

The end never justifies the means

A peaceful answer to terrorism



After the dreadful events on the 11th of September in the United States of America everyone poses the same questions. Where do we go from here? Will there be a third World War? But against whom? The enemy has become invisible. Should we retaliate these acts of terror? But how? Would that not be the cause for even more violence? These are confusing and fearful times for most of us.

Like every reasonable person we strongly regret and condemn the fact that a small group made so many innocent people pay for their frustrations in such a brutal way. But we don't want to leave it there. We encourage people and nations to unite in their struggle against the instigators and the causes of these acts of terror. However, this should not happen on the basis of 'an eye for an eye'. In which case a spiral of violence will develop which will fuel many negative reactions. Still, we do believe we can safeguard ourselves from violence and terror in the future.

The main objective of the I.S.I.S. Foundation (International Study-centre for Independent Search for truth) – a platform for all searchers for truth – is to form a nucleus of Universal Brotherhood. Going from this objective, the Foundation tries to develop initiatives to arrive at a more peaceful world. In its efforts, it mainly focuses on the causal side, which means, it tries to accomplish a change in mentality. This pamphlet offers several principal thoughts that might trigger a broad exchange of views. We hope that everyone longing for peace and non-violence will give serious consideration to these thoughts. We would gladly receive your reactions.

The sense of separateness

Every form of aggression, terror and war is embedded in a certain mentality. We could describe this mentality as the sense of separateness, meaning that people think that they are separate from others. They think that they have nothing to do with others, or are superior to others.

This mentality will make you treat your fellowmen differently if they don't belong to your group. What you consider to be normal and just for yourself does not count for others.

You feel superior.

This mentality originates from a false vision on reality because human beings are inseparable. They are bound to one another in numerous ways. The feeling of superiority is a delusion. The idea to be separate from others is a fallacy, conflicting with the way Nature operates.

Unity

Behind the external diversity of life forms lies an internal essential unity. People are, as it were, rooted in the same Life. They share the same origin and therefore the same destination. They can only exist because of the other. This idea is the core of all religions.

You can't judge people just on account of their appearances. We are foremost spiritual beings. We are consciousness. This consciousness is continuously perfecting itself. Everyone is involved in that same process. We learn every day. We especially learn from each other. It is together that we grow.

If people have so much in common, then isn't it obvious that they spring from the same source, that they share the same spiritual background? Therefore, fundamentally we are alike.

This sameness, for example, shows in the universality of all human desires. Wherever someone lives, whatever he or she believes in, he always wants to be happy, to live in harmony and friendship with others. Every human being also longs for justice. Furthermore, we all pose ourselves similar questions such as: What is the essence of life?

We can raise many other arguments to prove that people belong to one another, in fact are one. We can even prove it biologically because genetics have proved that people hardly differ. No genetic grounds exist to honour classifications of people into races, nations let alone religions. People are simply too much alike.

Religions

All religions allude to that underlying unity. In Islam, Allah is the symbol of unity from which everything flows. This

is pointed out many times in the Koran. It is, for example, very clear in the famous first verse of the 112th Sura (chapter) Allah is one. The Arabic word A'had, here translated as one, also means unity. It points to the Universal Source from which everything emanates.

That same unity holds true for Christianity. The joyful message of the Gospels is that the Kingdom of Heavens is within us, in each and every one of us. It is our common heritage. All other religions adhere to that same principle of unity.

Because we are part of this unity we need each other. We are all indispensable facets of one diamond, the Whole. In that, nothing and nobody can be missed. This unity obliges us to put this inner brotherhood into practice.

If one gives thought to this, it seems clear that only through this, harmony will develop. We need each other because nobody is able to live his life entirely on his own. We need each other to meet our material, psychological and spiritual needs. Therefore, everyone has to devote himself to that diamond, the Whole. Every human being has the right, and the duty to develop his talents and to devote these to the entire human society.

Religion is derived from the Latin word 'religare', which means 'reunite'. The true meaning of religion is in fact to develop this inner sense of unity and to become one with our inner spiritual core. But from that knowledge that all living beings are part of that same inner core we may conclude that we have to unite ourselves with one another. A religious life means: giving expression to this already existing unity in one's own life.

The Koran clearly states:

O you men! surely We have created you of a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other... (*Sura 49:13*)

And in the Christian Gospel (Gospel of St. Matthew, 22:37-40) it is said that Jesus gave the people two commandments which actually are the same:

The first commandment is 'to love your god' and this is identical to the second commandment 'to love your neighbour as yourself'. Everyone is part of the Whole no matter how you name it. Once you realise this you will find that your next-door neighbour does not essentially differ from yourself and therefore you will love him as yourself.

Harmony and disharmony

When we put this unity into practice in our lives there will be peace and harmony. Harmony, though, does not necessarily mean a static state. The whole humanity is devel-

oping. We all are continuously learning to give even better expression to that unity in which we are rooted. Also in that learning-process we are supporting each other.

As soon as we go against that unity, disharmony will occur. Every sense of separateness – seeing yourself separate from the rest of humanity – is therefore an intrusion on the law of nature, on essential harmony, and will lead to disharmony.

This disharmony could express itself in different standards of living. But these differences in material possessions do not disturb harmony as much as the differences in the way people are judged in this world. This inequality in respect is very apparent today. When you do not take other people seriously, judge their culture and religion inferior, you create disharmony. People begin to feel humiliated, even desperate, with all consequences. People in such an underdog position may begin to hate people in power, if they haven't developed this inner protection by their sense of unity. Hate is the superlative of the delusion of separateness. Hate isolates yourself completely. Hate robs you of every sense of community and leads to the worst kinds of violence.

Let us therefore begin by not humiliating other nations and communities.

The source of all Faiths

Degenerated faiths could feed that hate because they stimulate the idea of being the 'chosen ones'. When we use the word "faith" we mean something different than religion. Let us explain.

Every religion springs from one and the same source. Every religion is a cultural and time-bound attempt to express that same wisdom. We could call that common source the Wisdom-religion. Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism or any other faith has as its roots that same Wisdom-religion. In essence they do not differ from one another, especially not in ethics. In the course of time around the core of these religions have grown dogmas and doctrines, which are presented as absolute truths not open for discussion. At that moment we speak of 'Faiths'.

Fundamentalism: abuse of religion

Faiths as such could inspire people to activate the noble part in themselves, that is if the followers see themselves as part of total humanity.

But if the universal thoughts of the original religion are abandoned, then the faith degenerates into a conviction which teaches that only by believing one's own dogmas and strictly following outer precept, happiness can be achieved. People who don't believe this are considered to be enemies.

Religion becomes faith and faith becomes fundamentalism. True religion always unites people, not only those belonging to the same church but every living being. Fundamentalism separates people.

Religious leaders always have a more profound influence on people than political leaders because the in every person existing religious sense induces us more rapidly to self-sacrifice. Religion touches the human core, man's search for answers to the most essential questions: What is life? What is death? Who am I? What is the essence of my life?

Present terrorism in the world abuses religion. The Islamic, Jewish and Christian teachings are being abused to make people hate each other.

The thoughts of hatred they launch are an extremely contagious virus that affects everyone who bases his thinking on the delusion of separateness and doesn't control his thoughts. Especially if somebody is raised on the idea that his religion is superior, hate will sneak into his consciousness as a poison. Someone overpowered by hate will not think when he is assigned to use violence, especially as he sees the assignment as something that is sanctioned by higher powers.

People contaminated with the virus of hate will always make use of fear. Terror also means fear. Hate and fear are the same. People who are afraid will always defend themselves by frightening others. The anxiety-psychosis that occurred after the attacks in the United States is, hence, grist to the terrorists' mill. If there is one thing crystal clear, this is that we should not let fear be our guide.

When you let the sense of universal unity be your guide then there is absolutely no reason for fear. This sense of unity is your protection against any virus of hate. Life itself can never be destroyed; at the most, the manifestation of life, the form in which life veils itself, could be disconnected temporarily. It is therefore and for good reason that the I.S.I.S. Foundation reasons continuously that the core of all living beings and all religions is the same.

Restoring harmony

The sense of separateness, hate and fear are the instruments that turn our world-society into a vortex, in which people are drawn further and further away from the sense of unity, thus creating more and more disharmony.

However, disharmony cannot last. There is a law in nature, the Law of Conservation of Harmony, which says that there is always a tendency to restore harmony. As we are connected with one another we always participate in this process of restoring harmony.

It can be compared to a law of physics, the Law of

Communicating Vessels. These vessels too are connected with one another in that a change of the level of liquid in the one vessel will influence that of the other. This law does not only pertain to liquids but also to human thoughts and feelings. This is how a situation in which an imbalance in power, status and material possession does not last forever. It is in this respect impossible to speak of local conflicts, local disturbances of balance. Every disturbance has its repercussions on the Whole.

The restoration of harmony is easy to understand as well as to guide with the Whole as your starting point. As said, we are all part of that Whole. If you do not act in accordance, then you will reap the consequences, if not in this life then well in a next.

Dishonourable means

Sometimes, people are trying to restore the balance by forcefully claiming what they call their rights. In doing so they do not shun killing innocent people. There is absolutely no justification for these kinds of actions. In all religions – also in the Islam! – this unjustified form of violence is dismissed. It will only intensify the disharmony.

However, if those being attacked react in similar fashion violence will even increase. Even if they are aiming at peace, the effects will be contrary. The means one uses should be in accordance with the ideal of unity. Dishonourable means, such as violence, generate similar reactions and disrupt harmony even more.

History has proved this. Never has violence led to a more harmonious and just society. Even the support given to people using violence against an unjust enemy, will never lead to lasting and beneficial results.

Humanitarian action: never retaliate, always prevent

The answers to these attacks can therefore not be based upon the old habits, that is, to just 'lash out'. True restitution of harmony needs to originate from 'unity'. The sole means for that is human compassion.

With this, we certainly do not mean passivity without obligation nor mindless fatalism, accepting quietly all that passes. The opposite is true.

It takes enormous efforts, continuous alertness of mind and action. That we must act, is clear. We must undertake action. No instinctive action, but well balanced action based on human compassion.

Naturally, in the short term, we must first of all repair the external effects of that terrorism: support victims, join hands world-wide in order to prevent further attacks. But

that is not the real approach.

The most effective and practical approach to eliminate terrorism is to eliminate its breeding ground. Terrorism originates from ideas, which are circulating throughout the world. It is a fallacy to think that one can eliminate ideas with missiles or bombs.

Therefore we cannot pinpoint with precision who are responsible for the recent attacks. We are not dealing with a specific regime. No, we are dealing with a cluster of organisations and cells which, over the years, have grown into a large global network. Therefore, to eliminate just one organisation or cell is of little use as the rest of the network remains intact. And even if we were to destroy the entire network, the actual profound thoughts of hatred will remain.

How to deal with these thoughts of hatred? Thoughts of hatred can only be neutralised by actively spreading on a global scale thoughts of unity. By supporting the moderate members of all religions who defend these inner thoughts of unity within their religion, in their combat against fundamentalism within their own circle. With this, abuse of religion in whatever power struggle will be prevented. And furthermore, we need to look at young people within all religions, whose young minds are most susceptible to influences of those who want to abuse their idealism and devotion.

Nations who raise their youths to become 'soldiers for a holy war' invest, in the long run, in the destruction of their own culture.

On top of this global support to moderate Muslims, Christians and Jews, we also have to look at the unjust living conditions – material, mental and religious – of people and groups of people.

Restoration of that harmony can be done on the basis of the following long-term policy:

We must respect people holding different views. Even though, economically as well as technically, they might lack behind, this does not mean that their ideas are less valuable than ours. Therefore we must take them seriously. Taking them seriously does not mean that we should collaborate with them. Collaborating would only prove that we do not take the other seriously. Taking each other seriously means: to consult collectively how to best bring about that unity, the actual brotherhood; to actively support those who try to bring this about, no matter where; to actively address those who do not. It stands to reason that we then allow others to make us aware if they feel that we are not giving

our utmost to this Idea of unity.

If this becomes the basis of all foreign policies, you then deprive the fundamentalists of their main weapon: the dissatisfaction of the people they try to win for their cause. True exchange of thoughts will melt frustration and despair. Religious authorities should hold gatherings together, where people not only pray together but are to study each other's religions as well. We could help each other to find the source of those religions.

Also in the economical, technical and scientific domains must we try to find unselfish ways to co-operate.

This is of course a long-term policy but we have to start right now. Meanwhile, political leaders are obliged to explore all sorts of practical means to protect citizens. Add to this that it will be very effective to mute fanatics who try to incite young people.

But let us beware not to increase that climate of hatred ourselves. Let us not be led by our own anxiety.

Conclusion

There is absolutely no reason for a doom scenario. We are quite capable to handle violence and terror.

The I.S.I.S. Foundation suggests four plausible arguments:

1. unity of all beings
2. unity of all religions
3. compassion as the only means against disharmony
4. sacred aims, such as peace, demand for sacred means

If you reflect on these four principles, you will notice that your signs of anxiety fade away and a clear view of universal brotherhood will unfold. Those who strive towards this, will grow and will find the inner strength to make the world more peaceful.

Anyone who has ideas for peace initiatives and wants to co-operate with us is invited to contact us.

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