

# **Belief Networks and Social Normativity**



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## **The Principle of Peaceable Conduct as a Discrimination Tool in Social Life**

**Abstract:** By exercising their (imperfect) capacity to discriminate, people try to recognize and to understand some important differences between things that make them prefer some things to other. In this article I will use my ability to discriminate between people and societies according to a principle which plays the role of attractor, both at individual and societal levels, namely the principle of peaceable conduct. This principle allows us to discriminate at the civic level between the people who have a civilized conduct and those who manifest an aggressive conduct. The category of civilized people includes individuals who (a) respect the life and bodily integrity of their fellows, (b) practice self-control, not control over others and (c) do not claim, through coercive means, the goods that their fellows have obtained by making free and peaceful use of their own faculties and capabilities. The category of aggressive people reunites (a) murderers (those who endanger the lives of their fellow), (b) tyrants (those who beslave their fellows by taking control of some of their faculties) and (c) thieves (those who claim the goods of their fellows without their consent). The civilized conduct requires high standards of action of the people who embrace it and, implicitly, considerable physical and psychical costs. The primary impulses originating in our lower Self blatantly contradict the respect for life, liberty and property of our fellows, so that it seems impossible for them to be controlled only by personal effort. Therefore, it is vital that the energy allotted to peaceable conduct by our higher Self be superior to the energy which it spontaneously mobilizes in support of the primary impulses of our lower Self. This can be achieved by feeding the people with the social energy of certain social emotions in the process of internalizing the norms of peaceable conduct. Among these emotions, contempt and shame, respectively anger and guilt stand out through the predominance of the moral dimension and force of shaping human conduct. They underlie two different moral systems – “shame morality”, and “guilt morality” respectively – that support our peaceable conduct and, *ipso facto*, our civilized life.

**Keywords:** principle, peaceable conduct, discrimination, social norm, social emotion

## **1. The ability to discriminate as an imperfect product of evolution**

The ability to discriminate allows people to recognize and to understand the differences between things, particularly those differences that make them prefer some things to others. By exercising their capacity to discriminate, people have preferred over time (not) to eat certain foods, (not) to ally with people of a certain race, ethnicity or religion, (not) to work on certain days of the week, (not) to practice certain professions, (not) to live together with people from certain social classes or categories, (not) to adore certain supernatural entities, etc.

Like any human faculty, the ability to discriminate is essentially imperfect. Many of the choices made by people in their social life have been and still are based on irrelevant differences or are misinterpreted. For example, in Ancient Rome, the flight of a flock of birds or the appearance of a liver extracted from a sacrificed animal used to influence the choice of particular days for certain public events or battles, even though this correlation is, in fact, entirely arbitrary. Several centuries later, the discrimination between the nobility and the lower class was made, among others, by the (wrong) dietary preferences of the nobility for venison and confectionery. Combined with the physical repulsion of labor, these dietary choices have generated serious medical problems, such as gout, diabetes or obesity.

The mistakes made in practicing discrimination are not more serious and scandalous than the errors of perception, the affective disorders or the errors in argumentation. Therefore, the ability to discriminate – an important element of the survival kit which our species is endowed with – deserves to enjoy the same treatment as sentiency, affectivity, reason and the other human faculties; this treatment consists in persuasive correction, refinement, growth and consolidation, and not at all in inhibition or distortion by means of certain legal prohibitions.

Furthermore, in an apparently paradoxical way, the legal measures taken in order to combat “erroneous” discrimination often lead to its perpetuation and consolidation. A good example in this sense is the situation of the Indian Dalits converted to Christianity. The Dalits have been educated by the Church to ignore the caste system in order to gain their inner freedom. At present, the Dalits tend to reconvert to Hinduism and to revert to the paradigm of segregation. The explanation of this phenomenon is related to system of educational scholarships, reserved

places in universities and other governmental benefits which the Indian state refuses to the Christian Dalits on the ground that ... they do not recognize caste separation. (Kottayam 2015) It results that the material and social benefits granted by the Indian state to the Dalits are conditioned by the *subjective* acceptance of segregation and of the status of “untouchable.” The benefits offered to the “victims” of discrimination in exchange for the recognition and personal bearing of discrimination only lead to its consolidation.

Due to the fact that it implies a subjective preference based on a real or only supposed difference, discrimination is ultimately an object of debate and controversy. Neither the factual data, nor the legal instruments of coercion are able to annihilate the preferences of individuals or of collectivities, regardless of how unjustified the differences invoked to support them would seem. With punitive means at its disposal, the state can temporarily restrict the manifest expression of certain preferences, but cannot annul them. As long as they are alive – like the *live hypotheses* discussed by William James (1910, 2-3) –, these preferences will produce effects, be they in disguised forms.

People do not behave in the context of social life the same as the objects from the physical reality. They can defy both the laws of the universe and the laws of the political agency that governs them, bearing, evidently, the consequences of their bravado. “Condemned to discrimination” by the necessity to make choices based on certain preferences, people essentially refer to their subjective system of perceptions, feelings, knowledge, opinions, beliefs, etc., not a corpus of “objective truths” or a code of laws. If we wish to change certain preferences, we have to influence precisely this system of perceptions, affects and cognitions, and this influence can only take effect through free and sincere discussions. The sincere and civilized manifestation of the ability to discriminate *between* things facilitates to a greater extent its correction and development, than blocking discrimination altogether or consolidating the “discrimination *against*” or the “discrimination *in favor* (of)” through the coercive instruments of a political agency.

Despite application errors, discrimination remains an adaptive strategy essential for the survival of civilization and, in general, of the human species. Discrimination has become a “bad word” due to the fallacious interpretation of discrimination *between* things as a discrimination *against* something. This way, however, the most natural distinctions – like the one between men and women – could be condemned under the pretext that it is discrimination against men and

against women respectively.<sup>1</sup> Taking the generalization to absurdity, if mushrooms could talk, the poisonous mushrooms – usually more beautiful than the edible ones – could complain about being discriminated against because they are never included in the human diet.

In what follows, we shall practice our ability to discriminate between people and societies according to a principle which plays the role of *attractor*,<sup>2</sup> both at individual and societal levels, namely the *principle of peaceable conduct*. Our approach will follow the method of deductive derivation and the method of reduction to absurdity. The differences that we shall highlight could justify the subjective preference for individuals and societies whose character is shaped by the principle of peaceable conduct, but not the coercive imposition of the code of conduct arising from this principle.

## 2. The principle of peaceable conduct

The term “principle” is given here the meaning of a primary active element that generates a structure of order and imprints a specific character on the object of which it is part. At the individual level, the principle of peaceable conduct shapes and integrates sentiency, affectivity, reason, will, temperament, faith and the other components that define the human personality, and, at the societal level, it integrates various individuals in multi-layered communities by means of norms, cultural values and institutions. Obviously, the specific character of individuals and communities that follow the principle of peaceable conduct is influenced by other factors as well, such as genetic heritage, language, religion, common past or a shared political project, though not in a substantial way. This specific character is determined by certain simple patterns of conduct that constitute the principle of peaceable conduct and replicate (like viruses or molecules) at infra-individual, individual or supra-individual level.

An individual’s conduct is that way of behavior and action that appears to be subordinated to a superior regulative power: divinity, principle, social norm, cardinal virtue, fundamental vice, etc. That power

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<sup>1</sup> “Discrimination used to be a good word, meaning a good trait – the ability to tell things apart. We discriminated ‘between,’ not ‘against.’ But today, if you discriminate between such obviously different categories as the sexes, you may be charged with discrimination ‘against.’ (Sobran 2002)

<sup>2</sup> “An attractor represents the organizing principle that brings regularity to a system (i.e., ‘attracts’ orderliness).” (Shaffer 2012, xvii)

inspires, guides, escorts or leads the respective individual. It does not manifest itself implacably and unequivocally in all the circumstances through which the individual goes, but in the majority of common situations and in all the situations that are of crucial importance. Conduct integrates the behaviors of the individual, but does not even them out or make them predictable. For example, the aggressive conduct of an ill-tempered person could make us anticipate an exaggerated reaction in a situation of competition or confrontation, but we cannot know exactly if this person is going to resort to physical aggression, verbal abuse or an unexpected departure from the scene of confrontation. An individual's conduct can be considered peaceable if and only if his actions and behavior lead to harmony. A whole is harmonious only if its parts coexist and cooperate so that none of them tends to harm the others in what pertains to them. Harmony does not exclude, but often even presupposes differences between parts.

The same as the harmony of an orchestra performance is not affected, but favors the diversity of the musical instruments played, the harmony of a society is not prejudiced, but stimulated by the differences between the individuals composing it in terms of capabilities, resources, concerns, preferences, interests, needs, etc. The voluntarist reduction of those differences between individuals that were generated naturally and not through violence threatens the harmony of society. The excesses of egalitarianism are no less dangerous than those of ideologies that promote the forced maintenance of vetust differences.

The comparison between the harmony of an orchestra performance and the harmony of a personality or of a society illustrates the advantage of the diversity of the parts that constitute a whole, but not the static and impeccable character of harmony. There is no state of perfect harmony, no "royal road" to reach harmony. In fact, individuals must resort to the strategy of *discovery through competition* during their lifetime in order to find places in society that lead to harmony. This imperative was magnificently formulated by James R. Lowell in the poem *The Present Crisis*, "New occasions teach new duties,/ Ancient values test our youth;/ They must upward still and onward,/ Who would keep abreast of Truth." (Lowell 1898)

As an attractor that generates harmony, the principle of peaceable conduct can be followed progressively on several levels. In the context of this article, we shall only consider a civic level and a moral level. On each level, the principle of peaceable conduct will be associated with a set of requirements that clearly differentiate between the individuals who adopt

them from those who violate or ignore them. Generally, individuals progressively develop the order structure related to the principle of peaceable conduct, moving from the civic level onto the moral one.

### 3. Aspects of the peaceable conduct at civic level

The internalization of the principle of peaceable conduct begins with bearing an underlying principle, namely the non-aggression principle<sup>3</sup> or, in what is perhaps a more appropriate formulation, the principle of civilized life. An individual respects the principle of reasonable self-determination if s/he refrains from the proactive use of force in an individual's *own sphere*. This principle does not forbid the reasonable use of force or violence in situations of self-defense or retaliation.

Drawing on Frédéric Bastiat, we include in one's own sphere (a) one's life and bodily integrity, (b) one's physical, psychical, moral and spiritual faculties and (c) the tangible and intangible goods which the individual has acquired by the free exercising of his own faculties and capabilities. (Bastiat 2011, 49-50)

The peaceable conduct involves, above all, not taking the life of a human being and not hurting the body of that person. Although it is simple, clear and generally accepted *in principle*, this prohibition was misinterpreted when it came to respecting it in specific cases, especially in situations in which certain interests of individuals or groups prevailed. The most flagrant violations of the imperative not to kill are wars, revolutions, rebellions, insurrections and other similar violent movements<sup>4</sup>.

Unable to deny the evidence, the promoters of such violent actions justify themselves by invoking the right to self-defense, however, most often than not, this is a fallacious justification<sup>5</sup>. For example, historians have established with relative precision the number of victims of the First World War (1914-1918), *La Cristiada* (1926-1929) or the Rwandan Civil

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<sup>3</sup> “[The non-aggression axiom] states that it is illicit to initiate or threaten invasive violence against a man or his legitimately owned property.” (Block 2014, 163)

<sup>4</sup> The individual acts of violence must evidently not be overlooked. Almost universally detested, the murders, rapes, beatings and other similar individual aggressions taken together produce only an insignificant number of victims compared to the ocean of blood and suffering resulted from organized wars. Paradoxically, what arouses horror at the individual level, stirs admiration and respect at the collective level.

<sup>5</sup> Most states use the euphemistic label “Ministry / Department of Defense” for the institution that organizes and leads the war. Nonetheless, if all the states are merely defending themselves, who is the one triggering the aggression?



War (1990-1994), but not also the responsibilities for triggering these conflicts. In general, the guilt for starting the conflict is attributed by the winners to the losers or, less unduly, it is covered with the veil of silence. The prohibition to kill or injure a human being was and still is violated by those who refuse the human dignity of their fellows on the grounds of race, of potential physical or mental disabilities, ethnicity or situation in a particular stage of life. In these situations, the deviations from the peaceable conduct are justified by sophistic intellectual acrobatics. For example, one can justify bearing significant social costs to extend the life of fellows who are elderly or sick (which would be a good thing for a society to do), however, the same could be said about the murder by abortion of unborn fellows. Yet unborn people do not ask assistance for *prolonging* life, but merely the *continuation* of the natural process of life. If to refuse an elderly or sick person the socially reasonable means to extend their life is a crime, then all the more so is abortion a crime, which is the violent ceasing of the *natural* process of evolution of the “product of conception” to the fetus and then to the newborn<sup>6</sup>. If the product of conception results from a sexual union freely consented upon between two adults, abortion presents a high degree of violence, due to the fact that the product of conception is treated as a parasite. However, by definition, the parasite is an organism from another species that invades the body hosting it from the exterior and tends to remain in the host body throughout its life, often causing harm, disease or even death (The Free Dictionary by Farlex 2014). It is obvious that the product of conception presents *none* of the features of the parasite (England 2012).

Retaliating against one's aggression is compatible with the peaceable conduct at the civic level only if it is proportionate to the damage caused by the aggression and is administered by an impartial and disinterested judge. In a (perhaps slightly humoristic) version of the Law of Talion, the principle of retaliation would say “*At the very most* an eye for an eye, but only an impartial and disinterested judge may resolve to have the eye of the guilty removed”.<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, the peaceable conduct requires us not to subjugate the physical, mental, moral and spiritual faculties of our fellows in order to obtain a personal gain. Naturally, one enjoys neither omniscience and omnipotence, nor impunity. In exercising their own faculties, one is confronted on a permanent basis with ignorance, weakness and the

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<sup>6</sup> An exception would be the termination of a pregnancy that is threatening the life of the mother.

<sup>7</sup> The retaliation is not mandatory; it is often advisable to leave room for forgiveness.

adverse consequences of one's own actions. Nonetheless, by virtue of reason and free will, one can have the subjective experience of freedom, choosing (more or less inspired) the manner in which to make use of one's faculties<sup>8</sup>.

Without a doubt, through the actional competence of divinity, of humanity, of an elite or even of an "enlightened leader," the actions of any person could appear to be unproductive or even counterproductive. Nevertheless, the principle of peaceable conduct prohibits the subjugation of that person, namely the prescription of an alleged *optimal utilization* of his/her physical, psychical, moral or spiritual faculties.

The most flagrant breach of the principle of peaceable conduct is that of taking a human being into captivity. Slavery involves subordinating the faculties of the slave to his master, so that these faculties become an extension of the master. Evidently, the transfer of the center of command is not integral. The master can impose certain uses upon the slave's physical and, partially, psychical faculties, but is most likely to stifle his intellectual, moral or spiritual faculties rather than use them. For example, the slave can neither be compelled to love his master, nor to use his intellectual creativity for the benefit of the master. Ignorant as regards the efficient use of the slave's capabilities, the master cripples his personality and enjoys only the feeble benefits that a mutilated personality is able to provide. Slavery is not only unfair; it is also a source of inefficiency. The induced inefficiency in the slave is doubled by the inefficiency produced in the master by the integration of exogenous faculties deprived of the slave's vivacity.

Aware of the inefficiency of overt slavery, the supporters of vassalage place their directives under the authority of superior powers: divinity, holy book, state, nation, public opinion, state of emergency, etc. The common sally according to which "Every organization is designed and functions to the advantage of its organizers" should make the *patients* of organization distrustful as regards the ultimate goals pursued by the leaders of such an organization. In almost all organizations, some people are impelled to work in the benefit of others. As long as the illusion of freedom is maintained, the servile members of the organization will plenary use their capabilities to the benefit of the organizers; once the

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<sup>8</sup> The discussion about the free exercise of one's faculties does not regard the situation of children, of mentally debilitated persons, of persons who behave compulsively because of sex addiction, drugs, gambling, etc. The issue of freedom is only relevant for those who benefit from the integrity of reason and will.

exploitation scheme becomes obvious, the paralysis of the respective faculties strikes and the organization enters into disintegration. The life span of an organization seems to be inversely proportional to the degree of coercion within the organization.

The last aspect of peaceable conduct at civic level targets the right to property of goods obtained by the free use of one's faculties or capabilities. The specific means for the procurement of said goods are multiple: claim of free goods, transformation of idle resources into assets, production, free exchange of products, etc. In all these cases of appropriation, production or exchange, the owner of the goods considers himself and is in fact the effective cause of these goods because, in his absence, the respective goods would not have existed. This quality gives one the right to claim control over the goods placed in one's property.

Claiming control over the goods acquired in a free and peaceful manner is not a hollow act of pride. People acquire consumer goods and factors of production on private property in order to use them as a support of personal life and as a multiplier of the efficiency of one's own faculties. As in many other situations, human error makes its presence felt in this case too. Often, some goods that are accumulated in excess are more a curse than a blessing for their owners. Nevertheless, no power in the world is more entitled than they are to decide where excess begins and what should happen to their goods, regardless of whether they are absolutely necessary, useful or useless.

The most flagrant deviations from the principle of peaceable conduct in relation to the right to property over the goods acquired in a free and peaceful manner is theft and fraud. By means of these two antisocial acts, the rightful owner is deprived of a part of the goods in his possession. As long as they are committed individually or in small groups, these transgressions are treated as such, and their authors bear both legal and moral sanctions. However, if the theft and fraud are performed on a large scale and in an organized way – potentially under the patronage of a political agency – we are witnessing a spectacular reversal of attitude. Under the form of a legal distribution of the goods of *the haves* to *the have-nots*, the theft is not just desirable and acceptable, but often imposed by force.

If the legal redistribution is generalized to the level of the society as a whole, the theft gains the appearance of reciprocal spoliation; under these conditions, the state becomes a “great fiction, through which everybody endeavors to live at the expense of everybody else.” (Bastiat 2011, 99). This reciprocal and generalized spoliation anonymizes the

authors of the theft, which leads to the amplification of the spoliation. At the scale of human evolution, respecting the right to property is a very recent acquisition. Only through the adjoint efforts of legal institutions (council of elders, judges, state, etc.) and of persuasive institutions (family, school, church, etc.) the wild tendency to abusively grab the fruits of other people's labor could be kept in check. The corruption of legal institutions and the dissolution of persuasive institutions could determine the generalization of theft and, consequently, bring about the return to the wild state.

In conclusion, the principle of peaceable conduct allows us to discriminate at the civic level between the people who have a civilized conduct and those who manifest an aggressive conduct. The category of civilized people includes individuals who (a) respect the life and bodily integrity of their fellows, (b) practice self-control, not control over others and (c) do not claim, through coercive means, the goods that their fellows have obtained by making free and peaceful use of their own faculties and capabilities. The category of aggressive people reunites (a) *murderers* (namely those who endanger the lives of their fellow), (b) *tyrants* (*id est* those who beslave their fellows by taking control of some of their faculties) and (c) *thieves* (that is those who claim the goods of their fellows without their consent). The class of murderers, tyrants and thieves could be further divided into two subclasses: (a) *savages* and (b) *barbarians*. The former practice violence against their fellows in an excessive, chaotic and idiosyncratic manner, and the latter do so in a moderate, organized and predictable way.

The exercise of discrimination that we have conducted at the civic level is signally descriptive. It has as sole differentiating criterion the formal compliance of the norms of peaceable conduct. The difference between civilized and aggressive people does not take into consideration the assent to these norms. Particularly, disregarding the reasons that lead civilized people to follow the norms of peaceable conduct, we cannot distinguish between the virtuous and the hypocrites, between those who identify themselves with the norms of peaceable conduct and those who respect these norms against their will, only so as to be accepted in the community to which they are part.

Any exercise of discrimination can be followed by the manifestation of a preference. Naturally, most people would express their propensity for civilized conduct, however, it is likely that they would really prefer that their fellows, not themselves, adopt this conduct. As the wolf would feel more comfortable in a sheep cot than in the competitive environment of

the pack, so would murderers, tyrants and thieves feel more at ease in the company of civilized people. The preference for a type of conduct is real only if it is applied in the assent of the will to one's own self.

#### **4. The moral level of peaceable conduct**

The civilized conduct requires high standards of action of the people who embrace it and, implicitly, considerable physical and psychological costs. The primary impulses originating in our lower Self<sup>9</sup> blatantly contradict the respect for life, liberty and property of our fellows, so that it seems impossible for them to be controlled only by personal effort. Therefore, to the extent that the motivations behind our conducts are “*énergies en lutte*”, (Le Bon 2002, 96) it is vital that the energy allotted to peaceable conduct by our *higher Self* be superior to the energy which it spontaneously mobilizes in support of the primary impulses of our *lower Self*. This can be achieved by feeding the social actors with social energy and emotion in the process of internalizing the norms of peaceable conduct.

Emotions are reactions to certain stimuli and differ from other human behaviors through the following features: (a) emotions are simpler than cognitive reactions, but more complex than tropisms, homeostatic reflexes and reactions; (b) emotions have cognitive antecedents that create expectations as regards one's own reactions and the reactions of others in situations that are relevant for personal safety and welfare; (c) emotions offer one a first judgment in the evaluation of the respective reactions; (d) emotions are accompanied by physiological arousal: accelerated pulse, shortness of breath, high blood pressure, excessive sweating, etc.; (e) emotions are manifested through physiological expressions, at the level of paralinguistic, mimics, gestures, posture etc.; (f) emotions engage action tendencies; (g) emotions have valence, however, within themselves, they are neither good nor bad; (h) (powerful) emotions can blind the intellect and debilitate the will; (i) emotions can neither be suppressed nor fully controlled, however, they can be guided by means of reason and will. (Griffiths 2004, 242-244; Rorty 2004, 270-276; Elster 2007, 147; Bennett & Bennett 2011)

Social emotions are reactions triggered by the confrontation of own behavior or the behavior of others with certain social norms, *id est* with generally accepted standards of social behavior. The *living* social norms

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<sup>9</sup> In religious (Christian) language, the lower Self corresponds to our “decayed (and corrupt) nature.”

call for approval or disapproval respectively, more precisely, they entail rewards for those who follow them or sanctions for those who violate them. The feedback loop associated with this leads the said rewards and sanctions to reinforce the appropriate social norms. The internalization of social norms, especially of the norms of peaceable conduct, is accompanied by a great variety of social emotions. Among these, *contempt* and *shame*, respectively *anger* and *guilt* stand out through the predominance of the moral dimension and force of shaping human conduct. These two couples of emotions underlie two different moral systems: “shame morality”, and “guilt morality” respectively. (cf. Miller 1997, 198-199)

Contempt is a complex emotion that establishes and maintains hierarchies, statuses, ranks and levels of respectability by means of norms that govern the presentation of the self within social life. Signaled at the physiological level by disgust, nausea, horror or recoiling, contempt is triggered by the perception of a flagrant discrepancy between the high standard of action that has been claimed or socially imposed and the manifested behaviors. The hypocrisy of the puritans, the phariseism of the clerics, the betrayal of friends, the cupidity of politicians, the cowardice of the military, the rampancy of the elderly and the servility of officials are just some of the factors that are likely to provoke contempt (Miller 1997, 185-186).

Similar to the other emotional experiences and in contrast to the sensory experiences, contempt does not represent the physical features of people. Therefore, we cannot speak of sensory receptors of emotions, in this case, of contempt. (Clare and Ortony 1999, 25) Returning to the example above, we do not actually perceive through our sense organs the cowardice of the military, but possibly their disorderly runaway before the enemy, their faces contorted with fear or their cries and lamentations. Including these perceptions in the complex factor of cowardice is the result of a difficult learning process.

Contempt is internalized by the people who are the object of this emotion in the form of shame (Miller 1997, 196). As a complementary emotion to contempt, shame correlates with action tendencies, as well as alienation from others, isolation and, in extreme cases, suicide. Such tendencies of action have also marked, throughout history, the life of some social categories that have been (unjustly) exposed as an object of public scorn: single mothers, homosexuals, Jews, people with physical deformities, handicapped, etc.

The couple of emotions contempt-shame correlates with the social norms that govern us *without* our consent, not with the internalized social norms. (*cf.* Miller 1997, 201) One argument to that effect is the fact that people do not feel shame unless their fellows catch them violating said norms. For example, if an individual is placed under the control of the norm not to steal and this norm does not enjoy his consent, said individual will steal without any kind of shame whatsoever as long as he does not get caught. The lack of consent of his free will deprives him of an effective inhibitor of the tendency to steal, namely guilt.

Contempt can be a first instrument for promoting the principle of peaceable conduct, due to the fact that it does not require the internalization of social norms “Do not kill!”, “Do not enslave your fellows!” and “Do not steal!”, but only the awareness of the power of external control. However, the power of control of peaceable conduct can be maintained only if most of the individuals who break it are caught and sanctioned with contempt. For this purpose, the members of society must be in a state of constant vigilance and be willing to bear the costs of the administration of contempt as an altruistic punishment, so that everyone becomes afraid of the shame of being caught while endangering the life, freedom, or property of their fellows.

The efficacy of contempt as an instrument for promoting peaceable conduct is affected by the development of manners. Even though contempt does not require the internalization of the norms of peaceable conduct, it presupposes all the same the recognition and reinforcement of their validity. Ignoring or misinterpreting the norms makes contempt powerless and shame impossible. For example, the “civilized man” is ashamed to publicly execute his fellows, but not to kill millions of unborn children through abortion or hundreds of thousands of (noncombatant) civilians through “bombing meant to undermine the morale of the enemy”; he is ashamed to buy a slave and to be seen in public with him, but not to impose a great number of absurd or harmful regulations on his fellows in order to feed his pride; he is (still) ashamed to steal the wallet from his fellow’s pocket, but not to fraudulently claim a disability pension. The results of an empirical research could show that in the case of many violations of the principle of peaceable conduct, people do not present physiological arousal and the physiological expressions related to contempt or shame respectively. Some people feel ashamed for not having silky hair (which is absurd), rather for fraudulently receiving a disability pension.

Usually, contempt presents the risk of abusive use, not in relation to the actions of individuals, but as regards what they are and cannot be changed. It is unacceptable to despise someone based on the fact that they have inherited certain physical or psychical traits (such as being bald), but can despise someone else for their bodily negligence (such as wearing a thatch of dirty hair infested with lice). However, in the sphere of the norms of peaceable conduct, contempt has action as its exclusive object, hence the risk of abusive use is reduced.

The principle of peaceable conduct gains a more pronounced moral dimension through the intervention of the couple of emotions anger-guilt. Someone becomes angry with a certain person if the latter caused the former damage, usually knowingly and deliberately. (If said damage affects a third party, anger takes the selfless form of indignation.)

Anger is accompanied by a major physiological arousal (which can reach paroxysm) and is signaled to the others by the tendency of (antagonistic) confrontation with the author of the damage. Through an angry attitude, the injured person claims of the one who caused the damage (a) to show signs of a guilty conscience, (b) to express regret or repentance and (c) to fix the damage. (*cf.* Miller 1997, 197-198) In other words, he is asking the author of the damage to internalize his own anger in the form of complementary emotion, namely guilt. As a means of reinforcing social norms, anger has two major advantages compared with contempt. While contempt imposes an unequal status between the one who despises and the one who is ashamed (the asymmetry being clearly unfavorable to the latter), anger generates, in an apparently paradoxical way, a relationship of equality. The antagonistic confrontation places the parties involved on the same degree of dignity; this means that either the guilty one raises to the level of the angry one, or the angry one descends to the level of the guilty one. Moreover, unlike contempt, anger can be extinguished faster, more easily and more radically (Harris 2009, 40-42).

Even if it is internalized as complementary to shame, contempt tends to become perpetuated because it is embedded in the hierarchy that it generates between the contemptuous and the contemptible. In addition, even if contempt is gone, the person who was humiliated continues to bear grudges against the one who once despised him. Insults are very difficult to forget; some of them are never forgotten. Being a more vigorous emotion, anger tends to be consumed quicker. Usually, it is subdued by completing the cycle of internalization, namely confessing to the guilt, manifesting repentance and fixing the damage. The situations are not rare when the simple admittance of guilt completely assuages the



anger. Finally, (reasonable) anger leaves no marks. It is possible for the antagonistic confrontations of the past not to affect the cooperation relations from the present. Even the relations between peoples seem to confirm it<sup>10</sup>.

Due to its destructive potential, anger is more difficult to accept as a means of strengthening social norms. Admittedly, the risks and issues raised are considerable. There are many ignorant and irascible individuals who get angry at their fellows under fictitious pretexts. Evidently, in such cases, the targets of their anger cannot complete the cycle of admission of guilt, and their anger remains unabated. Secondly, anger is vigorous, expansive, bellicose and sometimes oriented towards hurting the allegedly guilty individual.

The risk for the potential damage that has caused the anger to be followed by much higher damage after the manifestation of anger is real<sup>11</sup>, but this risk is no greater than that which arises from trying to control nuclear energy, torrent energy, mass energy, etc. Ultimately, it is an issue of capacity of control. Like any other emotion (positive or negative), anger should be subject to emotional discipline. This process is intended to prevent disorganized, ineffective or harmful manifestation of emotion, emotional exhaustion and the narrowing down of the sphere in which reason and free will are active. Essentially, anger management generally involves the completion of the steps associated with emotional discipline: (a) identifying the immediate cause of the emotion, (b) locating the corresponding physiological reactions and evaluating their intensity, (c) identifying the thoughts and beliefs that accompany these physiological reactions, (d) identifying the parts of one's own personality that is activated by the circumstance of the emotion and (e) choosing the emotional manifestations that constructively meet the immediate challenges of the context (Manz 2003, 23-24).

Subjected to emotional discipline, anger is not only able to, but *must* be exercised in relation to the violation of social norms, in this case, the norms of peaceable conduct. As already mentioned, the norms that have not been internalized are respected only if the entire society is in a state of vigilance against all possible transgressions. If those who violate these

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<sup>10</sup> The bursts of anger that generated wars in Europe for hundreds of years did not prevent the establishment of the European Union as a space of cooperation between the peoples that built it. The impediments that still persist in the process of European integration are rather related to the awareness of some contemptuous manifestations of the present or of the past.

<sup>11</sup> The terrorist attacks thoroughly illustrate this risk.

norms are not made to pay the price of shame, the norms gradually lose their relevance and become obsolete. By claiming guilt morality, people create the conditions required for the internalization of the fundamental interdictions “Do not kill!”, “Do not enslave your fellows!” and “Do not steal!”. Benefiting from the support of one’s own will, one is able to easily refrain from violating these norms. The norms of peaceable conduct are not only for the society (as an exterior and binding entity), but also for each individual taken separately.

## 5. Conclusions

The civilized form of social cohabitation is a recent and imperfect product of human evolution. It restricts, without being able to eradicate, the human propensity to murder, enslavement and theft. The capacity to control these discordant impulses depends on the force of social norms arising from the principle of peaceable conduct. When a civilization falls into decline, a (pathological) state of emotional anorexia is installed. The manifestation of emotions that support the norms of peaceable conduct – contempt and shame, anger and guilt respectively – is either discouraged, or even prohibited. However, in the absence of reasonable manifestations of said emotions (especially of anger and guilt), the norms of peaceable conduct and the related social institutions fade away. Deprived of the essential guidance of social emotions, people are condemned to relapse in the state of generalized aggression, which is incompatible with civilization. The fact that generalized violence occurs in an excessive, chaotic and idiosyncratic form, or in a moderate, organized and predictable one, is of secondary importance.

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