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Promoting Tolerance, Respect for Diversity and Non-Discrimination through Education and
Media, Particularly among the Younger Generation

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The productivity of a society can be measured by how creatively its members respond to the conflicts that arise from any form of coexistence with others. A society that does not allow room for various ways of life denies those who belong to it opportunities to learn from each other. The distinctiveness of original personalities directly mould the living character of a society. This is the source of freedom: each individual exercising their right to determine autonomously how they want to live. However, because – and to the extent that – they have to rely on other people to do this, these individuals may be expected to give reasons that justify the resources they use to realise their goals. This is fair to other people. And here is the deeper significance of the idea of justice, as Immanuel Kant argues: free human beings entitled to equal rights coming together for the purposes of enduring mutual support. “Freedom is always the freedom of those who think differently” (Rosa Luxemburg). Throughout his philosophical work, John Rawls developed categories based on an incontrovertible insight: that human beings are capable of learning morally, examining arguments reasonably, articulating their own convictions publicly and acting with a sense of responsibility. In doing so, they may find themselves in conflict with their fellow citizens. John Rawls distinguishes three main types of conflict

- + “those deriving from irreconcilable comprehensive doctrines;
- + those deriving from differences in status, class position, or occupation, or from differences in ethnicity, gender, or race;
- + those deriving from the burdens of judgment.”

These are the causes of the well founded differences of opinion that occur between reasonable individuals.

In constitutional democratic societies, it is possible to respond to all three types of conflict in such a way that their inherent destructive potential is defused. The idea of tolerance is rooted in this approach.

In Latin, *tolerare* means “to bear” or “to endure”. Historically, tolerance originated when the strong made a pragmatic offer to the weak to limit the use of force so that both sides could “bear” each other. Tolerance therefore spanned the field between power and morality. It showed its double aspect early on: it can serve as an instrument of domination and it can support emancipatory demands. This conflict has given rise to three different concepts: the tolerance that merely permits others to follow their own beliefs, and the tolerance that actively respects and values others. These concepts have encouraged people to pursue their yearning for freedom and cooperate with others to establish democracy as a humane form of social life. As citizens in an ethically pluralist community, they have created norms that are generally valid. They also have a reciprocal obligation to discuss the reasons for their actions when they take political measures. This right to justification is the irrefutable basis on which discourse between citizens rests. Among themselves, citizens will follow the precept of tolerance because it allows them to deal more productively with social conflicts. Neutrality should be expected of the state so that its temporarily elected representatives only allow their actions to be guided by reasons capable of finding general and reciprocal assent, and not by disputed value judgements.

What form should tolerance assume in societies that are modernising at varying speeds? Is it not possible for the rapid acceleration or abrupt braking of social change to throw people off track, disorient them or fill them with fear? How can tolerance be maintained where trust has been shattered?

Is it not at such moments that the limits restraining the use of force break down? Previously, citizens may have taken reasonable decisions mandating their state representatives to deploy force, though only subject to public scrutiny and solely using appropriate resources that could be accounted for. But once democracy has revealed how fragile it is, how can it regain the assent of civil society?

It is in conflicts with such profound implications that the virtue of tolerance particularly shows its real strength. Tolerance is a product of shared learning. This product multiplies its value when people from different backgrounds encounter each other with open minds and are curious to discover their differences. This sets off a process that enriches the individual’s personal identity. Tensions grow between shared contextual and fundamental interests and diverse ethical and political pluralisms. These conflicts are perceived individually, managed at the social level and have an impact on the consciousness of the individuals involved in the learning process.

What concept of tolerance is best able to cope with today's conflicts? On its own, the permission majorities once granted certain minorities to maintain their separate cultures may have been adequate for the conflicts of the pre-modern period. Authoritarian systems were dominated by hierarchical power relations that were sufficient to reproduce themselves. Modernity demanded mutual respect, which the members of a society have a reciprocal duty to show each other. Under democracy, the law-bound nation state has a legitimate monopoly on the use of force. The second modernity, in which we are now living, is able to compensate for the processes of decentring and the erosion of power. Action by civil society is becoming more urgent if we are to keep the limits on the use of force in place. A new division of labour is emerging between the state and the citizen. The modular components of which society is constructed are becoming more reflexive. With the second modernity, the cognitive and emotional capabilities of society's citizens are growing. They are its producers and, at the same time, its product. Simultaneously, the societies of the second modernity are clearly characterised by increasing levels of internal complexity. More and more, they are attracting people from all over the world who migrate to them, increase their prosperity and enrich their cultures.

Tolerance can only survive in the long term if it also takes account of these changes. The second modernity relies on the mutual esteem of people who do not see a dialogue between culturally diverse ways of life as a threat to their own identities. Each individual belongs to various groups at the same time. Many paths lead to the sites where identity is constructed. The core of freedom is the individual human being deciding for themselves which different priorities to select as they search for the building blocks of their own identity.

People's search for a self-determined identity is likely to be all the more successful the wider the range of the opportunities open to them to integrate into a particular society. Discussing this question, Amartya Sen writes in the UNDP Human Development Report 2004: "The inclusiveness of a society will depend greatly on bringing clarity to the role of choice in identity and to the need to [place] 'reason before identity'."

All citizens in a democratic society must be able to take part in debates about its condition and its future. This right must also be guaranteed to those who have migrated to that society. This is essential because citizenship rights cannot be linked to ethnic criteria. It is necessary to secure inclusiveness in order to create structures of power that give everyone the opportunity to assert their rights. This will create a climate that opens up social discourse, making it possible for different models of the future to be recognised as having their own value. If it does not prove possible to open up a society, if it even demands of minorities that they simply

accept conditions as unchangeable, that society will become repressive. Repressive tolerance calls on minorities to tolerate injustice. This makes democracy hard, inflexible and therefore more fragile.

Democratic states in the second modernity can cope better with their growing internal conflicts because their citizens possess a greater wealth of personal competences, which they have acquired in open learning processes. These competences develop when people are willing to engage with the multiplicity of cultural liberties. However, integration does not mean these different models of the future just standing together without connecting. They must learn to comprehend one another. Each should learn to appreciate the values the others represent.

Might not, as John Locke feared, a tolerance that goes too far destroy the normative principles of society, especially if “unbelievers” were to call them into question? John Rawls has given the following answer to this apparently irreconcilable conflict: “The political conceptions are seen as both liberal and self-standing and not as comprehensive, whereas the religious doctrines may be comprehensive but not liberal.” Fundamentalism in any form, whether religious or political, is intolerant and cannot demand to be treated with tolerance.

In his study “Terror in the Mind of God”, Mark Juergensmeyer investigated the tendencies towards violence that are present in all the great religions. His conclusion is that it is not religion “in itself”, but contexts in which religion plays a major role that can lead to the taboo on killing other human beings, which is proclaimed by all religions, being partially suspended, provoking and producing violence. The fragmentary, selective interpretation of religious doctrines can suggest a one-sided view of the world characterised by a struggle between Good and Evil that is conceived in quasi-cosmic terms. Events that are part of an eternal scheme evade human categories and are impossible to respond to reasonably. This is why the great advances made by the Enlightenment have been so invaluable to humanity. Since that time, it has been possible for politics to be separated from religious promises of salvation. Nevertheless:

A democratic society needs normative principles. However, these should not consist exclusively of the values of just one group. If this were the case, society could not be either just or inclusive. In the second modernity, political integration requires agreement that society is based on a set of moral convictions, provided that these moral convictions can be shared. If not, the results will be exclusion and disintegration.

As long as it remains committed to liberty and embedded in the idea of justice, tolerance will keep watch to ensure that no truth, and no religion, forces people to submit to systems that are not prepared to justify themselves in a reciprocal fashion.

Tolerance can be acquired through learning. The likelihood of a person acting tolerantly in a conflict with another person or group depends on their skills and experience of how it is possible to resolve conflicts peacefully and democratically. This in turn demands the greatest possible cooperation between all parties to the conflict. A complex mix of personal competences is required: the ability to listen actively, analytical skills and creativity.

One key factor is an understanding of the need to accept that other constructions of reality are equally plausible. People who have learned to reconcile differences and move on to solutions from which all benefit are more likely to act constructively by deploying their skills in a conflict than people who feel overwhelmed by situations of this kind and tend to use force when they encounter them.

This is why an education in tolerance should consist of two essential phases:

- + It is necessary to create awareness so that difference is acknowledged and the fundamental right of each individual to the construction of their own difference recognised.
- + Conflict resolution has to be learned and the relevant skills acquired by examining solutions from which all concerned benefit.

During their training, teachers should study how conflicts can be managed so that the conflict resolution strategies they pass on to their pupils will promote socially productive action.

Learners will perceive themselves as more tolerant if they acquire and consolidate the following competences during the learning process:

- + Dialogue and communication skills
- + The capacity to adopt different perspectives
- + The capacity to use opportunities for constructive, democratic conflict resolution

Tolerance is always shown toward a concrete party to a conflict in a concrete context. The skills demanded by tolerance can therefore only be acquired on the basis of a comprehensive understanding of one's own identity. Confidence and a strong sense of self make a person tolerant. Anyone who can judge their own worth accurately will also be able to respond self-reflexively to their own emotions. Identity, as the product of our ability to define ourselves, involves comparing ourselves with others. This, in turn, is closely associated with the capacity for open-minded social behaviour.

Education in tolerance will be a key that unlocks the door to an enlarged conception of democracy in future. Either society succeeds in living with the increasing differences between people in such way that they become able to manage their conflicts democratically and non-violently, or the prospects for humanity will be gloomy indeed.

Where do we go from here?

I hope that we will adopt an action plan against anti-Semitism in Cordoba – or Qurtuba, as it was known at the time of the Caliphate. Cordoba: the city of the great Jewish thinker Maimonides. He was forced to leave his homeland when Christian fundamentalism began to drive Islam out of Spain, and with it the Jewish community. Highly esteemed along the coasts of the Mediterranean, both in Europe and in the Arab world, Maimonides found exile at Al Fustat, modern Cairo.

What could we do in Cordoba to send out a signal in the battle against anti-Semitism and fight for tolerance?

One idea could be for the OSCE to set up a competition to find outstanding projects in which young people are working courageously to help those who are under threat of persecution. Any group from one of the OSCE countries could enter this competition, and the projects would be documented on film, something that could be done by film schools. The films would then be judged by a jury, with well known filmmakers choosing the prize-winners. They could include Steven Spielberg from the west of the OSCE area, Ingmar Bergman from the north, Elim Klimov from the east, Andrzej Wajda from the centre and Roberto Benigni from the south. Arte, the French-German television arts channel, would then broadcast the films about the winners.

This competition would help spur young people to stand up bravely and be counted when their fellow human beings find themselves in danger. We need signals of this kind. If we are to make the world a better place for all of us to live in.