



## THESIS—ANTITHESIS—SYNTHESIS

### *FROM CONFLICT AND COMPROMISES TO DEVELOPMENT IN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP*

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So much of what we do in personal relationship to survive and for the relationship to survive feels like a compromise. If I insist on my version of reality, my perception, conception, ethics, logic, opinion, I push my partner to the corner, to submission and resentment, or into counterattack and conflict. But if I give way in the face of pressure, give up, give in, accept opinion and positions which are not mine, just to keep the peace, I feel compromised, defeated, dishonest, not me, unauthentic, invisible, diminished, unhappy and resentful. Who can win this dilemma?

Living together with an independent, free thinker, self-respectful partner, we simply *cannot* agree on everything. There will be disagreements. If each of us insists to have one's own way *all the time*, it will be a state of conflict all the time, a war zone. There must be a third way if personal relationship is to have a future.

As the habitual patriarchy regime is melting away and women claim the rights of equality to men over the past century, a right that should have never been taken away from them, there cannot be a clear structure of hierarchy in families, such as the man as a head of the family making all the decisions. This is over. Yet decisions by majority rule through voting, like in parliament or in a committee, cannot work between two people either. A new way of negotiation and deciding must be created for personal relationships to succeed. For most of us the example that our parents gave us is not an inspirational guide. There is nothing over the past 70 years for our generation to follow. We are all busy creating a new way of conducting personal relationship, couple, marriage, family.

#### **A Dialectic approach**

I propose a *dialectic approach* to couple negotiations: thesis—antithesis—synthesis: growing from the meeting of opposites, not being crushed by them.

- As a starting point, by entering a partnership, relationship, co-parenthood, you gave away the power to conduct your life as if it is your private property—it is made into a common reality where your life is no longer your business alone. Relationship means that your life becomes someone else's business, and your partner's life becomes your own business. Whatever the relationship gives us, and there must be a good reason to enter it, it also takes something—it takes some of your freedom to conduct your life as if it is

your business only. If you respect your partner as an independent intelligent human being, their reality and point of view *is intelligent!* Even if it is different from your own. There is a possibility in joining life with someone else to become *more* than just yourself: richer, broader, deeper, different. Of course, there is also the possibility of becoming *less* than your individual single self. That is a losing game.

- The *common body* being created between two partners in intimate relationship has its own life and has a right to be, like a child. If you think of a struggle between two partners in a relationship as a power game, you have lost it before you started. By joining your life with another person, a new being was created: the relationship itself. The relationship itself and the reality of it deserves to be considered—maybe your partner is wrong in their opinion, but in accepting it sometimes anyway, you do not just *sacrifice* your own truth, but you probably serve the relationship itself, which has its own truth. By insisting on your own point of view, your truth, you may be damaging the space in-between you and your partner, and that space has *its own truth!*

### **Basic principles of sustainable relationship**

The *7 Conditions for sustainable human development* describe the principles of leadership training that can transform everyone's life into a spiritual/developmental process. They originated in the teaching of Rudolf Steiner (1904) and through many years of practicing and teaching Psychophonetics, they became the basic structure of the training to become a Holistic Coach, Holistic Counsellor, and Consultant for sustainable human development. They can, in my view, be transformed into the basic principles of sustainable relationship. I will only speak here about four of them in relation to the topic of compromise in personal relationship.

- **The commitment to understand the reality of another human being from their own point of view — Methodical Empathy.**

This is a life-long developmental task, for those who want to develop. Personal relationship is the most powerful opportunity to develop the capacity of empathy. Without that commitment, personal relationship cannot be nurtured, sustained, and grown. Most conflict in personal relationship and domestic arguments are based on the opposite of listening to each other. Most domestic arguments will disappear if the two people would stop and listen to each other. That does not come naturally but only through a conscious effort. Maybe there are real differences of opinion, but maybe there are not—we just have not really understood the position of the partner and the reason for it, because we have not listened. Listen before you disagree.

- **The commitment to regard the inner life of people's feeling, emotions, thoughts, habits, wounds, defences, desires, and frustrations as reality.** Also, your own inner life and your partner's inner life.

The inner life is as real as the outer life of objects, only we cannot see it. We must *manage it* or else it controls us unconsciously. Defensive reactions to your partner are offensive to your partner, without any exception. If you know it, you can potentially control it. If you can see your partner is in reaction, you can take it into account

and choose not to take it all personally, because the reaction will come and go, and the person you love will stay. In a state of reaction, there is no listening and hearing of the other person, so a real conversation cannot take place.

- **The commitment to respect your reality and to respect the reality of the other *at the same time!***

There is always more than one truth in a relationship. Insisting that there is only one truth, your truth, is a major factor in destroying personal relationship. You do not have to *agree* with your partner's opinion in order to *respect it*. That is the major requirement to transform conflicts in personal relationship into an opportunity for human development: **thesis—antithesis—synthesis**. Your opinion and reality are your *thesis*, your partner's opinion and reality are, for you, the *anti-thesis*. If both positions are listened to, heard, understood, and respected *before* there is a mutual agreement, something new can emerge—a broader common picture, the *synthesis*. There is no guarantee of that being the outcome, but there is a much better chance if doing this process. Also, to accept an option different from your original opinion feels different after you felt heard, understood, and respected than when you do not feel heard, understood and respected. Accepting the opinion of another person *after* a real and respectful conversation, does not feel like a compromise in the same way. Try it and you will see it for yourself.

- **The commitment to responsible decision-making process and to acting on the decision. No one can tell you how to make a decision in a couple.**

Democracy cannot help, but you can decide in advance how the decision will be made. Be creative and practical about it. Try different ways and learn from the mistakes. You have to find your own unique way of making a decision in a couple. All the above conditions are essential for good common decision-making.

This is what I have to say now about compromise in personal relationship, out of my long personal experience and more than 30 years in practicing couple counselling as a counsellor. I hope some of it is helpful for you.



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