

7 skills + 1 for the Survival of Humanity

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Abstract

In a transdisciplinary document published by UNESCO, sociologist and philosopher Edgar Morin sets out seven fundamental principles that are essential for the future of education. These principles address critical issues such as the understanding of human nature, the development of earth identity and the promotion of ethical values. The document stresses the need for a transformative approach to education, advocating interdisciplinary knowledge and cognitive reform. In this article, the author proposes an eighth principle centred on awareness as a fundamental element, encouraging the integration of self-awareness and inner freedom to overcome deterministic and fatalistic mentalities. The ultimate aim is to cultivate a more unified, joyful and fraternal humanity, capable of navigating the complexities and uncertainties of the modern world.

Keywords: *transdisciplinary education, complex thinking, cognitive reform, fraternity, awareness, conscience.*

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1. Introduction

In a transdisciplinary document published by UNESCO, sociologist and philosopher Edgar Morin highlights seven principles that he considers vital for the education of the future. I believe that an eighth piece of knowledge is essential if these principles are to be universally fruitful.

In October 1999, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) published ‘The Seven Knowledge Areas Necessary for the Education of the Future’. It asked Edgar Morin to express his ideas on the very essence of the education of the future in the context of his vision of ‘complex thinking’, which is dear to Ciret.

One of the most difficult challenges we face,' writes Federico Mayor, the organisation's Director General, 'will be to change our ways of thinking in order to cope with the growing complexity, rapid change and unpredictability that characterise our world. We need to rethink the way we organise knowledge. To do this, we need to break down the traditional barriers between disciplines and work out how to link up what has hitherto been separated'.

2. Educating for a Viable Future

In this transdisciplinary document 'Educating for a viable future', E. Morin puts forward seven principles that he believes are necessary for the education of the future: the blindnesses of knowledge: error and illusion; the principles of relevant knowledge; teaching the human condition; teaching Earth identity; confronting uncertainties; teaching understanding; the ethics of humankind.

These are the seven 'fundamental' areas of knowledge that 'the education of the future should address in every society and every culture, without exclusion or rejection, according to the modes and rules specific to each society and each culture'.

For their author, 'the cognitive problem is of anthropological, political, social and historical importance. [Indeed,] so much suffering and misguidance has been caused by errors and illusions throughout human history and, terrifyingly, in the twentieth century! So if there can be any basic progress in the twenty-first century, it would be for men and women no longer to be the unconscious playthings not only of their own ideas but of their own lies to themselves.

It is a vital duty of education to arm everyone in the vital battle for lucidity'.

He adds: 'What bears the greatest peril also bears the greatest hope: it is the human mind itself, and that is why the problem of thought reform has become vital'.

3. From Hominisation to Humanisation

The philosopher's text is driven by a lively faith in the possibility of transforming society, of 'continuing hominisation into humanisation, through accession to earthly citizenship'.

This transformation must be based on 'the complex exercise of thought that enables us to inter-criticise, self-criticise and inter-understand each other (...) The problem of understanding has become crucial for human beings', starting with self-understanding through 'constant critical self-examination'.

It is at this point that I would like to propose an eighth branch to this preliminary tree of knowledge: that of consciousness itself. The nature and mode of being of this faculty are not addressed at all in this document. While E. Morin does speak of the 'living flame of consciousness', he says nothing more about

this very special ‘light’, which is the only source that illuminates all knowledge. It therefore predates even the seven principles developed by the philosophical sociologist.

4. The ‘0’ Branch at the Root of All Knowledge

This is why I suggest giving it the number ‘0’, signifying the absolute root of everything that can enter the human mind or emerge from it before constituting knowledge. The seven knowledges remain the pillars underpinning the cognitive process that is essential to the advent of a humanity that is both learned and united, joyful in its creative powers that are definitively turned towards the good of one and all.

It seems to me, however, that to ensure the solidity of these perspectives, it is essential for everyone to discover within themselves the infinite freedom offered to the mind's eye when it manages to turn in on itself¹. The mind, although inseparably linked to matter, is absolutely untouchable by it, hence its freedom without assignable limits.

Seeing this truth within ourselves is a prerequisite for emancipating ourselves from the determinism apparently imposed by appearances. This determinism is also sustained by the principle of materialist causality and by the lack or inadequacy of reflection. Under the domination of this inexorable determinism, fatalism and despair have invaded hearts and minds, to the point where the ideal of fraternity has been abandoned by most.

5. Two Entirely New Facts

The modern era is witnessing two entirely new developments in the history of humanity:

Firstly, we know that fraternity is a prerequisite for the proper functioning of our societies, whatever their cultures. Democracies themselves are in danger if this prerequisite is not put into practice. We have seen this bitterly in the first quarter of this century.

This moral and political obligation, forgotten by many, was clearly formulated at the end of the Second World War. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations on 10 December 1948, states in Article 1: ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood’.

Without this requirement, without a firm commitment from every citizen and a constant educational effort, it is clear that the ‘Never again’ of our Poilus

¹ J-L Martin-Lagardette, *Voir la conscience, philosophie radicale, une science de la liberté*, L’Harmattan, Paris, 2023.

will remain a derisory and pathetic wish.

Secondly, the technical power developed by our contemporaries has reached a level of total destruction: no philosophical, ethical, religious, moral or political question will have any meaning on the day the apocalypse is unleashed. A threat that could materialise at any moment.

In 1979, the German philosopher Hans Jonas published 'The Responsibility Principle', revolutionising our concept of ethics². Taking the future into account became a new priority, insofar as the impact of our actions and behaviours on the planet could lead to widespread pollution and, therefore, to the extinction of species, including our own. Since then, the devastation caused by climate change has made the threat even more tangible.

It is no longer a question of knowing what is right and good to do per se, but of how to act to avoid a quasi-programmed collective suicide.

6. An Irresistible Current of Joy in Knowing and Living Together

Suicide by nuclear power or by 'natural' disasters, on the one hand, or thought reform (democratising epistemology in particular) and giving priority to fraternity, on the other - such is the dilemma that faces us, with no room for procrastination.

To keep up the momentum, Edgar Morin advocates multiplying the 'oases of fraternity'³ that he sees springing up all over the place: 'We must create islands of a different kind of life, we must multiply these islands, because either things will continue to regress and the oases will be islands of resistance to fraternity, or else there will be positive possibilities and they will be the starting points for a more widespread fraternity in a reformed civilisation'.

Today, we can no longer procrastinate: a 'more generalised fraternity' has become the very condition of humanity's survival. It's no longer even a question of 'resisting', but of wanting to generate an irresistible current of awareness and a joy in knowing and living together that alone can motivate individuals and crowds alike.

Experience shows us that reacting to necessity, even if this is essential to curb an evil, is always less fruitful than producing value and creating the good that was lacking.

That's why I invite you to experience this freedom within yourself, because it opens up the exciting prospect of a communion of humanity. Without it, the vision of a 'more generalised fraternity' is always believed to be impossible, limited and burdened as it is by the accusation, external or internal, of being nonsense or a utopia, despite the thousand-year-old dream that burns in people's hearts.

² Hans Jonas, *Le principe responsabilité, une éthique pour la civilisation technologique*, Champs Essais, Flammarion, Paris 2024.

³ Edgar Morin, *La Fraternité. Pourquoi ?* Actes Sud, 2019.

This psychological and philosophical brake on the development of unprejudiced and confident thinking about the evolution of humanity is so deeply ingrained in our mentalities that it has come to be seen as the indisputable fruit of the ultimate intelligence.

7. Tyranny of the Concept and Passivity

Yet - and the younger generations are undoubtedly more inclined to think this than the older ones - the heaviest chain, the most hermetic prison, the most irremediable obstacle to human freedom in its hope of universal brotherhood are not material conditions, political regimes or religious systems. The ball and chain that we carry around with us everywhere is in fact our submission to the tyranny of the concept, on the obverse side, and, on the reverse side, our lack of motivation and faith, our passivity in the face of evil and injustice, and our insensitivity to the suffering of others.

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The tyranny of the concept is the tyranny that we inflict on ourselves by taking as truth everything that seems obvious to us: what our senses show us and tell us; the evil that we observe (more often than not, moreover, in others than in ourselves) with the judgements that we make; the knowledge that we have acquired and that we do not know how to question. In short, any thought, perception, sensation or feeling that crosses our mind and that we take at face value.

8. Breaking the Shell of the Ego

As Edgar Morin quite rightly said, our knowledge is 'biodegradable', including that developed by our sciences. In the absence of a single truth to share as far as knowledge is concerned - and, of course, with the support of the evolving knowledge we manage to develop - the sociologist and inventor of complex thought suggests an attitude that will enable us to cope with life: 'introducing poetry, that is to say, intensity, celebration, joy, communion, happiness and love'⁴. In other words, the vibration of the blossoming human soul, the free expression of individual subjectivity through sharing.

That's for the fuel.

But another intimate act is needed to make the transition from hominisation to humanisation a reality: breaking the shell of the ego, piercing the veil of appearances through the exciting discovery, deep within ourselves, of an unlimited source of luminous and creative energy: our own consciousness, a particle of

⁴ Edgar Morin, *Vers l'abîme ? 10 essais pour penser l'avenir*, Champs Essais, Flammarion, 2020.

universal Consciousness.

9. Conclusions

The article highlights the pressing need for transdisciplinary education, as advocated by Edgar Morin, to effectively address the complexities and rapid changes of the contemporary world. Morin argues for the dismantling of traditional disciplinary barriers, promoting an integrated approach to knowledge that equips individuals to pass uncertainties and tackle global challenges. A profound cognitive reform is essential to prevent the errors and illusions that have historically plagued humanity. This includes fostering a continuous critical self-examination to enhance self-understanding and mutual comprehension. The principle of fraternity is underscored as fundamental, not only as a moral value but as a crucial condition for the survival and proper functioning of democratic societies. Education must, therefore, cultivate a spirit of fraternity to build more cohesive and supportive communities.

Furthermore, the article emphasizes the importance of awareness and inner freedom, recognising consciousness as the root of all knowledge. This awareness liberates individuals from the deterministic constraints of materialism, opening new avenues for human communion based on creativity and goodwill. Introducing elements of poetry, intensity, and celebration into education can nourish the human soul and facilitate the transition from hominisation to humanisation⁵. This holistic approach fosters a culture of joy and communion, which is essential for the development of a harmonious and sustainable human society. Through this transformative educational framework, humanity can aspire to a more unified, enlightened, and fraternal future.

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The author declares that they have no conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Any errors or omissions are his own.

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⁵ See some interesting development in Cristina Elena Popa Tache, *Vers un droit de l'âme et des bioénergies du vivant*, Ed. L Harmattan, Collection: Logiques Juridiques, 2022, preface by Jean-Luc Martin-Lagardette.

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