



VIDEO Edgar MORIN (Scientific Council, Paris, 8 April 2010)

Pondering over complexity

What is the challenge of knowledge? It is the challenge of complexity, from the Latin word *complexus* which means what is woven together. We see more and more things that induce us to say that it is complex: the economic situation is complex, the world situation is complex, such-and-such personality is complex... This reveals our inability to give an accurate and clear definition. Therefore it appears that, to gather all these elements of knowledge, a real mental revolution is necessary. It implies that we need tools enabling us to connect them together, instead of juxtaposing them. It is the task that I undertook in a work -which took me thirty years indeed - called "*The Method*", and which aims at providing tools appropriate to link what is scattered. However, that also means that a polydisciplinary, not to say transdisciplinary training, is required. Disciplines are something extraordinary, because they have permitted knowledge to progress in all fields, but they mustn't remain closed, they must enrich each other. For instance, in order to understand what "being human" means, we have to draw from various disciplines. [...]

Teaching how to conceptualize

The problem, therefore, consists in conceptualizing permanently a in teaching how to conceptualize. Why? Because the passion for knowledge that we've been taught has taught us to know objects separated from each other. [...]

Teaching the global era

Teaching what I call the global era. Because the globalization that we are now living in is the continuation, under other forms, of a process which started with the discovery-conquest of the Americas and circumnavigation round the world. Namely, as far back as the beginning of the XVIth century, with colonization, slavery, and which goes on under new forms. Consequently, we have to find our bearings. And to situate this global era, it is obvious that demographic, political, religious, economic and social processes of all kinds intermingle. And of course, we can't just juxtapose what demographers, politicians, religious leaders and economists say... We've got to see the link between all that, to establish relationships.

Teaching human understanding

So, teaching human understanding is undoubtedly a fundamental subject. But it has become more and more imperative. Not only because we understand each other less and less between people from different cultures and especially from Islamic culture, for example, and from Christian or Jewish culture.

It is a more and more vital issue for the global era in which all of us are interdependent, and share a common destiny.

But the problem does not arise only with cultures and people from elsewhere; it is also in our families, in our everyday lives that we can see the ravages due to misunderstanding. The difficulty of understanding others is something to be taught.

Teaching the confrontation of uncertainties

In the same way, teaching the confrontation of uncertainties.

Because attempting to live is undoubtedly like sailing over an ocean of uncertainties. But, fortunately, with islands or archipelagoes of certainties on which we can get supplies. [...]

Reforming political thinking

So, this issue of reforming political thinking has cropped up to meet the challenges we are confronted with. But obviously it goes beyond the bounds of the field of education. [...] Because we also need to reform political thinking. Why? Because there is a decline of political thinking. Until the middle of the XXth century or so, policies were based on works of theory, of thought: communists, left-wing parties on Marxist thinkers or on revisionist and socialist thinkers [...]. For the others, centrists, moderates, there was Tocqueville. In other words, there was a whole culture. Not only this culture is not used any more, but it is no longer useful to deal with problems which have considerably changed today, which have been altered. [...]

Consequently it means that here also, in the political sphere, we live on myths, on illusions. We



believe that quantitative factors will solve everything, whereas we are faced with very serious problems of civilization, some of which being precisely due to the domination of the quantitative over the qualitative. It is taken for granted that what matters is to have more things, more goods, and not to live better, to feel better.

So you can see that it is a reform of our way of thinking, a reform of our knowledge which is closely

linked with politics. And if political thinking succeeds in getting out of this sort of deterioration in which it wallows, it will be able to cope with the big social and economic issues.

Everything has to be reformed

In other words, the reform of the contents of education is a reform closely connected with other reforms. I won't say that it is sufficient. It is necessary, but not sufficient. It must be accompanied with other reforms. In fact, that's the great challenge of today's world. I believe indeed that everything has to be reformed, everything has to be rethought. It is very difficult, but issues can't be considered separately. Because all that is also linked with a reform of the way of life. If we are to think our life must not be enthralled any more by advertising, by supermarkets, by disposable goods and by the industry of leisure, then we will search for real life - as Rimbaud said : "real life is not here" - There is a sort of art of living to be looked for, to be rediscovered.

Therefore, you can see how vital the reform of education is, since it has to do with many other reforms which depend on it, but it will also depend on these other reforms. [...]

Democratizing education

Consequently, we have to carry on a whole work of "*rethinking*" which is absolutely necessary. Moreover, there is not only the issue of reform. There is the serious problem which arises in a different way in each country: how to democratize education. There are countries where democratization means access, even to primary school, [for all children]. This is a very important issue...

Putting all cultures in symbiosis

But when it comes to so-called underdeveloped countries, countries which suffer - we think - from illiteracy, hence from ignorance, we should keep in mind that, in those countries, there are age-old oral cultures, which also have -though they have superstitions and illusions like ours- a knowledge on the vegetal and animal world, wisdom, arts of living, a lot of know-how. We must make the symbiosis of educations and cultural contributions. We must not impose what the West has produced and which, in fact, shows its limits today. [...]

Inserting some "Eros" in education

I am going to say a commonplace which, unfortunately, is not mentioned in any teacher's book, namely what Plato said: to teach, we need Eros, love, passion. If we do not have passion for the subjects we teach nor for our pupils, well then, we bore them stiff, that's obvious! [...]

To conclude

I say it again, we are confronted with various challenges. Education is exposed to all the crises. It is like a dot on a hologram where the whole social, historic problem is concentrated on education. Therefore, a regeneration of education has to be conducted in all fields. And- in short- I'd like these ideas to be introduced among the suggestions and propositions that will be made during the [Shanghai] Forum.