

A Philosophical Approach to Critical Thinking and Conflict

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Abstract : The phenomenon of conflict is considered as one of the most essential phenomena of human beings and is a part of their existence. Conflicts are social phenomena that have existed throughout the history of human society against the will of the people. Their existence in social life has transformed them into universal and objective phenomena that exist despite our knowledge and attitudes. These characteristics are imposed on man to study his eternal nature for the benefit of life and progress. The sciences of philosophy and critical thinking provide new concepts for conflict management and transformation. Critical thinking offers a new conceptual approach to dealing with conflicts in human society. The essence of critical thinking is the idea and views of philosophers for a rational and reasoned approach to conflicts. The following paper aims to influence the education and formation of beliefs and a dialectical attitude on the importance of critical thinking in the recognition, understanding, and management of conflicts in society.

Keywords: Conflict Management and Transformation, Conflict Resolution, Society, Philosophy.

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Introduction

Recognizing and treating the causes of conflict in human society remains an important and vital objective of human thought. Conflict follows man from birth to death. In addition to the conflict with oneself, a person must also cope with those that arise and appear in the relationships that he creates with others. The creation of this relationship, between oneself and others, is accompanied by the expectation of conflicts of different natures because the closer we get to the individuality of each one, the more conflicts arise that are caused by the existence of differences about what "I" am and what the other is. Human activity is directly related to the thoughts embedded in his psyche and shaped into world views and habits, that guide him to action.

The path described so far, as well as the one expected to be traversed tomorrow, is a product of the ideas of human society. The formation of worldview ideas and concepts aims at the development of individual human capacities, so that the individual fulfills his social mission in his daily activities. Achieving maximum efficiency in this field is closely related to the growth of individual experiences as well as of society itself, which communicate and feed each other. The development of a democratic society requires not only social cooperation

from all its members, but also the training and development of their capacities at contemporary levels. Philosophical thinking is closely related to the formation of reflective thought, which is achieved through the acquisition and application of the method of reflection, which, for each thesis in the philosophical field, starts with the doubt of its authenticity and its application in practice. The only way to improve our theories and experiences remains to learn and philosophize intelligently, which also creates the necessary conditions for the full use of the acquired experience. When dealing with the phenomenon of conflict in human society, the role and nature of human beings remain essential in the recognition, treatment, and resolution of conflict. In the light of philosophical studies, man has abandoned the fatalistic theory of conflict treatment, the black and white attitude, and replaced it with a contemporary point of view, treating and conceptualizing conflicts as an attempt to overcome obstacles to development and coexistence, as an opportunity for communication. In this process we can progress in achieving our goals.

Methodology of the study

The methodology followed in the design of this study is the research work, which is based on the collection of scientific materials, the use of the literature, the relevant bibliography, and the consultation of the selected literature. After the selection of the scientific materials, their translation into Albanian was carried out, as was the systematization of the existing knowledge in order to select only the necessary information. The last stage that followed contained the processing of the material, thereby crystallizing the entire material. During the literature analysis, we focused on the recognition from a philosophical point of view of the nature of the conflict as well as the role of critical thinking in its treatment and management, enabling the acquisition of new knowledge. For the preparation of the paper, we focused on the selection of original materials for the benefit of deepening the content with scientific concepts and facts.

Philosophical concepts about conflict: a new approach to critical thinking

The themes and variety of problems discussed by ancient philosophers also included the substantive nature of the conflicts. Critical and philosophical thought has aimed to provide strong arguments for the very existence of human life. In this sense, the first foundations of living are based on thoughts about the elements of nature and human society. The elements of nature also include man, who abstracts in an effort to live. Socrates' reasoning is based on the fact that man is a rational being and interacts according to the principles he establishes in his life. Socrates focused on developing the thought: How should one live according to the principles of good? Thus, critical thought put the phenomenon of evil in human life and society under its microscope. In this sense, the goal of the development of human society is the result of his thoughts. Therefore, today's arrival point summarizes the spiral of our concepts and ideas, which precede the level and quality of tomorrow.

Man is the only being to whom nature has given the ability to judge and reason. Reason is the basis of the

thoughts that form the elite. The concepts and worldviews of a society are born and formed by the thinkers who build the foundations of the state itself. Thinking is followed by logic, which is precisely what further develops mental activity. Thinking is a psychic process that accompanies man towards new knowledge, generalizations, and the discovery of laws that determine various phenomena in nature and in society. Through thinking, people manage to get to know the phenomena that surround them more deeply, to penetrate into their essence, and to discover the cause and laws of their development. People practice thinking to realize their goals. Through thinking, people not only manage to plan and organize their activities but also to predict their results. The purpose of human existence is closely related to education and the use of human will for the acquisition of new ideas, in the endless path of knowledge and cognition. On the other hand, any knowledge, which is part of knowledge, creates opportunities for man to use the laws of nature and those of different fields of knowledge to his advantage. Our entire existence is connected to our knowledge of the truth and the world around us. An important element of the thinking process is intuition, which guides the process of cognition in the path of research and enrichment of knowledge for the benefit of human society. In principle, philosophers accept the existence of conflict in nature and objectively before the birth of human society. The German philosopher, Emanuel Kant, treated in his conflict studies the complexity of human nature and, especially, the contradictions that accompany it. His concepts about conflict value it as an instrument of nature through which it realizes its purpose, the establishment of justice and the triumph of freedom.

The German philosopher Georg Simmel thinks that the individual in society always remains in a double relationship with society. The individual is at the same time inside and outside society: he exists both for society and for himself. *"Man in society is not partly social and partly individual. More precisely, his existence is shaped by a fundamental unity, which cannot be accounted for in any other way except through the synthesis or coincidence of two logically contradictory determinations: man both in social connection and in being for himself, both of which are products of society and life from an independent center."* (Cose and Ridener, 2005, p. 127). The field of social science investigates what happens to people and according to what rules they behave, not in relation to how they unfold their individual existence in their generalities, but in relation to how they form groups and are defined by the existence of their group due to interaction. Thus, according to Simmel, *"The forms found in social reality are never refined: every social phenomenon contains a variety of conventional elements. Cooperation and conflict, subordination and supremacy, intimacy and distance, can all be operative in a marital relationship or in a bureaucratic structure."* (Cose and Ridener, 2005, p. 123-124). Due to his nature, man is inclined to see and analyze conflict in two aspects; the first, which includes the factors that favor it, and the second, which includes the factors that fight against it and hinder its progress or development. The appearance of conflicts is relatively difficult to assess. Simmel's views start from a dialectical approach and highlight the dynamic interrelationships and conflicts between the social units he analyzed. Throughout his work, Simmel emphasizes the connections and frictions between the individual and society. In these treatments, the argument for the positive role of conflict in the lives of groups and society occupies a prominent place. The social significance of conflicts has never been seriously discussed. Simmel underlines his critical attitude towards the legacy according to which conflicts have been seen simply as a destructive factor in human relations

and as something that should be prevented as much as possible.

People reach this conclusion by observing only the negative consequences of conflicts in certain individuals or social groups and extending them to the entire society, creating an illusory vision that what happens to any individual or group also happens to the whole society. In addition, people forget that it is these conflicts that, among others, keep them bound to each other in a mutual action, which, in one way or another, necessarily increases and facilitates social integration. Quite important remains the perspective of conflict resolution. This avoids the negative result of the loss of human life and material and financial values, of victory or defeat by only one side, and the creation of a reality based on the triumph of peace, which is always more precious than war, as well as the vision of the common victory. This means abandoning forms and methods that rely on the use of threats and violence. In order to resolve conflicts, traditional attitudes of communication that rely on threats and blame should be avoided. Rather, a right approach involving the use of attitudes and communication based on understanding and cooperation should be adopted first. Also non-threat and non-use of violence methods can help to resolve conflicts. It is very important not to cut off communication and dialogue in any way, because in this way, the conflict would only escalate. Simmel's motto consists of his concept of presenting a peaceful alternative for conflict resolution, while also accepting the opinion and platform of the other side.

Understanding conflict: its management and transformation

The history of human society proves the presence of conflicts in all cells of life as an inherent part of human nature. Man is forced to choose only one alternative behavior towards him; managing and resolving conflicts in a timely manner, avoiding consequences that punish society. The studies of the French philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, on the causes and origin of the conflict have transformed it into a serious reference in the field of philosophical thought. Rousseau developed an advanced concept for the time on the origin and nature of conflict, which he expressed in the work "The Origin of Inequality among Men". Rousseau showed special interest in typology and conflicts with nature; religious, political, ethnic, social, economic, etc. He stopped at one of the causes and origins of the conflict; that between people in human society, continuing with the argument that inequality, exploitation, slavery, poverty, etc. were born from property. *"The first who, after setting the boundaries of a plot of land, said: This is mine!"* (Rousseau. 2008, p. 89).

The essence of Rousseau's views is focused on the stages of development of human society, where the idea stands out, according to which the essence and main source of conflict in society remain the inequality that has arisen. *"Such as was, or should have been, the genesis of society and laws, which gave new constraints to the weak and new powers to the rich (18th century), destroyed natural freedom once and for all, permanently embedded the law of property and of inequality, by a violent and bold appropriation, they derived an irrevocable right, and for the sake of the gain of some ambition, they finally subjected the whole human race to labor, slavery, and misery."* (Rousseau, 2008, p. 109-110). Rousseau managed to arouse attention and argue before the society of the time about the awareness of the natural right of man to live equal and free. This could

not be ensured in a monarchy that stood on the idea of absolutism and the unlimited powers of the monarch, where everything, every wealth, and every right, which included the human life of an individual or group of people, belonged to him. For Rousseau, social inequality and social injustice were the main sources of conflict.

Another source of conflict today remains economic inequality. Because, on the one hand, the wealth of the rich only increases, while on the other hand, the poverty of the poor only deepens. Even this economic inequality between different layers of society remains a source of conflict. Dwelling on the consequences of these inequalities, Rousseau points out: *"As soon as people began to mutually appreciate each other, and the idea of condescension was conceived in their souls, everyone thought he was right about it, and it was not possible to find a single man with impunity who could do without it. From here began the initial obligations of civilization, up to and among the savages, from this, every voluntary injustice was called a disgrace, from which, together with the harm that flowed from the evil, the injured person saw in it the disregard of his own person, often more unbearable than evil itself"*. (Rousseau 2008, p. 97). Arguments and analysis prompted Rousseau to draw the conclusion that *"social inequality and social injustices cannot, just as the rays of the sun have the same source, but are many, because, along the way, they encounter many breaks, even we, although we have many bodies, only have one soul. I cannot separate myself from the worst soul, nor deny identity with the worst."*(Rousseau 2007, p. 133).

Gandhi sees man from his good side and says that those sides can be developed without limit, and by developing them, a better man and a better world are created for everyone. Gandhi's philosophy was inspired by life's problems that needed solutions. And Gandhi gave them solutions, but always the kind of solutions that were compatible with morality. There are many attitudes and ways of solving or approaching a conflict. Conflicts can be handled badly, poorly, or constructively. Even our daily lives are accompanied by a number of small conflicts that we must face carefully. The ways of handling and resolving the conflict are highly institutionalized and dealt with by the courts. But, in many cases, conflicts are handled carelessly, which leads to bloody clashes, because people apply and rely on the law of the strongest. The point of view of conflict resolution that avoids the negative result of the loss of people's lives and material and financial values, victory or defeat by only one side, and the creation of a reality based on the triumph of peace, remains quite important; it is always more precious than the war as well as the vision of the common victory. This means abandoning forms and methods that rely on the use of threats and violence.

Various philosophers have expressed the opinion that reason and human dignity are another factor, apart from power, that ensures the regulation of interests for the establishment of peace. The philosopher John Locke said that people are basically rational. Most people are able to understand that others also have a number of rights, such as the right to live, for the simple reason that they are humans, and that most of them are willing to respect these rights. Therefore, the way the parties reason and communicate, how they express their feelings and emotions to each other affect the outcome of the conflict. Recognizing the respective responsibilities, verifying and correcting the wrong steps that deviate from the peaceful resolution of the conflict prepare the conditions for

the recognition of the rights of the other party in the conflict. When opponents clarify their positions and listen to each other's points of view, they come to understand each other correctly. As a rule, people who share different points of view with each other ensure a healthy and long-term friendship and relationship. The researcher of conflict resolution, Johan Galtung, starts from the fact that we should not look at conflicts as a win-lose situation, where one party must necessarily win and the other must lose. Instead, he looks for ways to create a win-win situation, where both parties benefit from the solution found. *"Finding a solution that fully satisfies both actors in the conflict is naive and impossible, but this does not mean that the conflict is unsolvable."* (Galtung 2007, p.172).

Galtung's main idea consists of recommending the creation of conditions where both conflicting parties emerge victorious from conflict resolution. All other solutions that tend to create imbalance or that offer victory to only one side are evaluated as short-term and without sustainable perspective. Finding a middle ground between hard and soft is a stepping stone to the right path. If both parties understand that reaching an agreement has long-term benefits, we can undoubtedly say that they are closer to a solution. The permanent or long-term solution to the conflict requires concessions from both parties, who have made the necessary concessions. An obvious positive result is the fact that the parties to the conflict have started down the path of cooperation, abandoning the path of violence and conflict. Caught in the whirlwind of the long process of finding a solution to the conflict, the parties understand and feel that they are now collaborators forced by circumstances to overcome common difficulties to solve the problem. This situation is also known as the time when both parties profit. However, it is important that the parties focus on what is common rather than what divides us. For the full effectiveness of this process, it is required that both parties openly raise and present the issues, interests, needs, and circumstances that caused the initial disagreement.

Conclusion

Philosophical approaches are the product of the selection of ideas in human society. Knowledge of the world and nature that surround us is the philosophical basis of human existence. Elites and philosophers of different eras through which human society passes have made undeniable contributions. In particular, an important place in the philosophical field is occupied by the concepts of critical thinking theorists, which constitute an innovative and contemporary approach to conflict resolution and management. Critical thinking is the ability to think rationally, which criticizes traditional concepts of using force to resolve conflicts, and the use of pressure, aggression, and military attacks to resolve them. The basis of the philosophy of critical thinking is the concept that only dialogue and holding open talks between the parties are the most fruitful and effective paths to a long-term solution and establishing trust between the conflicting parties. According to philosophers of critical thinking, neither conflicting party is deprived of dialogue and communication between them. They underline that conflict transformation is a process that never ends. Old antagonisms can resurface, just as new ones can arise. Achieving a lasting solution is at best a temporary goal. Much more important would be the ability to build a fair ratio so that it is sustainable and acceptable.

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