

Part One: Understanding Relationships

Chapter 4: Problems and Solutions

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arriving at a more transcendent vision of our
difficulties.*

There can be no doubt that each person has the right to think in a certain way and to fulfill his ideals, but in practice we often deny this right to others. Obviously the level at which we confront our differences is not so developed as to allow us to live together in harmony and stimulate our unfolding as a human society.

When we come up against a problem, we try to solve it. But until now our solutions have not ended our problems. It is quite likely that we need to understand problems in a broader way rather than look for new solutions, since if a problem is not thoroughly understood, one does not have the basis for solving it in a conclusive way.

The most serious problems we confront are neither natural catastrophes nor trials brought to us by destiny. They are the product of ourselves, of our way of living, working and relating. Therefore, our problems are principally the symptoms of our own failings. It is essential not to mistake symptoms for the evil itself.

When children play they often fight over toys, even when there are enough toys for everybody. If a more mature person does not intervene, their games might be transformed into tears, aggression, and suffering. Fighting, which is the way in which children war with each other, is the expression of their problem at the level of toys--in other words, at the level of the child. Each child imagines that the solution to his problem is to possess the toys to play with by himself. A mature person understands that the solution is neither that nor giving the children more toys--it is to teach them to relate in a way that permits them to grow as human beings: to teach them to live together, to share, and to participate.

In order to guide children we must be more mature than they are. As mature adults, we understand the relationship between the child and his toys, and hence we know how to gradually orient the child in his process of unfolding.

As he matures, the child assigns a different value to his toys and discovers the value of aspects of life he has hitherto ignored. When the child grows up, he stops fighting over toys. He sometimes fights for other reasons, but only until he becomes inwardly mature and comes to understand his relationship to others from a broader and more elevated point of view.

The fact of becoming older and considering ourselves adults does not imply that we are mature in all aspects. In some respects we proceed as if we

were children. We no longer fight over toys, but we do over other things: sometimes material things, sometimes over prestige, power, opinions.

Therefore, when we confront our problems we must remember that, in addition to the immediate solution, there is the broader one of working at another level, the level of inner unfolding.

Only unfolding can give us the possibility of arriving at a more transcendent vision of our difficulties. For example, when we consider the problem of hunger, we cannot avoid thinking that we must feed those who are hungry. But at the same time we know we cannot conceal the enormity of the problem of hunger by a few simple answers. There must be a terrible lack of maturity in our relationships as human beings for hunger to exist as a problem in this world. If we don't work inwardly, spiritually, to attain a better kind of relationship among human beings, our immediate solutions postpone, disguise or dissipate the problem, but they do not resolve them.

To solve a problem, we need to begin by understanding it from our highest point of view. How do we do this? By maturing as human beings, by working on the process of spiritual unfolding, which all too often is interrupted before reaching its full development.

Each level of unfolding has its characteristic problems. The solution to these problems takes up a great deal of our daily work. But the work of our life is based on our capacity to progressively mature. Our own unfolding gradually changes the way we look at our problems. This change of the level of our vision of things eliminates the cause of our problems and allows us to attain a more harmonious, stable, and productive way of relating.

We are making and attempting to present different aspects through which our inner spiritual unfolding is expressed through these very essays.

None can in itself be complete or conclusive. But each constitutes a useful tool which, if used properly, can help us to transcend the level at which we confront our problems, and enable us to know ourselves.