

# Consultation: From Competition To Cooperation

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**by Emanuele Tinto**

We are always taking into account only certain points when we speak about education: the physical aspects, the discipline and the notions.

We are forgetting a fourth point, that is the cooperation between the potentialities of human beings as both the teacher and the student.

One of my favourite thoughts is "Man is the Supreme Talisman. We should consider man as a mine full of gems of inestimable value. Only education can reveal the treasures and let mankind take part of it."

This thought refers to both the teacher and the student.

This fourth part of the process will lead the teacher and the student to consider each other not any more in a competitive position such as "I am right, you are wrong."

They will consider themselves as taking part in a process that will develop the potential of a human being, and they will consider each other, as everyone sees in the other the beauty of God reflected in the mind, and this point of resemblance will bring attraction and love between each other.

This love will render all mankind waves of the same sea, stars of the same sky and fruits of the same tree. This love will realize true agreement, the base of true unity that will bring development of the society.

This is a new way of cooperation, based on a specific law governing the process of CONSULTATION such as: "all are right but no one has the truth."

Looking at this process, it is possible to admit that the participants will be in the position of a true scientist.

They will certainly need particular qualities such as:

- sincerity and purity;
- belief and experience;
- detachment;
- devotion to search after truth.

Considering those particular qualities the participants in a consultation will be able to get in touch with anyone else present explaining their own ideas. Moreover, they will listen to everyone's ideas. They will be in the position to:

- present the idea, meaning with this that everyone will be ready to search for truth with a sincere and pure heart;
- evaluate the idea, that is, everyone will verify what was explained towards a clash of opinion;
- promote the ideas, i.e. all will be able to express their own points of view;
- to put into practice the result of the consultation as only through action will everyone deepen as a result of what was suggested in the discussion

No one knows his own capacities to love or how much he can learn. In other words, we have to accept

others not only for what they are but also for what they can become. Otherwise, we will prevent the natural process of transformation and the development of their own personality.

In more personal terms, if we will not accept the responsibility that we do not know ourselves, we will only be able to establish superficial relations with our peers and will neither be able to help them or to develop their potentialities nor to develop our own.

Is it possible to use consultation in the educational process? How do we start this process?

We can start easily on three different levels:

- family level
- teacher level
- community level

Working successfully with others brings us to the great challenge brought by the spirit of this age, namely how to work with success in groups to solve the problems that beset humanity from the nucleus of the family to the family of man. Here, consultation is both the process and the content

We analyze the structure, the process and the content of consultation. First of all, we have to think about the characteristics of the process and what it is for

1. It releases creative energies from the minds and the hearts of those involved.
2. New understanding and enlightenment are brought to a subject for a specific purpose such as to:
  - solve a problem
  - plan an action
  - generate inspiration
  - reassess priorities and clarify purpose
3. This is accomplished by sharing and interacting with proper information, ideas, thoughts, feelings, and impressions provided by different perspectives, knowledge, experiences, and by allowing interaction time to develop.
4. Each individual who takes part in the consultation should:
  - study
  - meditate on inner meaning
  - discuss
  - strive to acquire a fuller measure of certain requisites for the participants of a consultation:
    - o purity of motive
    - o radiance of spirit
    - o detachment from all save God
    - o attraction to His Divine fragrances
    - o humility
    - o patience in difficulties
    - o servitude

Let us now try to understand these requisites.

In each characteristic there is a negative and positive aspect. We must learn how to discard the negative one and learn how to develop the positive one, which is a potential aspect.

The final step is to make these characteristics a natural part of everyday life.

### **Purity of Motive**

Each intention should be clear and free from corrupting impulses. The individual's aim should harmonize with the aims of the group. To fulfill these conditions a person needs the ability to examine his own heart

for ulterior motives, mixed emotions, or ego involvement that would prevent the group from seeing the matter with clarity. The negative side will be eliminated and the positive components will include singleness of purpose and the striving to win the good pleasure of society and the welfare of mankind.

### **Radiance of Spirit**

This confers the ability to display pleasure, love and a sense of well-being. A person can brighten the atmosphere in which a consulting group carries out its deliberations.

This quality of radiance is found in individuals who are sensitive to others, show genuine interest in their concerns, and take pleasure in their accomplishments. It corresponds to enthusiasm for life and excludes gloomy, pessimistic attitudes that cause undue heaviness in group consultation.

In consultation, it is not usually so important how much one knows, as how much one cares.

### **Detachment from all else save God**

The quality of detachment, which enables one deliberately to set aside personal references and attachments and to view matters objectively, is indispensable in consultation. Being detached means not being involved emotionally, i.e. impartial. It does not mean indifference.

### **Attraction to His Divine Fragrances**

This means also being attracted to the divine qualities in other people. The divine fragrances are found in all activities where there is love of God. Attraction to those fragrances implies a lively curiosity in everything that relates to the Divine. It further implies not being attracted to those things that appeal to the lower nature of man.

Those who take counsel together should be informed about, find excitement in and give enthusiastic support to all projects, not just those that involve them personally. It also implies an eagerness rather than a reluctance to be together and consult.

### **Humility and Lowliness Amongst His Loved Ones**

In consultation, no one tries to exalt himself above another. A proud or boastful attitude is a negative element that needs to be curtailed. Considering one's self as low and others as higher is a protection against vainglory and permits all contributions to be accepted on their own merits. Today, in the world of humanity, this is sometimes confused with weakness or timidity. In reality, there is a clear distinction between them. Humility is not something one can strive for. Rather it develops to the degree that one is absorbed in divine attributes such as service to mankind and to one's peers. This service is really love in action. True humility lies in the development and use of talents, capacities and resources that are necessary for the service of educating mankind. The two-edged sword of fear and insecurity on the one hand and pride or false modesty on the other awaits anyone who loses sight of true humility.

### **Patience in Difficulties**

These are part of life. The question is "how to meet them."

Patience, which should not be confused with inactivity or passivity, involves grace under stress, composure while deciding what action is appropriate. It implies retaining self-control and perspective, persistence and diligence, and above all, not succumbing to complaining and anger no matter what frustrations are encountered.

While everything reasonable is done to remove the source of difficulty, there is a need to recognize that some problems have no ready solutions: they must simply be endured.

## Servitude

One meaning of servitude is “being subject to a master.” We are all subject to a wide variety of demands, but we can select our master from either the lower elements of life or a higher calling. Education lovingly calls us to submit to our true Master, the Creator. The paradox is that freedom is found only through this complete servitude. The people will become distinguished by their freedom from ambition and desire, from animalistic impulses, passions or from a quest for self-gratification

When coming together, the participants should abide by two conditions:

1. Absolute love and harmony amongst them, which implies resolving, or at least looking beyond, any differences that exist, forgiving and forgetting, and developing a condition of genuine concern for one another
2. Turn their faces to God and ask His aid. This will bring about the following five rules of procedure for all discussions:
  - devotion
  - courtesy
  - dignity
  - care
  - moderation

Different points of view should be freely expressed and judgements suspended in order to establish and evaluate the facts, as well as discuss their implications.

As will have become clear from all the ideas presented up to this point, unity is a pivotal value and is considered to be one of the most basic principles of the universe. If reality is such that unity and connectedness are among its defining characteristics, truth cannot lead to conflict and division, but must be a cause of unity and harmony.

Practically talking of course, this process takes time and it may be necessary to act before full consensus has been reached. In such cases, it is recommended that the individual accept the voice of the majority and avoid the tendency to insist on his opinion of the truth, as such insistence leads to dissension.

As the above statement demonstrates, consultation is not conceived as a single event in which opinions are expressed and a decision is made. The process of consultation extends into parallel activities of gathering facts and data, identifying principles, analyzing situations and their causes, expressing views and reaching decisions, acting on decisions, reflecting on collective actions and continuously learning.

This process of consultation has been presented here with extreme brevity, but it is hoped that this description gives a context for the mention of certain qualities, attitudes and abilities that the process of moral education must explore if it is to prepare people to engage naturally in this unific and effective approach to decision-making and search for truth.