

An excerpt from

## THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS IN ADAM INSTITUTE WORKSHOPS

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The primary objective of the educational process in Adam Institute workshops is to educate participants to an active recognition of freedom as an equal right of all people. Equal right to freedom means that every person is indeed equal. Other people are, therefore, not a means of achieving goals, but rather autonomous individuals with their own legitimate desires and goals (in philosophical terms, other people are subjects and not objects). In this context, democratic institutions are a means of realizing this central goal. They, then, should be evaluated and judged according to their contribution to the objective.

Other educational objectives in Adam Institute workshops are education for tolerance, rationality and development of a creative view. While these values are important in and of themselves, they are also important in that their implementation is a precondition for realizing the equal right of all people to freedom.

Tolerance is the ability to accept the right of others to think and act, particularly when these thoughts and actions conflict with our own beliefs. Rationality is the ability to critically evaluate all views, especially our own. Both concepts are related. In both cases we need to accept a position with which we disagree and reject one that we hold true.

Whereas tolerance forces people to overcome the difficulty of accepting the differences existing in all people, rationality forces them not to blindly accept their own views. As outlined in the previous chapter, when persuasion and choice are the key educational concepts for studying controversial issues, it becomes quite difficult for people to accept other views and to examine their own beliefs in a critical manner.

In addition, the need to choose makes it difficult to distinguish between goals opposed in principle and those opposed due to the given circumstances. There is a difference, in logical terms, between a decision between good and bad options and a decision between two good options. Murder, for example, is opposed and the right to life is affirmed. One is legitimate, and the other is not. The bad must be condemned along with those who support it. However, the situation is completely different when, for example, freedom of expression conflicts with the right to personal security. In this case, both are important and should be realized in full. In terms of psychology, however, the decision process is the same. When forced to choose between two options, people justify their own views and reject all other opinions. They also develop antipathy toward the people who holds different views than their own. When people must choose from available options, all but one of those options is negated. Under certain conditions, this process leads to decreased tolerance of others. It also causes them to consciously reject legitimate and important options.

*Example: When freedom of expression is chosen over the right to personal security, people are putting themselves and their freedom in jeopardy. When, however, a choice is made for the right to personal security and freedom of expression is restricted, quality of life and government are significantly reduced. It would be best if this situation could be avoided altogether and people be allowed to enjoy both rights to the fullest possible extent. Alternatively, one of them could be chosen, while the right restricted in the given context is still valued, as are those who believe that the other right should have taken precedence.*

The educational method developed by the Adam Institute is designed to heighten the ability to differentiate between negative and positive alternatives that are currently not being realized. This process of “bringing suitable alternatives home” is tightly connected to the process, which aims to develop the ability to accept the rights of those who hold conflicting views and examine ourselves. People must be taught to recognize that the rejected option is not negative. It simply cannot be realized at present due to a situation that requires that a single option be selected. When it becomes clear that society as a whole has an interest in realizing the rejected option, people will be able to relate differently to people who have made different choices. When we understand that we, too, are interested in realizing that right, we will be able to relate to those who made that particular choice differently. When people look for ways to realize all of the options, they shift from a state of hostility and competition regarding the issue – whose right takes precedence, to one where people cooperate to find a solution that will no longer require a choice to be made.

The educational efforts of the Adam Institute help distinguish between types of options under discussion (distinction between good and bad, as well as distinction between two legitimate options). Adam Institute activities also develop a new way of relating to the second type of alternatives.

The aforementioned factors can engender intolerance and create difficulty in recognizing the equal right of all people. To deal with this better, participants in Adam Institute workshops learn to direct critical opposition toward themselves. In other words, they learn to understand that there are instances when the goal they opposed is both important and desired. They recognize that they, like their “opponents,” actually have an interest in the realization of this right. (This realization precedes their ability to accept the views and rights of their opponents.) Participants learn to “remove the obstacle of choice,” which causes them to reject a particular alternative. They are taught to create a new situation that will not require the waiving of one of those rights. If a situation where one right must be selected at the expense of others cannot be avoided, and both rights cannot be realized, participants look for a solution that will allow them to resolve the problem in an equally just manner.

The main stages in this process are as follows:

- ❖ **Discovering the views held by workshop participants and creating awareness of the conflicts that exist between them.**
- ❖ **Transforming the conflict into a dilemma** – a process in which participants direct actual opposition toward themselves (thereby identifying with the other person, critically evaluating their own positions and finding the positive points of the conflict views).
- ❖ **Finding creative solutions for dilemmas faced by participants** – and evaluating them as potential solutions for realizing the majority of individual rights and for resolving the conflicts that arose between the participants in the first phase.

## PHASE ONE

### DISCOVERING THE VIEWS HELD BY WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS AND CREATING AWARENESS OF THE CONFLICTS THAT EXIST BETWEEN THEM

A lack of conflict in a group might be the result of life with mutual respect and preservation of the rights of the participants. However, it might also be due to extended oppression that has led weak members of the group to avoid expressing their desires and rights. There are times when the oppression is so severe that those oppressed are not even aware of these rights and the possibility of realizing them.

During the educational process in Adam Institute workshops there is a directed shift from a situation where there is no awareness of rights to one in which these participants fight for them. Another shift is made from the struggle for rights to an understanding of the complexity of the conflict and a search for solution that will allow the rights of all involved to be respected.

During the first phase of Adam Institute workshops, participants take part in a structured exercise (appearing in one of the curricula developed at the Adam Institute<sup>1</sup>) in which they are forced to relate to a controversial issue from the field of education for democracy. For example, they may be asked to examine whether the names of crime suspects should be published in the press. Participants generally express their opinions. When they encounter people with different views, they find it necessary justify their position. As a result, they feel they need to persuade others of the validity of their view. They begin a process of persuasion, even before they have equally evaluated both their own and other opinions. Naturally the persuasion process leads to conflicts between the participants.

While the process of persuasion has many drawbacks, as illustrated in the first part of the chapter, it also has advantages. The desire to persuade others requires that a large number of assertions be offered to justify the position. The person doing the persuading tends to present one side of the argument as well as possible. This can later contribute to an equal evaluation of the options.

Yet another important outcome of the phase in which participants attempt to persuade each other, is that given a proper moderation process, legitimacy can be granted to the views of those participants who were not provided a previous opportunity to express their opinions. At this point, participants are still having trouble listening to conflicting views. However, they encounter the possibility, which may be entirely new to them, of the authority (the facilitator) granting legitimacy to the views of the group's weakest members.

In addition, the conflict phase provides participants with an opportunity to express hostile and negative feelings. It also provides them with an awareness of the structure of their views and perceptions. With proper moderation, they will reveal the assumptions that bolster their views. Then, at a later stage, they will be able to improve their ability to understand the situation in more complex terms.

**The activities conducted in the first phase of Adam Institute workshops can be summarized as follows:**

- ❖ Participants discuss a controversial issue relating to democracy.
- ❖ Participants begin the process of mutual persuasion, generating conflict around the issue under discussion.
- ❖ The facilitator allows participants to express their views, while ensuring that all participants are granted equal opportunity to take part in the argument. The facilitator does not limit their self-expression (except in extreme cases). Expressing feelings in this phase allows participants to evaluate matters more calmly later in the process.
- ❖ The facilitator allows social processes to take place in the group, with almost no intervention. This provides material for the work done later in the process.
- ❖ The facilitator assists the group in defining the controversial issues raised in the discussion.
- ❖ The facilitator mirrors the results of the discussion, which was based on the attempt to persuade others. The facilitator works with the group to determine the extent to which their views have changed

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<sup>1</sup> A full list of Adam Institute curricula appears at the end of the booklet.

and whether they are now better able to see the weaknesses of their own views and the strengths of views held by others. Reflection on the nature of the relationships based on the attempt to persuade others leads to the recognition that the foundation for the relationships in the room regarding the conflict prevents participants from seeing the weaknesses of their own views. Participants will also see how this prevents them from finding fitting solutions to conflicts.

## PHASE TWO

### TRANSFORMING CONFLICTS INTO DILEMMAS

Transforming conflicts into dilemmas means that in the first phase, a conflict between two individuals (or two groups) with opposing views on a human rights issue is transformed into an inner conflict. In the second phase, it is transformed into an emotional and cognitive state that either affirms or negates both of the conflicting views.

When participants find themselves supporting both views, they have difficulty making a choice between them. This difficulty serves as the impetus for seeking a solution that allows both views to coexist. Similarly, rejection of both views serves as a catalyst for actively pursuing a new solution.

Transformation of the conflict into a dilemma is a process in which the workshop facilitator creates situations that force participants to direct actual opposition toward themselves (as opposed to simulated opposition created in roleplays). When participants direct real opposition toward themselves, they see the issue under discussion as well as participants with conflicting views in a different light. The support they are developing for the position they initially opposed, helps them find new solutions for the conflict.

It is important to note that transformation of conflicts into dilemmas is an educational method designed to foster tolerance and promote recognition of the equal rights of all people. However, it must be stressed that this method, like all methods, is limited to specific situations. It is particularly important in situations when intolerance is manifested in a conflict that is grounded in the need to choose between two legitimate options (generally two conflicting rights), as well as when the dispute centers around the question of which right should be waived. In situations where there is a clear-cut conflict between negative and positive views, it is more fitting to promote tolerance and recognition of equal rights through other means (for example, dilemmas should not be created between racist and democratic views).

#### **The objectives of transforming conflict into dilemma are as follows:**

Promoting understanding of the conflict and of the various views in as complex a manner as possible. (Participants will be able to evaluate the issue from new perspectives that are not limited by their views, as presented in the initial argument.)

1. Developing recognition of the equal rights of all people to freedom. (Participants will develop recognition of the equal rights of others through an understanding that they are not really opposed to them, but rather have developed a hostile attitude as a result of their need to choose between them).
2. Motivating participants to find solutions to the conflict that will preserve the rights of all parties to the greatest possible extent.

#### **How are conflicts transformed into dilemmas?**

There are numerous ways of transforming conflicts into dilemmas. This booklet will only touch on several of them in order to clarify the principle. (Additional examples can be found in Adam Institute curricula. See bibliography.)

## CREATING AN INTERFACE OF PROCESS AND CONTENT

- ❖ In all Adam Institute workshops, facilitators conduct an exercise dealing with a question from the field of education for democracy. Participants deal with the key concepts of life in a democratic society.
- ❖ After the exercise, facilitators generally lead a discussion regarding a controversial democratic issue raised during the exercise.
- ❖ Workshop participants relate to the matter in two ways: verbal and behavioral.

*Example: Assume that the issue discussed in the workshop is freedom of expression. Participants discuss the importance of freedom of expression and articulate their beliefs regarding the limits that should be put on this basic human right. At the same time participants are verbally expressing their views, they are also expressing their attitude toward this principle through their behavior toward others: They silence them, allow them to speak, listen to what they say and more. Often there is a significant difference between their stated position and the position expressed through their behavior.*

*A situation may arise in which a participant who states a fear of the social implications of allowing unrestricted freedom of expression may be quite bold in their behavior, show a great deal of tolerance for others with conflicting views and allow others to express their views. However, the opposite situation is also possible. A participant who states support for unrestricted freedom of expression may not allow others with conflicting views to express themselves.*

*On the verbal level, a conflict generally arises between participants who support unrestricted freedom of expression and those who oppose it. The conflict causes both sides to become more entrenched in their views. It also causes participants to present an unqualified argument either for or against freedom of expression.*

*In order to allow both parties to the conflict to evaluate the issue from new perspectives, the facilitator may point out the discrepancy between the stated position of supporters of freedom of expression and their behavior. This discrepancy is not presented to the group in order to criticize people for the difference between their statements and actions. Rather, it provides an opportunity to raise the positive and important reasons for their behaviors and stated views (though they conflict with each other).*

*When participants receive support from the facilitator, they feel able to express the conflicts within them. This, then, allows them to make progress in three areas:*

- ❖ *They can accept the views of their opponents with greater understanding.*
- ❖ *They can understand that denial of the right to freedom of expression (in statements or in acts) stems from the desire to*

*protect other democratic rights (such as the right to respect, personal security and perhaps even others).*

- ❖ *They will become interested in finding a way to defend those rights that are impinged as a result of the fact that freedom of expression or other rights have taken precedence.*

This type of transformation of conflicts into dilemmas is based on the interface of group process and content. This is what takes place at Adam Institute workshops. Facilitators learn to identify the behaviors in the group that are related to the issue being discussed by the participants. Facilitators then use these behaviors to transform the conflict into a dilemma.

*If, for example, the workshop discussion is about equality, the facilitator must evaluate the relationship between what is said and the related behaviors. To illustrate, inequality in the room can be expressed in a number of ways including the amount of time participants are allowed to speak or the language used in the workshop (which is not the mother tongue of all participants).*

### **CREATING AN INTERFACE BETWEEN PRINCIPLES AND CONCRETE BEHAVIORS**

Another method for the transformation of conflicts into dilemmas is by bringing workshop participants face to face with the discrepancies between their views on an abstract issue and the views they express when provided with a concrete example of implementation of the same principle in their daily lives.

*Thus, the facilitator can lead a discussion on a matter of principle such as whether the state has the right to regulate marriage. Participants will express different and conflicting views on the matter and the argument will intensify. The argument leads all sides to become further entrenched in their views and more convinced that their view is the right view.*

*Once things have calmed down, the facilitator will give the participants two concrete examples of how the principle can be implemented. The facilitator will then ask the group to discuss the issue again and reach a conclusion.*

*Example 1: The facilitator asks whether the state may set a minimum age for marriage.*

*Example 2: The facilitator asks whether the state may regulate marriages of individuals who are emotionally disabled.*

It is very likely that the decisiveness of the argument when it revolves around an abstract issue will become less intense once specific and concrete examples of implementation of the abstract principle are provided. Here, just as in other methods of transforming conflicts into dilemmas, the facilitator does not lecture participants on the inconsistencies of their views. Instead, the facilitator attempts to take advantage of the lack of consistency to promote an understanding of the complexity of the issue. The facilitator works with the group to determine what other rights they are defending when they express their views.

Here, too, the facilitator utilizes the inner conflicts that result from the views of the participants to change the interaction among them and motivate them to look for new solutions to the conflict.

## CREATING A CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Facilitators look for situations in which participants can experience a conflict of interest. Only in this manner will they be able to view the same issue from two conflicting perspectives. The result in such cases is that participants experience inner conflict. This conflict must be closely related to the subject of the workshop.

*Example: Take the case of a workshop for teachers on student rights. A question is raised as to whether students should be allowed to select the courses that interest them or whether teachers, who have more knowledge, should be the ones to determine a course schedule, which each student must accept. The teachers' views stem from their professional interests, and it is very difficult for them to see the issue from a different perspective. To help teachers do this, the facilitator makes use of the fact that they are now students in the workshop. The facilitator recommends that they adopt the conclusions brought up during the first phase of the discussion and implement their assertions during the workshop, where they are in the role of the student. The implication is that the workshop facilitator (the teacher) decides their curriculum for them and that they must complete the assignments. It is very likely that at this point a portion of the teachers will oppose the points that they themselves put forward in the initial discussion.*

*The conflicts between their original position in the argument as teachers and their different perception when cast in the role of student should be used to develop a complex view on the matter. The facilitator does not criticize the participants for the discrepancies between the two views. On the contrary, the facilitator asks participants to relate all of the conflicting assertions that they now can identify with as a result of having been cast in both roles.*

*The ability of participants to relate in a positive manner to the inner conflicts they express allows them a much deeper understanding of the issue. It also allows them to develop their ability to be tolerant of peers who previously expressed opinions conflicting with theirs. A complex understanding of the issue motivates participants to find new solutions for teacher-student relationships.*

The facilitator leading the discussion in the room must be able to see these inner conflicts as the key to rational thought processes (as opposed to what is accepted in "democratic" thought). Inner conflict allows individual participants to view the issue at hand from different perspectives.

*Another example of inner conflict that can be used to transform conflicts into dilemmas is the following: In workshops on equality of the sexes, fathers-men hold certain views when dealing with their rights compared to those of women. When, however, the discussion turns to their daughters and the rights they want for them – their views are different. Similarly, mothers-women have certain views regarding equality of the sexes as it relates to them and different views when discussing their sons and daughters-in-law.*

**The methods used in Adam Institute workshops to transform conflicts into dilemmas can be summarized as follows:**

- ❖ The facilitator brings up a controversial issue from the field of education for democracy.
- ❖ The facilitator allows participants to express the conflict between them.
- ❖ The facilitator raises questions that lead participants to experience inner conflict.

- ❖ The facilitator asks participants to connect with their own conflicting views.
- ❖ The facilitator points to the differences between the views of the participants raised during the conflict stage and highlights the similarity of their arguments once the conflict was transformed to a dilemma.
- ❖ The facilitator lists the rights that those with conflicting opinions wanted to realize and directs participants to the possibility of finding a solution that will allow both rights to coexist.

As previously stated, it is important for workshop participants to understand that steering clear of finding a new solution leads them, and their opponents, to give up rights that are important to both groups.

While there are additional methods that can be used to transform conflicts into dilemmas, they are not discussed here. The following questions must now be carefully examined:

- ❖ How can methods of conflict resolution be used to deal with the dilemmas facing the group?
- ❖ How will these solutions be implemented to resolve the conflict created in the first phase of the workshop?