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## **Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies**

### **Ideological – Religious Beliefs and Humiliation**

#### **Discussant presentation at the 2011 workshop**

Last century can be considered as one of the bloodiest in human history. In the name of ideological dogmas of Fascism, Nazism and communism, millions of people have been humiliated and frequently annihilated.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century began with a new kind of threat to humanity. It seems now that in the name of religious beliefs, humiliation, hatred and violence are being very intensely exercised. At this point in history, when nuclear arsenal of weapons is so spread in the world, the fate of the human species is in real danger of total destruction. What are the roots of the human motive for humiliation and destruction? What are the means, if at all, to curb and transform it into constructive measures to preserve humanity? Let us learn from a famous past correspondence of the matter. Eighty years ago between the years 1931-32, when the world was watching undisturbedly the rise to power of Hitler and Fascism, two great minds: Einstein and Freud discussed the origins of war and ways to prevent it. Einstein, who addressed Freud regarding these questions, wrote as follows: "Because man has within him a lust for hatred and destruction, in normal times this passion exists in a latent state. It emerges in unusual circumstances; but it is a comparatively easy task to call it into play and raise it to the power of collective psychosis...".

And Einstein continues to pose his concrete question: "Is it possible to control man's mental evolution so as to make him proof against the psychosis of hate and destructiveness?" And he is indicating the target audience who may prevent war: "Here I am thinking by no means only of the so called uncultured masses...".

Freud responded to Einstein's address with a thorough scholarly account regarding the development of conflicts and their resolution. He writes: "The most causal glance at world history will show an unending series of conflicts between one community and another or a group of others... For humanity", writes Freud, "Instead of frequent, not to say incessant little wars, we face great wars". This comment was

made almost eight years prior to the cruelest and deadliest of all wars: The Second World War, and prior to the mounting danger of a future nuclear war.

When referring to Einstein's analysis regarding the "active instinct for hatred and destruction", he further refined it presenting his theory: "We assume that human Instincts are of two kinds: those that conserve and unify which we call erotic... and secondly, the instincts to destroy and kill... All the phenomena of life derive from their activity whether they work in concert or in opposition..."

Referring to possible measures to be taken assuming the characteristics of human nature described above, Freud comments: "There is no likelihood of our being able to suppress humanity's aggressive tendencies..." However, based upon his analysis of the two opposing instincts, he comes up with the following suggestion: "If the propensity for war be due to the destructive instinct, we have always its counter agent: Eros, to our hand...". And I emphasize the following excerpt: by Freud: "All that produces ties of sentiment between man and man must serve as war's antidote... First, relations toward a beloved object" And Freud the secular devout adds: "Religion uses the same language: Love thy neighbor as thyself. A pious declaration: easy to announce but hard to carry out...". And Freud continues: "The other bond of sentiment is by way of identification. All that brings out the significant resemblance between man calls into play this feeling of community, identification, whereon is founded, in large measure, the whole edifice of human society..."

We are still struck by the sharpness of observation and the accurate analysis of human nature and its relations to society, as presented by these two great minds. However, two important developments occurred since their correspondence, which even make more severe the threat to human existence: The widespread of nuclear weaponry and the central role religion occupies in the life of many sections of society. Karl Marx, who cynically termed religion as: "Opium for the masses", did not realize that it may turn into a powerful force that will take over political, cultural and military spheres in many societies. Religious and political leaders often utilize mechanisms of humiliation of the "other" in order to create and foster solidarity among its own group members. The "other", "the different", are to be blamed for all the failures of the ruling elite.

Our understanding of the true moral dogmas of Christianity, Islam and Judaism – they all stick by the Jewish proverb: "Love thy neighbor as thyself". Moreover, according to the Bible the human being was created in the image of God.

Therefore the life of each individual is considered sacred. Hence, we cannot afford waiting for the Eros forces to be activated by themselves. Religious leaders of all faiths should unite at this dangerous hour to human existence. As Freud put it so bluntly: "Man have gained control over the forces of nature to such extent that with their help they would have no difficulty in exterminating one another to the last man". This was written in 1930 prior to Second World War and nuclear development. The excerpt is from his essay: "Civilization and its Discontents". Can we contribute to civilization contents? This is our challenge and responsibility!