

## Point V. Brothers by Existence

Human beings, by the mere fact of their existence, there always being the possibility that they might not have come to exist, have a fundamental relationship: being brothers and sisters in existence. If we did not exist we could not be anybody's blood brothers or sisters. Our awareness of this primordial fraternity in existence will facilitate our solidarity in opening ourselves to society.

In a moment of societal renovation, as we experience today, we find many people perplexed and disoriented. Psychologists point out the importance of the sense of belonging in alleviating the intense loneliness some suffer. Membership to groups that share a collective identity not only unites people, it conveys protection and tranquility. Having something in common facilitates the development of relationships as we have seen in families, clubs, associations, professional groups, sports teams, and political parties. The identity of the group is based strongly on being different, unique and exclusive which if exaggerated may lead to friction and conflict.

Underneath those diverse ways in which human beings form groups lies a more basic yet convincing reality; all human beings belong to a group, the group of the living. This is a real group with the common identity of being something instead of nothing. We are something. We exist next to every thing else that exists. Nature does not allow for gradations, either you exist or you don't. As Alfredo Rubio says in this line from his poem, "Ser"<sup>1</sup>: "I need nothing to be something, instead of nothing".

### Peace Needs New Groundwork

Throughout centuries mankind has constantly aspired to finding the basis and reasons for living human fraternity better. History itself has produced valuable advances in this subject, indeed, numerable religions and philosophies affirm that all human beings share a common nature-being human- which has promoted equal treatment amongst people. There have been many examples of fraternity between persons and between nations.

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<sup>1</sup> A. Rubio, *Poema Ser*. En Revista RE de pensamiento y opinión, época 4 n° 39. Barcelona, 1996. p. 1

But looking back at History, numerous as well, are the examples of: enmity, oppression, deception, slavery, and lack of solidarity. Such as the enormous and almost continuous desire of men to undervalue women, the abandonment and neglect of children and the elderly, the disputes among social groups, the injustices between nations, the contrast between hunger and wealth etc. Often the law has, in fact, favored unfairness among people. Slavery lasted well into the XIX century, while until recent decades; women were denied the right to vote in these so called developed nations.

Today the foundations on which fraternity has been erected seem insufficient. The Letter of Peace Addressed to the United Nations clearly states in its introduction that its main objective is to point out new foundations on which to build a more solid and peaceful human coexistence. Human sciences such as Anthropology and Sociology affirm that the human being besides being an essence and part of nature, is an existence. In Point V of the Letter of Peace, the most philosophical part, it is stated that if we did not exist, we would be unable to do any other thing.

Within the content of the letter of Peace we find interrogative, exclamatory, conditional, and affirmative phrases. The latter usually coincide with facts. Here we face an affirmative phrase which parallels a metaphysical affirmation:

“Human beings share a fundamental relationship by merely existing...”

It does not divulge which relationship it refers to, but it does provoke us intuitively to the idea that there is something that bonds us. You and I, something fundamental which we are privileged to experience, gratefully given it is a gift from existence.

### **Brotherhood, Kinship, and Fraternal Existence**

We are all familiar with the concept of “blood brothers”, but there is another concept, also real, profound and broad: We all exist. Differences between individuals, be them genetic, environmental, or cultural plus all other realities such as: growing, moving, nourishing, thinking, laughing, crying, and loving are all built upon the most radical of foundations: existence.

Using kinship as a basic element of society can and has frequently led to the establishing of divisions among human beings (i.e. clans, ethnicity, social classes, and nationalism...). It has unleashed fierce competitions which are frequently driven by a false sense of brotherhood whose origins lie in fanaticism and corporate extremes. Many are and have been the countries that become enemies to other nations for considering themselves superior, that their economic

standing is much better, that their race is better, or that their religion is the only authentic one. This leads them to acts of extortion, and the manipulation of the dignity of others. It disguises the relationship of brotherhood as it is considered from a collective aspect. Too many nations annul other nations based on the belief that they have a greater historical significance!

We all need to discover our basic fraternal existence. And within this reality the family, blood relatives, peoples, ethnic groups and nations can find their place. These realities which come about as a result of existing will not threaten coexistence which flows forth from this deeper and more pleasurable source of existence.

In his book *Desarrollar la paz*<sup>2</sup>, Josep M. Forcada explains in a didactic manner the importance opening to social bonds has in laying the foundation for peace:

“In a recent study, Mr. Howard Ross, relates low levels of conflict within societies that engage in emotional social bonds that are not exclusively between relatives. Societies populated with families exercising open options, much like a cylinder open at both ends, allow families to experience relationships outside the exclusivity of the family, rather than privatizing all that belongs to the family’s turf, this allows for a much more social openness. Howard Ross states: “strong social ties diminish the internal hostilities within a society, while close ties among different societal groups have the same effect on the external hostilities of a society.”

The family is real, good and necessary. But as Ross says, it should be open as a cylinder; open to its original community at one end and open to solidarity to different communities at the other. The latter will be a very difficult task should families close at one end like a bag and ignoring the common thread all on earth share: existence. Regardless of the many differences that may exist between an Eskimo and a Pygmy, or a Bavarian and a Breton, there is far more that links them: they exist!

## **Solidarity**

Strong blood ties and ethnic bonds propel folks to share life, time, culture and material goods. Good brothers and sisters make sure the weak and mentally challenged are not left behind and strive to move along together maintaining a certain level of dignity for all as Point IX of the Letter

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<sup>2</sup> J.M. Forcada, “*Hacia una Cultura de la Paz: una contribución desde la Carta de la Paz*”, en J.M. Forcada, *Desarrollar la Paz*. Barcelona, 1999. p. 61

of Peace states. The same happens among friends. Brotherhood and friendship are enjoyed by those who know each other.

On the other hand, solidarity, which is also necessary for peace to occur, takes place amongst people who mostly do not know each other, but who are aware of each other's existence, difficulties and needs. As point V states, our awareness of this primordial fraternity in existence will facilitate our solidarity in opening ourselves (from within our families and the other groups we grow in) to society.

Solidarity, which was nonexistent centuries ago, is a contemporary global attitude fostered by means of social communication and the globalization of society. The development of solidarity is urgently needed to achieve peace and to secure the dignity of all human beings as was acknowledged over fifty years ago in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.