other people; and yet this proves that it is not inevitable. Violence is one possibility of human nature and, in this sense, is “natural”. But there is another possibility, which is just as “natural”, namely, the potential for generosity. If humans are capable of doing good, this is because their nature is good; if they are capable of doing evil, it is because their nature is free. Humans are good voluntarily, by a free decision of the will. It is this freedom which gives dignity and meaning to their existence.

If we, as individuals, do not cultivate our own garden within ourselves, but leave it untended, then the weeds of violence will spring up everywhere. But we are not content to gather only the wild fruits of violence, the products of neglected waste ground, although we are indeed such poor gardeners that we put a great deal of effort into cultivating precisely these fruits. To cultivate violence is indeed to make it inevitable, but it is an inevitability only created by our own misguided will. It is a characteristic feature of this culture that it does not appreciate the need for non-violence and is wilfully ignorant of non-violent methods for the resolution of conflicts. What spaces, what times do we set aside so that our children can think about

the philosophy of non-violence and begin to practice the methods of non-violent action? When we reckon up all that is done in our societies to cultivate violence, and all that is not done to cultivate non-violence, we see how much there is to do if we are to organize humanity's transition from a culture of war to a culture of peace.

The culture of non-violence is more difficult; it requires more attention, more care than that of violence. It takes a great deal longer for the delicious and life-enhancing fruits of non-violence to grow and ripen than it does for the bitter, deadly fruits of violence.

It is when we, as humans, become aware of the inhumanity of violence, of its absurdity and pointlessness, that we discover within ourselves a demand for non-violence, the basis and organizing principle of our humanity. The culture of non-violence is wholly founded on a philosophy which says that the demand for non-violence is the expression of our humanity, and will not be denied. Non-violence is the necessary condition for our mutual encounter as brothers and sisters.

### **The history of non-violence**

At the second International Forum on the Culture of Peace, held in Manila (Philippines), in November 1995, UNESCO formulated a number of proposals aimed at strengthening a culture of peace through education. Two of these advocate a redesign of the teaching of history in such a way that violence and war no longer feature as the only means available to individuals or nations for defending their freedom and achieving justice. These proposals are as follows:

“teaching programmes should include information on social movements (national and international) in favour of peace and non-violence, democracy and equitable development;

“the teaching of history should be systematically reviewed and reformed to give as much emphasis to non-violent social change as to its military aspects, with special attention given to the contribution of women.”

It is essential that the “heroes” we hold up for admiration by our children should be not only warriors or revolutionaries who have made themselves famous by fighting: the cult of such heroes becomes reverence paid to violence; and yet we have a whole history of great deeds of non-violent struggle and resistance. “An unknown history, rejected and scorned (...) A history singularly absent from school text-books and official speeches. It is vital for our culture that we retake possession of this history, this world of resistance which, though little known, has nevertheless its own patents of nobility, and is a part of our common inheritance.”<sup>104</sup> The struggles of

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<sup>104</sup> Jacques Sémelin, "A la recherche de notre histoire" [searching for our history], *Résistances civiles, les leçons de l'histoire* [Civil resistance: lessons from history], Non-Violence Actualité [Non-violence News], Montargis, 1989.

Gandhi and Martin Luther King, particularly, can help children understand how great and how effective non-violent resistance can be.

“A thought”, says Simone Weil, “only achieves its full existence when made flesh in human surroundings.”<sup>105</sup> For non-violence to be able to fulfil all its potential, it must indeed take root in “human surroundings”, that is, in a community, a society, all of whose members – or at least the great majority – share the same values and the same convictions. For non-violence to develop it needs to be part of the culture of our human surroundings; and quite plainly this condition is not fulfilled in our present societies. In our cultural surroundings the very mention of non-violence tends to provoke an avalanche of arguments – always the same ones – aimed at disparaging its sense and relevance. So long as non-violence is thus held prisoner of such endless discussion, this will be a sign that the culture of violence still has the upper hand in our thinking.

Non-violence is still only the conviction of a few individuals living in a society where the great majority do not share that conviction. In such conditions, in the absence of human surroundings that create an intellectual and spiritual atmosphere favourable to non-violence, we are in great danger of going without the fruits that it can yield.

Our most urgent task, then, is to create such a human environment that will foster the culture of non-violence.

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<sup>105</sup> Simone Weil, *Pensées sans ordre concernant l'amour de Dieu*, [Random thoughts on the love of God] Paris, Gallimard, 1962, p. 65.

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**E-mail: [gemediat@club-internet](mailto:gemediat@club-internet)**

**Web-site: <http://gemediat.free.fr>**

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#### **Institut de Formation et de Recherche du Mouvement pour une Alternative Non-violente (IFMAN) [Training and Research Institut of the Movement for a Non-violent Alternative]**

**135 rue Grande, 27100 - Val de Rueil**

**tel.: 02 32 61 47 50**

**E-mail: [ifman.n@wanadoo.fr](mailto:ifman.n@wanadoo.fr)**

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There is also an IFMAN in Brittany ([ifman.b@wanadoo.fr](mailto:ifman.b@wanadoo.fr)), in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais ([ifman.npdc@online.fr](mailto:ifman.npdc@online.fr)) and in south-west France ([ifman.so@wanadoo.fr](mailto:ifman.so@wanadoo.fr)).

#### **Institut de Recherche sur la Résolution Non-violente des Conflits (IRNC) [Research Institute on the Non-violent Resolution of Conflicts]**

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**tel.: 01 42 87 94 69**

**E-mail: [irnc@multimania.com](mailto:irnc@multimania.com)**

**Web-site: [www.multimania.com/irnc](http://www.multimania.com/irnc)**

The principal purpose of the IRNC is to conduct multidisciplinary scientific research on the contribution of non-violence to conflict resolution.

**Mouvement pour une Alternative Non-violente (MAN) [Movement for a Non-Violent Alternative]**

**114 rue de Vaugirard, 75006 - Paris**

**tel.: 01 45 44 48 25**

**E-mail: [manco@ free. fr](mailto:manco@free.fr)**

**Web-site: <http://manco.multimania.com/>**

MAN is a national federation of local groups, a discussion and action movement aimed, on the one hand, at conducting theoretical research on the insights of the philosophy of non-violence, historic experiments in non-violent resistance and the analysis of social and political phenomena and, on the other, taking steps itself, by means appropriate to the strategy of non-violent action, to take part in the construction of freedom and a fairer society.

**Non-Violence Actualité [Non-Violence News]**

**BP 241, 45202 - Montargis cedex**

**tel.: 02 38 93 74 72**

**E-mail: [nonviolence.actualite@wanadoo.fr](mailto:nonviolence.actualite@wanadoo.fr)**

**Web-site: [www.nonviolence-actualite.org](http://www.nonviolence-actualite.org)**

Resource centre on the non-violent handling of conflicts, offering a publication service (bimonthly review focusing on practical experiments in conflict-handling within the family, the school, the neighbourhood, etc.), and an educational tools distribution service (beginning with a Directory of Resources) for individuals and bodies seeking to understand and react to violence in their surroundings.

*(Author's introduction, cover page 4.)*

Jean-Marie Muller is a founder member of the Movement for a Non-Violent Alternative (MAN), and Director of Studies at the Research Institute on the Non-Violent Resolution of Conflicts (IRNC). As a writer he has had many books on non-violence published and recognized as standard reference works, including *Le principe de non-violence* [The principle of non-violence] (Desclée de Brouwer), *Gandhi l'insurgé* [Gandhi the insurgent] (Albin Michel) and *Le courage de la non-violence* [The courage of non-violence] (Editions du Relié).