



Picture: Kathrin Kratzer

Is the pressure of suffering supposed to make us change our perspective?

The need for different perspectives in interpersonal conflicts and global relations

Clemens Huchel

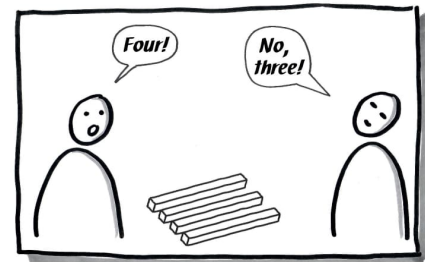
Taking a different perspective is very important for conflict resolution in both the individual and global context. People cling to tried and tested methods and beliefs that give them the illusion of security. Interpersonal conflicts, social transformations, environmental destruction or international conflicts require further development. When people and nature suffer and a comfortable “business as usual” is no longer possible, we urgently need progress and have to think outside the box.

Change of Perspective

Between heart and head, people have a hard time with the change of perspective that is so often invoked. The mind prefers security in known thought structures and remains in static thinking. This, like static language with stipulations and classifications, contradicts nature, where there is no standstill. There is no standstill in the entire universe; it itself is constantly drifting apart. Even the most massive boulder or steel block is constantly changing, but it is difficult for us to see it. These contradictions cause conflicts both internally and externally.

Emotional Level

At the heart level, we humans know that accepting other points of view is necessary to reconnect and thus enter into dialogue when problems and conflicts arise. We can feel accurately when we are in honest and authentic contact with people. Then we have a thriving relationship. But can we also see this in ourselves, do we have a connection to ourselves and to nature as a basis for the willingness to connect with other people? Yes, it is not that easy, and when we think we have understood it from the head, this head tells us that it has a strong need for security and would rather stay in familiar territory.



Old Beliefs

Old beliefs consist of habitual views, principles and beliefs as well as moral judgments that we have manifested through our socialization and our own experience. What they have in common is that they are rarely subject to review. If we get stuck in this, we miss out on the diversity that we urgently need in order to deal constructively with life's challenges. Our mind will not leave us alone as long as we do not accept and acknowledge its security-oriented position, with which we have a kind of "primordial change of perspective". This acceptance and appreciation of the need for security, which we naturally know from the heart and gut feeling, is fundamental. The problem is the dominance of the mind which, through identifications and other ego symptoms, makes our lives difficult instead of easier. This is also nothing new, but has been known for thousands of years.

Overcome Limitations

We need to get out of our thought bubbles to make significant progress on the challenges. As C. Otto Scharmer puts it, we try to solve 4.0 problems with the tools of systems 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0. If we always do the same, we always get the same. We go round in circles and remain static in an infinite loop and get into a contradiction with life, in which there is no standstill. For dynamic developments, a continuous change of perspective on challenges, especially international conflicts, is indispensable to generate sustainable solutions. The Change of Perspective is the well-known term for this, but why is it so difficult and what is necessary to use it as a prerequisite for transformation?

"We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."
Albert Einstein

Empathy

Taking another person's perspective to promote mutual understanding is empathy. This is a basic prerequisite for transforming conflicts towards a sustainable solution. This is not new, as can be seen from an old saying from native North Americans:

"Don't judge a man until you have walked two moons in his moccasins."

Change of perspective, goodwill towards other people and empathy are closely linked. Mistakenly, this is related, if at all, only to direct interpersonal conflicts and not to the political level, although ultimately only human beings act there as well. It is no wonder that many international conflicts drag on forever, such as the Middle East conflict.

What Prerequisites are needed?

If we look closely, the main thing that is needed is the willingness to change perspective. Behind a lack of ability there is generally a lack of will. In the larger context, we speak of political will, which, however, is again composed of the willingness of individuals. No matter how we twist and turn it, it always starts with each individual person, even for collective attitudes that only arise from this, but are of course more effective in their effect.

Willingness and Attitude

What inhibits willingness or why do we humans find it so difficult to take a different perspective? In many cases there is simply a lack of acceptance that another perspective can exist and that it is justified. Out of the right of the strongest, this is also regularly put into practice by ignoring or suppressing the other point of view. This includes the deletion of YouTube videos and other social media channels, selective admission of journalists to press conferences and bans on radio stations.

In particularly blatant cases, dissidents are imprisoned or even liquidated.

However, this does not resolve the other perspective, but rather escalates the conflict or it is suppressed and postponed until later.

Acceptance and Decision

There needs to be an acceptance of the necessity for letting go of the old methods and ways of thinking when they are no longer adequate. This means, for example, recognizing that a 3.0 tool can no longer cope with the challenges in the 4.0 system. Of course, we have grown fond of the old tools we are familiar with. They have been used successfully many times. All of a sudden, however, we are not progressing with them as we would like and we have to make a decision to try something new. Willingness alone is not enough, it is also a matter of wanting. Leaving one's own convenience or comfort zone involves effort. In addition, the new terrain is associated with uncertainty and can trigger fears.

Further Aspects

Anxieties

We all know the brainstorming method, at least by name, but do we also want to allow utopian or uncomfortable solutions to appear on the screen? Suggestions will come that might provoke the question of why we didn't think of this before, which often evokes feelings of guilt and shame. The human being's inherent programme of pain avoidance strikes and wipes the suggestions off the table or does not allow them to arise at all. The high level of conformity prevalent in Germany is a basis for the fear of social exclusion. Therefore, people prefer to sing along in the chorus of the majority without reflecting on this.

The fears lead us to the courage that is necessary for new steps into the unknown. We are entering new territory, moving out of our comfort zone and to do this we need trust in ourselves and our social environment.

Openness

Every opening theoretically allows for a violation. This openness needs inner strength and stability. Anxieties often concern our own integrity. They have been deliberately fomented by the authorities and used as a means of power for thousands of years, which has contributed significantly to our socialisation and still does. It is important to embrace our need for security and not to suppress it if we want to build more personal resilience.

Attitude

An open attitude with which we can gain new insights is not a self-propelling process. We have to make a conscious decision to do so. It can be inspired or stimulated from outside, everything else is personal responsibility.

This attitude is linked to a consciousness that enables critical questioning. Going to our system limits and beyond is related to our very own need for development. As already mentioned, there is no standstill in nature. We express standstill, for example, through static language, which means that we are constantly living in conflict. Static language is a term that Marshall B. Rosenberg coined in the context of Nonviolent Communication. It involves judging, condemning and pigeonholing through phrases such as "You are..." and "He/she is one..." This language turns people into objects and thus dehumanises them, which is reflected in conflicts and dissatisfaction in our Western society. This is a collective social normality that is rarely questioned.

Rosenberg described an attitude conducive to a change of perspective in detail in his works on Nonviolent Communication. In principle, the change of perspective is part of the Nonviolent Communication he describes.

Promoting a Change of Perspective

I am not concerned here with methods such as thought suggestion or self-reflective questions, for which there are already enough guidebooks. From the head, in other words with the mind, we can understand the whole range of self-reflection, but impact and an actual change and evolvement only occur when it has arrived emotionally at oneself and becomes a kind of experience.

From Personal Development to Transformation

As mentioned, it all starts with ourselves with the decision towards a more conscious attitude. This is a topic of individual personality development towards more personal responsibility. A more conscious attitude makes it easier for us to deal with personal conflicts, which is a good inspiration for development in our own social environment. If enough people do this, it will have an impact on society and the larger systems.



System Change

The theory or hope is that systems change by changing meaning and purpose (D. Meadows). However, these systems are still relatively stable because the critical mass is not yet sufficient due to a lack of consciousness. Whether it remains a utopia or not ultimately depends on ourselves. Even a long journey always begins with the first step, and there are already plenty of first steps.

Conclusion

In a world full of conflicts and challenges, the change of perspective is essential for the survival of the human species. The complexity due to the individual personality reference and due to the interaction with prevailing established systems makes it difficult to carry out changes of perspective on an individual as well as on a political level. For a substantial sustainable improvement in the ability to change perspective, it causally starts with the ego. Due to the framework conditions of our societal systems, unfortunately, it is usually precisely those who are equipped with a corresponding ego who end up in positions of power and thus tend to prevent a development towards more peace and sustainability. Civil society therefore has a special role to play, as it has not yet been able to make the most of its power and impact as the genuine sovereign power.

*"You cannot teach a man anything, you can only help him find it within himself."
Galileo Galilei*

www.peace-institute-potsdam.de
ch@peace-institute-potsdam.de

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