

Point II. Living without resentments

Why, then, should we feel and feed resentment against others if we have no responsibility for what happened long ago?

The Concepts, Roots, and Logic of Resentments

Resentment may be studied from differing points of view or by undergoing psychological, social, clinical, and even philosophical analysis. The latter being the most profound and most accessible because it addresses resentment from within its intimate roots, studying its essence and its nature beyond its external manifestations.

Francesc Torralba¹, clearly defines resentment, based on the genius of Scheler, in the following statements:

“Resentment is an emotional reaction of one to another. It is an interpersonal reaction between two free, intelligent, and responsible human beings. This emotional reaction is rooted in the heart. It is an instinctive emotion filled with feeling, strength, and energy. Furthermore, resentment is a reaction that is relived in the person's spirit and experienced repeatedly.

Said in other terms, resentment is the recreation of a hostile feeling toward another; it is the act of reliving this hostility internally.

But as Scheler states, resentment is not just an emotion relived within the human being, it is also basis of a system of ethics, policy and values In Scheler's words:

“Resentment conveys its most important task when it transforms itself into the definer of a ‘moral’, or when the rules of preference become perverted, to state it in some way; when what once appeared bad is now perceived as good. If we look at Europe's history we can see how resentment exercises great influence in its moral structures...”²

Scheler points out two types of resentment:

A) Individual Resentment: is the cause of conflict between one and another.

¹ F. Torralba “ *El resentimiento: obstáculo fundamental a la paz*”, en J. Rigol y Otros. *Convivencia en el siglo XXI: La Carta de la Paz*. Barcelona, 1995. p. 142-149

² M. Scheler. *El resentimiento en la moral*. Madrid, 1993. p. 19

B) Collective Resentment: is the cause of wars, interethnic massacres, and racial cleansing.

Resentment can be experienced individually or collectively. A resentful nation is one that has suffered and continues to relive its suffering from generation to generation. A resentful nation is one that recreates oppression experienced by parents who hand it down to their children and then grandchildren over the period of centuries.

Stemming from Scheler's classification of resentment we developed the following consequences:

A One could very well think that thanks to resentments we are kept tense and alert against insults and injustices experienced, thus keeping us from dozing off or conforming to such actions. But, unlike the well balanced objective person, a resentful one is never satisfied regardless of the amount of justice exercised. His re-resentment takes him in search of vengeance which he uses to hurt and destroy the other. These resentments felt by one against another must be overcome for peace to be well founded.

B Resentments that are fostered in groups originate and spread with greater ease, yet are more difficult to detect and the responsibility for the consequences of such actions is diluted. These resentments are also more difficult to eradicate. Unfortunately, families, social groups, nations, and ethnic groups often thrive on resentments as a means to strengthen their identity, their family unit, their patriotism and even their self-esteem.

Hence, a historical fact viewed from different sides will frequently differ far more than would be expected, given the limitations of Historical Sciences, which should never presume the accuracy of Physical Sciences, but should seek impartiality and objectivity within all Human Sciences.

Francesc Torralba, in his work *Los resentimientos obstáculo fundamental a la paz*³, highlights this idea:

“Resentment originates, and propagates through culture, personal exchanges, popular phrases or idiomatic expressions, and evidently through oral and written history. Every nation writes its history. However, it is not a neutral account but one filled with resentment, pain, hatred and envy. Dispossessed third world nations will write an anti-

³ Op. cit. p. 133-159.

European history. The Jewish people will write an anti-Germanic history; The Serbs will narrate a history where Bosnians will be depicted as evil...

Collective resentment is closely related to ethnocentrism and xenophobia. A son has heard his parents speak of the ills of war. He has heard them curse their opponents as well as the tortures they endured; and therefore is unable to remain indifferent to their narrations.

Yet this son is unaware of the other history, the other side to this matter. The Histories of towns, countries, and nations have been rendered with such loaded and manipulated words. As a result, History is neither a teacher nor a guide for the future; it is more of an argument for war and conflict.

Upon this blister which festers within the individual and is transmitted from generation to generation imposed is the need to figure out an antidote or therapy to eradicate resentment and accomplish peace in our world."

The Futility of Resentments

Is there anything positive about resentments? Can they be helpful in achieving peace? Can they serve as spring boards for us to enhance our present?

Many people claim they wish to fix the world, but their contribution is limited to making complaints regarding the present and the past. This attitude, which in many cases conceals their lethargy, leads us to sterility.

This tendency is stronger today than in other times. For them resentments are a powerful tool..

Then, should we search for inspiration to work toward peace in complaints, anger, or disgust? On the contrary; we must relinquish the use of resentments as the guiding force to motivate us to pursue a more joyful present. Being angry over the way History has occurred and wishing it had turned out differently, besides being worthless is quite detrimental and is inadequate as a constructive energy for our actions today, which should always favor peace. Do we really think that today's generations won't make any mistakes or act wrongfully and that future generations won't have any complaints about our actions?

Conclusion

In order for peace to exist History can not be falsified or tampered. The coherent and realistic thing to do, as human beings that we are, is to work with courage to improve the present. The

wisdom and strength necessary to succeed in this task are proposed in The Letter of Peace Addressed to the UN in the points to follow, while the treatment of such a delicate subject in Point II has been dedicated to bring about a new reality in the form of a question. A question answered intuitively: "Why must we harbor and foster resentments against each other?"

The Letter of Peace Addressed to the UN, following the criteria of numerable pedagogues, advocates the education of human reason and liberties as well as that of emotions. For emotions can betray us and take us down undesirable paths.