

# Law, Religion and Reconciliation in Africa



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## 24 THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION ON PLURALISM, RECONCILIATION AND LIVING TOGETHER

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### INTRODUCTION

During the second period of democratic transition in Tunisia (2012-2013), under the regime of the Islamic-secular coalition known as “the Troika”, the country was in the grip of a fratricidal confrontation between a modern and secular pole and a conservative and religious pole. Tunisian society and the political field are increasingly bipolarised, as shown by the debate which took place during this period of democratic transition on the first version of the Constitution of the revolution, particularly its references to Islam. Tensions escalated in the summer of 2013 during the crisis caused by the second assassination of a political opponent. The antagonism between Islamist and the anti-Islamist sides then took on a magnitude not seen since the fall of the old regime. Under the influence of both external and internal factors, the conflict reached a paroxysmal degree that forced the adversaries to try to measure their respective strengths by street demonstrations in order to decide between compromise and confrontation.

Although this acute crisis was resolved in a certain way by the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015, the root causes of the antagonism between the supporters of the identitarian vision, on the one hand, and the supporters of secularism and Arab nationalism, on the other, persist and fuel to this day the contempt and hatred between the two sides. However, there can only be a real solution to this problem in a Muslim country like Tunisia through a profound construction of the values of pluralism, respect for difference and living together, and the sincere conviction of working together on reconciliation.

Generally speaking, acute misunderstandings, dogmatism and identity-based hostilities are three endogenous factors that are at the root of the outbreak, increase and persistence of civil conflicts. Of course, there are other factors of an exogenous nature that fuel such conflicts, but they alone cannot perpetuate conflict between citizens, without the support of negative feelings and contemptuous attitudes towards the other. Education that develops a sense of tolerance and the use of reason can provide a valid answer to the problem of psychological resistance and the refusal of forgiveness and reconciliation. This chapter addresses the issue of reconciliation from a psycho-pedagogical and didactic point of view.

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The chapter consists of two main parts. First, we examine the psycho-cognitive foundations of pluralism, dialectical and relativistic thinking, as well as the negotiatorial attitude necessary for any process of reconciliation between antagonistic parties. The chapter then proposes an epistemo-didactic model for the promotion of epistemic beliefs influencing the ways of solving ill-structured and complex problems, such as the problems of social conflicts. In the second part, we present, by way of discussion, a complementary psychosocial approach, relating to mental development and the learning of reflective judgment<sup>2</sup> and to the change of norms and attitudes.<sup>3</sup> On the basis of scientifically supported psychological data, we draw, in each case, the necessary pedagogical, didactic or communicative conclusions.

### CHANGING EPISTEMIC POSITIONS: A WAY OF CHANGING SOCIO-POLITICAL ATTITUDES

The aim of this first part of this work is to propose a pedagogical and didactic way of acting to train in the resolution of open and complex problems, such as everyday problems and problems of socio-political conflicts and the establishment of a new democracy in a society crossed by divergences of an ideological, religious or other nature. This is done through the promotion of young people's epistemic beliefs, which implies education in pluralism, dialectical and relativistic thinking, and a negotiator attitude.

The achievement of this goal is progresses in five successive phases. First, we define epistemic beliefs. Second, we define ill-structured and complex problems. Third, we show the relationship between ill-structured problem-solving modes and personal epistemologies. Fourth, we illustrate in the psycho-didactic literature the ways in which students' epistemic beliefs can be promoted. Finally, we propose an epistemo-didactic model for the promotion of personal epistemologies.

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2 See Lautrey J. 1980. *Classe sociale, milieu familial, intelligence* [Social Class, Family Environment, Intelligence]. Paris: PUF; Lautrey J. 1988. "Structuring the home environment and cognitive development: what's new?", *Psychology Bulletin* 42:1-5, 47-56.

3 See Lewin K. 1946. "Action Research and Minority Problems", *Journal of Social Issues* 2:34-46; Lewin K. 1946. "Problems of group dynamics and integration of the social sciences: Social equilibria", *Human relations* 1:5; Lewin K. 1975. *Psychologie dynamique: les relations humaines* [Dynamic Psychology: Human Relations]. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. See also Montmollin G de. 2014. "Le changement d'attitude" [Attitudinal Change], in Moscovici S (ed). *Psychologie sociale* [Social Psychology]. Third Edition. Paris: PUF, 89-136; Faulx D, Nion C, Collière P and Capoen E. 2019. "Redécouvrir Kurt Lewin, un penseur-clé pour les formateurs de demain" [Rediscovering Kurt Lewin, a key thinker for tomorrow's trainers], *Les Cahiers Internationales de Psychologie Sociale* [The International Papers of Psychology], July.

*“Epistemic beliefs”: What are they?*

The notion of epistemic beliefs, under its various expressions (personal epistemology, reflective judgment and implicit theory of knowledge, among others) does not exist to this day in the great common dictionaries of language or psychology. However, this does not prevent a good deal of research from being carried out on this topic to this day, especially in the English-speaking world. The solution, then, is to define and analyse this concept by looking back at the literature produced so far in this new field of research.

Barbara Hofer, a professor emerita of psychology specializing in educational, developmental and cultural psychologist, states that “Research on personal epistemology, while not unified at the level of terminology, presents learners’ thinking and beliefs, relating to knowledge and to know. These beliefs include, in particular, some or all of these elements: beliefs about the definition of knowledge, how knowledge is constructed, how it is evaluated by the subject, the source from which it emanates, and how it can be acquired”.<sup>4</sup> Hofer and her late colleague Paul Pintrich defined the object of research on epistemic beliefs as a set of questions that it proposes to answer: “How do individuals manage to construct their knowledge? What are the implicit theories and beliefs they hold about knowledge and how it is acquired? And in what way are epistemic presuppositions part of the cognitive processes of the subject’s thinking and reasoning and influence them in turn?”<sup>5</sup> Schommer presents the work on epistemic beliefs as “an attempt to understand the learner’s personal perspective [relating to knowledge]”.<sup>6</sup>

In general, as Patricia King and Karen Kitchener, scholars of education and psychology, respectively observe, “Research on epistemic beliefs helps to understand how individuals solve problem-situations requiring appropriate knowledge, evaluate new information, and make fundamental decisions that influence their lives and the lives of others”.<sup>7</sup> It is therefore not a simple psychocognitive phenomenon or a process related to abstract mental tasks, but rather a question that extends to the social sphere and is oriented towards the resolution

4 Hofer BK. 2001. “How do I know what to believe?: Learning Online: Epistemological Awareness and Internet Research”. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Seattle, 355; Hofer BK. 2001. “Personal Epistemology Research: Implications for Learning and Teaching”, *Educational Psychology Review* 13:355.

5 Hofer KB and Pintrich RP. 1997. “The Development of Epistemological Theories: Beliefs about Knowledge and Knowledge and Their Relationship to Learning”, *Journal of Educational Research* 67:88.

6 Schommer-Aikins M. 2002. “An evolutionary theoretical framework for an epistemological belief system”, in Hofer BK and Pintrich PR (eds). 2002. *Personal Epistemology: The psychology of beliefs about the knowledge of knowledge*. Mahwah, NJ/London: Erlbaum, 108.

7 See King PM and Kitchener KS. 1994. *Developing Reflective Judgment: Understanding and promoting intellectual development and critical thinking in adolescents and adults*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass; Kuhn D. 1991. *Argumentative skills*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University of Minnesota Press (cited in Hofer “Personal Epistemology Research: Implications for Learning and Teaching”, 354).

of social problems, such as the problems of societal or political conflicts, which are problems qualified as complex and ill-structured problems. From an historical point of view, the pioneer of research in the field of epistemic beliefs was educational psychologist William G. Perry Jr., who crowned the body of work on epistemic development begun in the mid-1950s.<sup>8</sup> Almost all existing psychological work on epistemic beliefs has been inspired by the two longitudinal studies done by Perry in work that began in the early 1950s at the Bureau of Study Counsel at Harvard University. This work culminated in the elaboration of a model diagram of the “abstract structural aspects of knowledge and values”.<sup>9</sup> This schema has served as a heuristic for understanding the ways in which students make sense of their school experiences, and it has also served as the basis for several lines of research on epistemic beliefs.

For purposes of the present inquiry, let us return to Perry’s original model, that of “intellectual and ethical development”. Interested in the ways in which students seem to respond differently to the university’s diverse intellectual and social environment, Perry was committed to gathering descriptive accounts of students’ experiences. In order to select a variety of students for the initial interviews, he developed an instrument that he called the Checklist of Educational Values: Scale of Academic Values (CLEV). Perry built the CLEV instrument based on research on authoritarian personality<sup>10</sup> and on Stern’s Instrument of Beliefs: Stern’s Instrument for Measuring Beliefs.<sup>11</sup>

The goal of these interviews was to encourage students to express the most remarkable elements of their experiences, in their own words, and to avoid dictating the structure of the response. By analysing recordings of these early interviews, Perry and his colleagues were able to conclude that the ways in which students construct their world are as much signs of the existence of logically coherent developmental cognitive processes in them as they are characteristics related to personality. Based on these interviews, Perry and his colleagues constructed a model of intellectual and ethical development, which contains a sequence of nine positions.

The Perrian model is composed of nine epistemic positions typically grouped into four sequential categories: *dualism*, *multiplism*, *relativism*, and *engagement in relativism*.<sup>12</sup> The *dualistic* position is a Manichaeian position “that evaluates things according to the absolute principles of good and evil, without nuance and without

8 See Perry WG. 1970. *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the University Years*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

9 Perry, *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development*, 14.

10 Adorno TW, Frenkel-Brunswick E, Levinson DJ and Sanford RN. 1950. *The authoritarian personality*. New York: Harper and Row; Stern GG. 1953. *Inventory of beliefs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

11 Stern, *Inventory of beliefs*.

12 Knefelkamp LL and Slepitz R. 1978. “A Cognitive and Developmental Model of Career Development: An Adaptation of the Perry Schema”, in Parker CA (ed). *Encouraging Development in Students*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 135-150.

intermediate state.”<sup>13</sup> It is a source of dogmatism, fanaticism and extremism. As for the *multiplist* position, it can be qualified, as the case may be, either as a naïve position or as a mature position. In the case of naïve multiplism, the subject believes that there is no one piece of knowledge that can be judged true or false, and that “everyone has his truth” (excessive relativism). Whereas in a mature multiplism (moderate relativism), the subject manages to distinguish between a point of view that is well founded and another that is not sufficiently argued.<sup>14</sup> *Relativism* is an open-minded, critical epistemic position that does not claim to hold absolute truth. The most advanced and mature epistemic position is the one in which the subject feels committed to certain intellectual, ideological or political choices, while relativising his point of view and preparing at any moment to self-criticise and revisit his convictions partially or profoundly when necessary.

### *Ill-structured problems*

In their daily lives, each individual encounters a considerable number of problems belonging to a wide variety of contexts and inherent in situations that are generally quite complex. For example, people who have had the same educational and professional background, with the same degree of success, and with the same social status, may not solve the same everyday problem in the same way. Moreover, if each of them is invited to explain his or her point of view and agrees to do so, it is very likely that they will all find reasonable ways to defend their positions. Different beliefs, issues and challenges may come into play. In such a case, it is said that we are faced with an ill-structured problem.

As has been argued, “Ill-structured problems can then be defined as problems which do not have known solutions. Experts in the domain do not agree regarding whether a particular solution is appropriate, because it has various solutions and solution paths.”<sup>15</sup> David Jonassen, an educational reformer with a constructivist tendency, presents open issues as “having multiple solutions, several ways of

13 Larousse. “Manichean position” *Dictionnaire de Français*.

14 See Boudon R. 1995. *The Just and the True: Studies on the Objectivity of Values and Knowledge*. France: Fayard. Boudon warns us not to give in to the temptation of a postmodernist who defends the doctrine of “everything is good” and “everyone has his truth” (46). However, he criticises the sciences that propose to seek “what is true” in human phenomena and recommends instead an argument of “what is useful” (497) – that is, what is sufficiently convincing from a pragmatic operational point of view.

15 See Jonassen DH. 1997. “Instructional design models for well-structured and poorly structured problem-solving learning outcomes”, *Educational Technology: Research and Development* 45(1): 65-9; Reitman WR. 1965. *Cognition and thought: an information processing approach*. New York: Wiley; Voss JF. 1988. “Problem solving and reasoning in ill-structured domains”, in Antaki C (ed). *Analysing everyday explanation: A casebook of methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 74-93; Voss JF. 1989. “Problem solving and the educational process”, in Lesgold A and Glaser R (eds). *Foundations for a psychology of education*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. (cited in Hong NS. 1998. *The relationship between well-structured and ill-structured problem-solving in multimedia simulation*, PhD Diss, Pennsylvania State University, 3).

solving, few parameters that can be sufficiently controlled, and containing a degree of uncertainty as to the concepts, rules and principles necessary for their resolution or as to their form of organisation, and finally as to the best solution that could be envisaged" to a given situation.<sup>16</sup>

Similar to psychological phenomena concerning social representations<sup>17</sup> or implicit theories,<sup>18</sup> the solutions found for ill-structured problems are to some extent produced under "pressure to inference", due to a structural lack of information.<sup>19</sup> There can therefore be no universal agreement on a single solution. However, this will not prevent the emergence of social or political consensus on certain issues of public order. These consensuses can also change from one society to another and from one era to another, depending on the scales of values, beliefs and attitudes specific to each culture at a given time.

### *Ill-structured problem-solving and epistemological beliefs*

Ill-structured problem-solving involves various cognitive and metacognitive processes. First, at the *cognitive level*, it requires, above all, the possession in memory of declarative knowledge integrated into networks of ordinary knowledge and of procedural knowledge relating to the specific domain of the problem.<sup>20</sup> Faced with this particular type of problem, a sufficiently experienced subject has conceptual frameworks relating to the domain in their declarative knowledge,<sup>21</sup> which they try to adapt to the problem-situation posed with a certain effort of updating and reconceptualisation. Second, at the *metacognitive level*, solving ill-structured problems requires a variety of processes of planning, organising, reorganising, controlling, regulating, evaluating, re-evaluating, changing strategy and back-and-forth at all levels.

16 Jonassen, "Instructional design models", 65.

17 Moscovici S. 1961. *La psychanalyse, son image et son public. Étude sur la représentation sociale de la psychanalyse*. [Psychoanalysis, it's image and it's public. Study on the social representation of psychoanalysis] Paris: PUF.

18 See Jlidi M. 2002. *The Influence of Teachers' Implicit Theories and Beliefs on Students' Learning During the First Period of Basic Education* (original in Arabic). Unpublished DEA Thesis. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Tunis.

19 See Chi MTH and Glaser R. 1985. "Problem solving ability", in Sternberg RJ (ed). *Human abilities: An information-processing approach*. San Francisco, CA: WH Freeman & Co, 227-257. And see Wood PK. 1993. "Inquiring systems and problem structures: Implications for cognitive developments", *Human Developments*, 26:249-265 (cited in Hong, *The relationship between well-structured and ill-structured problem-solving*, 17).

20 See Jonassen, Beissner and Yacci (cited by Hong, *The relationship between well-structured and ill-structured problem-solving*, 23).

21 See Voss JF, Lawrence JA and Engle RA. 1991. "From representation to decision: An analysis of problem solving in international relations", in Sternberg RJ and Frensh PA (eds). *Complex problem solving*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 119-157 (cited in Hong, *The relationship between well-structured and ill-structured problem-solving*, 24).

However, these two levels are indispensable not only for ill-structured problem solving, but also for well-structured problems. However, what characterises the problems is, above all, the multitude of solutions and their relative validity. Hence the need, in the face of such problems, for a third cognitive level which will assume the function of evaluating the nature of the problem posed and the degree of ambiguity inherent in it. This level is precisely that of the *epistemic cognition*,<sup>22</sup> or what others have chosen to call epistemic beliefs, as we have noted above.

To recognise that we are really dealing with an ill-structured problem, we should at least be aware of the ambiguity involved and the possibility of considering a multitude of solutions. But an epistemically naïve subject, conferring an absolute status on knowledge, will never be able to recognise it as such. Such individuals may try to impose a single solution on themselves, which would be taken to be absolutely true or unable to be resolved. In the latter case, the subject might wait for the opportunity to meet someone – some authority – who would do it for them.

In the components of the complex ill-structured problem-solving process, there are notions such as multiplicity of points of view, justification of one's own position by objective and rational arguments and integrative knowledge as a synthetic solution – and all these notions are perfectly related to the complexifying and advanced epistemic belief systems. Hence, the individuals who would be best able to solve complex and open-ended problems are the subjects whose epistemic belief systems are the most complex.

### *Promote epistemic positions in order to promote conflict resolution*

Having shown the decisive role of personal epistemologies in the resolution of ill-structured problems, we should now turn to the question of the promotion of these personal epistemologies in order to promote the resolution of ill-structured problems. It should be remembered that the final aim adopted by this paper is to propose a pedagogical and didactic way of acting to train future citizens to resolve reasonably and peacefully societal, political, ethnic and religious conflicts that they may face one day or another in their common life.

The most chosen means for the desired training is education. However, it is necessary, first, to prove the effectiveness of the pedagogical approach in the epistemic development of subjects. In fact, studies that have looked for a possible relationship between education and the development of epistemic beliefs are infrequent or even rare.<sup>23</sup> Even so, a range of studies, thirteen studies in all, cover the period from 1985 to 2006. These studies fall into two categories: empirical

22 Kitchener KS. 1983. "Cognition, metacognition, and epistemic cognition", *Human Development* 26:222-232.

23 According to cognitive technology and learning scholar Marra RM. 2002. "The ideal online learning environment to support epistemic development: Putting the puzzle together", *Distance Learning Quarterly Review* 3(1):19.

studies<sup>24</sup> and experimental studies.<sup>25</sup> Both kinds of studies have sought to grasp the relationship between education and epistemic development, even if experimental studies sometimes seem more pedagogical methods and approaches adopted to facilitate the achievement of such development in learners. Examples include the studies by William Perry<sup>26</sup> and by Robert Kloss,<sup>27</sup> an educational psychologist.

Perry did not mention an experimental study that he or his collaborators conducted to verify in a specific way the role that epistemic pedagogical support can play in the promotion of students' epistemic beliefs, but he nevertheless reported some observations and developed several ideas and analyses on the beneficial contribution that such an approach would bring. Among these observations, he cited the case of the epistemic developmental shift that has been observed in the same subjects from one area of life to another, such as the fields of work, politics, religion, social relations and others.

Perry then suggests that we try to discover the areas where the students' epistemic beliefs are most developed. He speculates that such a discovery would help them, through analogue transfer, to move to even more advanced positions in the rest of the fields. He says this often happens spontaneously. But it is known that transference is a psychological phenomenon that does not occur in total spontaneity. Perry would only like to reassure us of the relative malleability of cognitive structures and assert that the role of the teacher would be limited to putting the learner in a "stimuli-sign" situation that would challenge his current beliefs and push him to make intra-individual efforts to adapt to this new situation, passing (through a multitude of analogous situations) to a higher developmental stage.

24 See, e.g., Perry, *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development*; Schommer, "The influence of age and education on epistemological beliefs"; Hofer B. 1999. "Pedagogical context in the middle school mathematics classroom: epistemological beliefs and student motivation", *Journal of Personnel, Program and Organizational Development* 16(2):73-82; Kloss RJ. 1994. "A Nudge Is Best: Helping Students through the Perry Scheme of Intellectual Development", *College Teaching*, 42:151-158; Sheppard C and Gilbert J. 1991. "Course design, teaching method, and student epistemology", *Higher Education* 22:229-249.

25 See, e.g., Marra, "The ideal online learning environment"; Stephenson BW and Hunt C. 1977. "Intellectual and ethical development: A dualistic curriculum intervention for college students", *The Counseling Psychologist* 6:39-42; Knefelkamp LL. 1974. *Developmental instruction: Fostering intellectual and personal growth of students*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota; Widick C and Simpson D. 1978. "Developmental concepts in college instruction", in Parker C (eds). *Encouraging development in college students*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (cited in Marra RM, Palmer B and Litzinger TA. 2000. "The effects of a first-year engineering design course on student intellectual development as measured by the Perry scheme", *Journal of Engineering Education* 89(1):41; Howard BC, McGee S, Schwantz N and Purcell S. 2000. "The Constructivist Experience: Transforming Teacher Epistemology", *Journal of Research on Informatics in Education* 32(4):1-8; Schommer-Aikins M and Easter M. 2006. *Ways of Knowing and Epistemological Beliefs: Combined effect on academic performance*, *Educational Psychology* 26(3):411-423.

26 Perry WG. 1985. "Different worlds in the same classroom: the evolution of students' vision, knowledge and expectations", *On Teaching and Learning* I(1):1-8.

27 Kloss, "A Nudge Is Best".

We can easily take advantage of this theory in the areas of religion and law. Epistemic development is remarkably applicable in the domain of religious beliefs and attitudes. And this is based on the way in which the religious text is interpreted. In the Islamic tradition, and even in the Judeo-Christian context, we distinguish various types of interpretation, ranging from the naïve literalist position to the vectorial reading of the text, which takes into account the diversity of contexts and accepts the multiplicity of solutions dealing with new problems arising in the life of the community, depending on the case. This serves to put judgments of these problems into perspective and protects against fanaticism and extremism, while also facilitating the achievement of compromises.

The manner in which the law itself is applied, whether religious law or civil law, is also strongly affected by the spirit with which legal texts are interpreted: a literal-reading mind or a vector-reading mind going to the ultimate ends of the law and its moral philosophy. In "The Spirit of Laws", Montesquieu considers that the law most adapted to the nature of man is the natural law, and that the most natural law is the one which best adapts to the people for whom it is established. Indeed, the diversity of peoples leads to a great diversity of laws, and as a result a large number of different political regimes: there are few universal laws and therefore there is no political regime which would be universally valid: "The Laws must be so specific to the people for whom they are made, that it is a very great chance if those of one nation can suit another."<sup>28</sup> This is why there is no solution for the diversity of laws or conflict resolution traditions in multi-ethnic societies other than negotiation and agreement on reconciliatory compromises, as is the case for most African societies. This way of dealing with such problem situations requires the adoption of an advanced socio-epistemic position that is very different from the Manichaean vision (true/false, good/evil, angels/devils).

William Perry has not only presented general ideas about the chances of achieving epistemic change among learners,<sup>29</sup> but also reported, during the decade of the appearance of his "Scheme" in the 1970s, that a generation of young teacher-researchers, without specific reference to certain works, were able to determine to each category of learners distributed according to the Perrian model. This distribution covered a range of epistemic positions from Level 1 to Level 5, the corresponding kind of pedagogical support or challenge, for the transition to the next epistemic level. For example, those in Level 1 need more social-cognitive conflict ("community's support") and the time needed for change. Those in Level 2 could benefit from the explicitness of some epistemic elements, such as the complex and relative nature of knowledge. They should also be confronted with texts that revert to divergent or even contradictory theoretical references ("contradictory authorities)" in order to free themselves from the authority of knowledge and allow themselves the self-construction of knowledge and consciousness. For those

28 Montesquieu CLS. 2003. *L'esprit des lois*. Paris: Gallimard, Folio Essais, I(ch 3):95.

29 Perry, "Different worlds in the same classroom".

at Level 5, it would sometimes only take a small challenge, such as a well-asked question, for them to begin to revise their old epistemic frame of reference.

Robert Kloss, a teacher-researcher who claims to have worked consciously and conscientiously for ten years with the Perrian schema in his classroom, says he is ready to answer three questions posed by Gary Henson, specialist in student development, on the development of epistemic beliefs: "What teaching method or style can challenge learners who think in a dualistic way? What has caused some students to adopt a more complex way of thinking than before? How long can it take to expect an epistemic change from one position to another, in a year, a semester or a month?"<sup>30</sup> Kloss summarises his answers in the following four points:

1. The best subjects that can challenge learners' dualism are those that offer the most opportunities for ambiguity (ill-structured problem-situations), variety of interpretations and multitude of perspectives;
2. Working in teams with a limited number of individuals also offers the possibility of confronting one's own point of view with those of others (socio-cognitive conflict);
3. The organisation of semi-structured discussions between peers, occupying 80-90% of the time of the lesson, can facilitate the epistemic development of learners, insofar as this would reduce teaching authority and increase interactions between learners themselves and attempts at self-construction of knowledge;
4. Teachers should always keep their expectations of their students very high. This is done by encouraging and inducing them to self-evaluate ideas and to always look for evidence or arguments for their hypotheses.<sup>31</sup>

Generally speaking, a review of the above-mentioned studies allows us to formulate the two observations: (1) education can influence, in some cases, the epistemic development of the subject in a significant way and (2) the approach most shared among researchers to promote the development of epistemic beliefs and knowledge in learners is that of teaching-learning is the one that is characterised above all by three particular traits:

1. It is a *socio-constructivist reference* and aim approach focused on the learner's activity and on socio-cognitive interactions.
2. It is also an approach, which insists on confronting learners with *ambiguous and ill-structured problem-situations* that challenge their old epistemic beliefs.
3. Finally, it is an approach that gives great importance to the explicitness of certain *epistemic and epistemological elements* and to the awareness of the *historicity of concepts*.

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30 Henson GR. 1982. "Critical issues in the assessment of student development", *New Directions for Student Services* 20:61 (cited in Kloss, "A Nudge Is Best", 151).

31 Kloss, "A Nudge Is Best", 151.

These three principles will serve us well basic elements for the epistemo-didactic model of this study.<sup>32</sup>

### *Epistemo-didactic model for the promotion of personal epistemologies*

With reference to a body of work in continuous growth, proving the existence of significant effects on learners' epistemic beliefs by variables belonging to the school context, we will propose an epistemic change protocol that will be defined in nine points expressing various epistemo-didactic teaching skills. References are studies carried out on the effects of educational pathways in general on the epistemic development of learners.<sup>33</sup> They also include studies on the impact of educational attainment on the development of critical thinking – requiring a similar development, at least, at the level of some dimensions of the epistemic belief system, such as dependence on authority and certainty of knowledge. Others have focused on the impact of certain modes of pedagogical intervention on learners' epistemic beliefs.<sup>34</sup> And if we want to add even the impact of constructivist teacher education programmes on the epistemic beliefs of teachers who benefit from these programmes, then there are certain studies we can cite.<sup>35</sup> With reference to all these works, we propose a pedagogical protocol that we have proven to be valid and effective and which presents a variety of pedagogical skills suggested to teachers,

<sup>32</sup> It is, in fact, a model of pedagogical intervention that promotes epistemic entry. It is called didactic because it tries to reconcile the epistemic cognitive characteristics of the subject with the epistemological characteristics of the knowledge to be taught. In addition, the approach in question is concerned with solving open problems. This represents a didactic focus, but not in the strict sense of the term, since it is a question of problems relating to several disciplines and not to a single one, as is the case with didactics.

<sup>33</sup> See, e.g., Schommer, "The influence of age and education on epistemological beliefs"; Bohr L, Pascarella ET, Nora A and Terenzini PT. 1995. "Do Black Students Learn More at Historically Black or Predominantly White Colleges?" *Development* 36(1):75-85; Pascarella ET, Edison M, Nora A, Hagedorn LS and Terenzini PT. 1996. "Influences on students' openness to diversity and challenges during the first year of university", *Higher Education Review* 67:174-195.

<sup>34</sup> Stephenson and Hunt, "Intellectual and ethical"; Widick C, Knefelkamp LL and Parker CA. 1975. "The counselor as a developmental instructor", *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 14(4):286-296; Marra RM, Palmer B and Litzinger TA. 2000. "The effect of a first-year engineering design course on the student's intellectual development, as measured by the Perry program", *Journal of Engineering Education* 89(1):39-46; Widick C and Simpson DE. 1978. "Development concepts in college instruction", in Parker CA (ed). *Encouraging Development in College Students*. St Paul, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 25-59 (cited in Marra, "The ideal online learning environment", 18-19); Hofer, "Instructional Context in the College Mathematics Classroom"; Kloss, "A Nudge Is Best"; Saunders GL, Cavallo AML, Abraham MR. 1999. *Relationships among epistemological beliefs, gender, approaches to learning, and implementation of instruction in chemistry laboratory*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Association for Research in Science Teaching. Boston. MA.; Sheppard C and Gilbert J. 1991. "Course design, teaching method and student epistemology", *Higher Education*, 22:229-249.

<sup>35</sup> Howard et al, "The Constructivist Experience".

so that they can facilitate the change of their epistemic beliefs to their learners.<sup>36</sup> The eight main elements of the epistemo-didactic model for the promotion of personal epistemologies are set forth below.

**First**, there is the *adoption of a constructivist teaching approach centered on the learner*, where the teacher knows how to practise and benefit pedagogically from a certain creative silence favouring the emancipation of learners from the teaching authority and from the other types of knowledge authority conveyed by teaching-learning situations.

**Second**, there are *planning periods dedicated to teamwork during each session and facilitation of semi-structured discussions* between the members of different teams. This is in order to allow the initiation of interactions, with or without socio-cognitive conflicts between the pairs. These interactions would cause the learner to be confronted with a multitude of points of view expressed by the other members of his team; This would represent a favourable social and educational environment for the transition from a dualistic vision to another multi-track or even relativistic one.

**Third**, there is the *exposure of learners to situations that would seem ambiguous to them* and that would challenge their dualism or naïve multiplism. The ambiguity intrinsically linked to any question or notion that falls within the domain of human or social disciplines is not obvious to a dualist, as most secondary school learners are, so it must be “reconstructed” in part by the teacher. Let us recall on this occasion that we can consider ourselves faced with an ambiguity, when we observe a circularity of relationship between given notions.<sup>37</sup> One of the solutions that would help to achieve this is to present learners with more than a single text (two or three texts, for example) serving as a didactic support for the construction of a problem-situation, as soon as the learners realise that these texts defend different theses or deal with the same question in different ways and propose divergent solutions. That is to say, the use by each author of a thought-provoking argumentative device that can complicate the conclusive task concerning what is asked of them. Hence the chance to make learners less impulsive, less absolutist and also less dependent on authority.

For example, confronting them with the divergences of views that have arisen within classical Islamist theological groups in North Africa, particularly the Mu‘Tazilites and Acharites, on the question of the creation of the Quran (some believe in the creation of the Quran or in its novelty and others in its eternity) or in the face of the Marxist/liberal conflict concerning the question of democracy or human rights (some are for social and participatory democracy and for the right to work and the others support representative political democracy and defend

36 See Jlidi M. 2008. *Learners’ Epistemological Beliefs and Their Role in Solving Ill-structured Problems in the Humanities: The Case of Tunisian Secondary Education*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Tunis.

37 Merleau-Ponty M. 1951. “Second private interview”, in Griaule M (ed). *La connaissance de l’homme au XXe siècle [The Knowledge of Man in the Twentieth Century]*. Rencontres Internationales de Genève. Neuchâtel: Editions de La Baconnière, 219.

individual rights), several texts that can facilitate the acquisition of this epistemic competence – that of assumed ambiguity – appear in students' school documents. Additional steps follow.

**Fourth** is the *encouragement of attempts to produce initial conclusions* relating to each stage of a lesson and *final conclusions in summary form*, within teams, in the first periods of the year, and then individually in the rest. The objective of this type of activity is twofold: (1) establish a sense of self-confidence in the learner as the affective motivational facet of personal autonomy and (2) facilitate the learner's gradual transition to a position of independence from the authority of knowledge. In this case, the teacher (or any other reference) would only represent in the learner's eyes a learning facilitator or a facilitator who coordinates individual interactions within the class group and who serves as a likely source of knowledge and expertise to whom one can refer deliberately as needed.

**Fifth** is the *explanation of the epistemic communicational contract* based on concrete examples, such as when marking the written composition tests to say, for example, that any opinion is debatable or refutable, even if it is pronounced by a great theological, philosophical, scientific or other reference, that a text is always interpretable, that truth is not simple and similar points. To give a more concrete example, I recall that in the Greater Maghreb (North Africa) there currently reigns only one Islamic religious school: the Malikite school. But, historically, there were a multitude of Islamic schools: the Ibadites (Berbers), the Mutazilites, the Hanafites and the Sufrites. The conflicts of doctrines and points of view between these schools were not always resolved through peaceful public debates, but in most cases, it is with the force of the political power adopting one of these doctrines, which left us a heavy legacy of dictatorship and fanaticism. We should, therefore, return to the spirit of dialogue and negotiation. For this, it is highly recommendable (relativity and contextuality of thought require it) to re-establish the history of the concepts of the discipline (affirm and demonstrate their historicity), even in a more or less limited time. The objective of such an approach would be to dispel the illusion of the absoluteness of the ideas and theses defended by this school or the other, or this scholar or the other. For example, the concepts of justice, truth, humanity, freedom and law, among others.

**Sixth** is the *explicitness of the evaluation contract*. This contract should emphasise the great interest that will be given to the methodological elements of compositions and dissertations: problematisation, contrast (or discussion and criticism), argumentation and synthesis. But since the pedagogical golden rule states that one should evaluate only according to the mode with which one has trained, then we suggest the following point.

**Seventh** is the *planning of methodological tutorial sessions*, where the teacher introduces the learners to the deciphering of problem statements, the extraction of implicit attitudes and presuppositions, the definition of key concepts, the delimitation of their semantic fields and everything that helps in the delimitation of the problem and problematisation. Methodology sessions should also be an opportunity to learn

the analysis and elaboration of anti-theses, which should involve determining the limits of the perspective represented by the statement of the proposed topic for the dissertation. Knowing how to solve the problem posed in a dialectical or relativistic way, in order to logically conclude all the work that has preceded it, is also one of the skills that the teacher should facilitate in the construction of it with his students. It would be very useful to schedule such a session at the end of each module or once a fortnight, for example.

**Eighth** is the *supervision of silent people*, or “who play dead” according to the expression of educational scientist Jean Houssaye (in his famous *Pedagogical Triangle*), “provocative” people who “play the fool” according to the same author.<sup>38</sup> That is to say, encourage the former to express their opinion, or provide them with elements of facilitation if necessary to make an attitudinal project and take an interest in the latter and help them to be less impulsive, less sharp and more reflective and argumentative. Such pedagogical behaviour on the part of the teacher would help learners to build a specific and fairly strong relationship to knowledge.

In general, the main features of the experimental model of epistemic change of the present study can be summarised in these five pedagogical competencies: (1) the *challenge of naïve epistemology in learners*, in its various aspects, by providing them with opportunities to inherently experience ambiguity: an ambiguity that is felt from within and not merely judged as such by the teacher, (2) the *progressive explicitness of the epistemic communicational contract* (or the suggested epistemic level of communication and the evaluation contract) valuing the methodological aspect, intrinsically linked to the epistemic position adopted, in the resolution of the proposed open problem, (3) the *pedagogical patience that goes hand in hand with a teaching practice of a certain creative silence* opening the way to reflection and attempts at interpretation and argumentative reasoning in learners, (4) the *planned methodological exercise* and (5) *teamwork and semi-structured discussions* (socio-constructivist aspect).

All this can also be formulated in didactic terms: situation-problem, devolution, objective-obstacles, rupture of old didactic and epistemic contracts and socio-cognitive conflicts. But it is also necessary to integrate pedagogical relational elements: motivation, an expectation always positive with regard to the learner’s intellectual and communication capacities, respect, patience and accompaniment. In any case, one should always make the necessary effort to maintain a certain balance between support and challenge, or in the words of Kloss: “A Nudge Is Best”.<sup>39</sup> As step-by-step principle, these are the general components of the epistemic developmental protocol proposed by this study for schools.

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38 See Houssaye J. 1988. *Le triangle pédagogique* [The pedagogical triangle]. Coll. Exploration. Série “Pédagogie: Histoire et pensée”. Berne: Peter Lang.

39 In the title of his article “A Nudge Is Best: Helping Students through the Perry Scheme of Intellectual Development”.

## SOCIO-COGNITIVE APPROACHES FOR PROBLEM-SOLVING, PROMOTION OF REFLECTIVE JUDGMENT AND ATTITUDINAL CHANGE

In the previous section, we were interested in ways of educating young people to develop epistemic positions that allow them to solve open problems, such as problems of a societal, political, environmental nature and more, in a reflexive, dialectical, relativistic manner and by embracing dialogue and negotiation. Thus, we tried to pose the underlying question of conflict resolution from a psycho-cognitive and didactic perspective.

However, social change in general, and change in norms and attitudes in particular, does not simply take place at the cognitive level and through the didactic means deployed in the school context alone. Shouldn't we also address the role of the family education system, the importance of group dynamics and the processes of attitudinal change in situations of social interaction and through specific communication strategies? It is to this psychosocial aspect of intellectual development and change that we will devote the remainder of this work.

### *Jacques Lautrey's work on "social class, family environment, and intelligence"*<sup>40</sup>

Jacques Lautrey is a professor emeritus of differential psychology. According to one set of scholars, "Lautrey's work on the structuring of the family environment (SEF) remains one of the most frequently cited research studies on the relationship between family education and cognitive development".<sup>41</sup> In addition, this work has inspired many others. Lautrey himself presented and commented on three doctoral theses, which verified and generalised his own results on Brazilian, Scottish, Pakistani and Ivorian populations.<sup>42</sup>

40 Lautrey, *Classe sociale, milieu familial, intelligence*. See also Martine R. 1981. "Lautrey (Jacques). Classe sociale, milieu familial, intelligence [compte-rendu]", *Revue française de pédagogie* [French journal of pedagogy] 57:88-90.

41 Tazouti Y, Flieller A and Sanlis C. 2014. "Etude dimensionnelle de la structuration de l'environnement familial" [Dimensional study of the structuring of the family environment, *Bulletin de psychologie* [Psychology bulletin] 2014/2(530):159-170; Bergonnier-Dupu G. 2005. "Famille(s) et scolarisation: pratiques éducatives familiales et scolarisation", *Revue française de pédagogie* [French Journal of Psychology], 151:5-16; Duru-Bellat M and van Zanten A. 1992. *Sociologie de l'école*, Fourth Revised Edition. Paris: Armand Colin; Gayet D. 2005. "Enfants et parents dans les aires de jeux" [Children and Parents in Play Areas]. *Les Sciences de l'éducation – Pour l'Ère nouvelle* [Educational Sciences for the New Era] 2005/2 38:11-24.

42 These are successively the works of Cunha de Carvalho L. 1983. *Structuration de l'environnement familial et développement cognitif: étude différentielle et longitudinale*. [Structuring the Family and the Cognition Environment: A Differential and Longitudinal Study], Third Cycle Doctoral Thesis, Université de Provence, Aix en Provence; Ogilvy CM. 1987. *Family type, cognition and social thinking in two ethnic groups*, PhD Thesis, University of Strathclyde; Tapé. G. 1987. *Milieu africain et développement cognitif: une étude du raisonnement expérimental chez l'adolescent ivoirien*. [African Environment and Cognitive Development: A Study of Experimental Reasoning among Ivorian Adolescents], Doctoral

The last study, in an African environment, aims to determine the conditions of the subject and the environment that are favourable to the development of experimental reasoning. Research carried out in an African environment reveals two things: the non-existence of formal thought in a traditional environment that may involve lack of schooling and the favouring of intuitive thinking in solving everyday problems, and the superiority of schooled subjects over non-schooled subjects in terms of mastery of operational thinking. These findings suggest that there are several types of logic responding to specific eco-cultural demands, but the school environment remains that which optimally presents the characteristics of an environment favourable to the blossoming of formal logic.

In addition to the cognitive model, the urban environment differs from the rural environment by the type of structuring of the family environment (predominantly “flexible” in the first case and “rigid” in the second). The intellectual differences between rural and urban students can be explained by the interaction of two factors: the cognitive model valued by the environment and the types of structuring of the family environment. The characteristics of the subject and the environment favourable to the development of experimental reasoning are therefore: (1) the activity of the subject in an environment which arouses and maintains it, (2) the formal instruction which supplies thought with varied content and (3) the decontextualisation of the training that promotes increased use of language.

Lautrey found that children from working-class social strata generally perform less well than children from culturally and socio-economically affluent social strata. From there, he was faced with the problem of “intelligence and social class”: Is there a correlation between these two variables? By reviewing questions on this problem, he concluded that there are three main interpretations: (1) the difference in genetic origin, (2) the existence of a cultural bias and (3) the difference in stimulation depending on the environment.

Referring to the work of Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist and genetic epistemologist most famous for his theory of cognitive development, and his team, Lautrey took up the rule according to which an environment would be all the more favourable to cognitive development if it had these two general characteristics at the same time. First, it must be a *source of cognitive disturbances*, thus encouraging adaptations of old cognitive patterns and structures to new information coming from this environment. Second, it must provide the *necessary conditions for rebalancing* and thus for adaptation and new constructions. Depending on the degree of presence of each or both of these characteristics, three types of environment are obtained: (1) loosely structured, (2) rigidly structured and (3) flexibly structured. It has been proven that the flexible structuring of the environment is more conducive to intellectual development than either of the other two, insofar as it more frequently elicits and enables cognitive constructs.

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Thesis, Humaines Université de Caen (cited by Lautrey, “Structuration de l’environnement familial et développement cognitive”, 49).

Two types of results were obtained in the study. First, there were results concerning the link between the *type of structuring and social status*. As expected, these results do indeed show that structuring is linked to social status and that rules of behaviour and educational habits can be considered as elementary organisers of the family education system: the more one moves from the liberal professions to the working class, the more the tendency to use restrictive and authoritarian methods becomes apparent. Second, there were results on the relationship between *family environment and cognitive development*. From the relationship between these two variables, it appears that there is a link between the type of flexible structuring of the family environment and a better success on tests than that associated with weak and rigid forms of structuring.

Children in families characterised by their type of structuring differ from the cognitive point of view: children whose environment is loosely structured more easily reorganise a schema if necessary, that is when they are faced with an obstacle that disturbs their assimilation patterns, and they do so calmly in a reflexive way. These are the same ones that more precisely reach the most advanced stages of cognitive development. In Lautrey's final conclusion, "the family education system can be considered as an intermediate variable between social class and the cognitive development of the child".<sup>43</sup>

The question arises: Where are we with regard to the relationship between social class, cognitive development or reflective judgment and good resolution of complex problems and with the presence of the family educational system as an intermediate variable, faced with a socio-cultural predetermination? And if this is more or less the case, how can we break this causal circle in order to promote reflective judgment and mitigate impulsive attitudes among children and young people from disadvantaged or underprivileged families?

I suggest two types of remedies. First, there is the democratic remedy, whereby school education should adopt a democratic form of socialisation. Second, there is the associative remedy, whereby cultural clubs or cultural and civic associations can serve as places where the future citizen is trained in dialogue, negotiation and experiences situations of socio-cognitive conflicts that can only be resolved through increased cognitive rebalancing. In the democratic school form, the socio-cognitive environment within the class group and in the school as a whole could only be flexible. That is to say, positively disruptive, and offering both the necessary conditions for rebalancing and new constructions. The associative form, embodying the spirit of dialogue, teamwork and negotiation, would also be a flexible socio-cognitive environment conducive to positive changes in attitudes and ways of solving the problems of the group and the city.

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43 Martine, "Lautrey (Jacques). Classe sociale, milieu familial, intelligence [compte-rendu]", 90.

## KURT LEWIN'S SOCIAL CHANGE THEORY

Kurt Lewin, a German-born American psychologist specializing in social psychology and behaviourism, has left his mark on the history of the social sciences through his several conceptual and operational creations, including group dynamics, field theory, social change and organisational change. His work is an essential reference for research on group dynamics and the change of social attitudes and behaviours, and an important source of inspiration for many training professionals.

With regard to the issue at hand in this paper, that of the change in the attitudes and behaviors of antagonistic groups living in the same society in political mutation, and the way in which this change could occur positively, we believe that we find the answer in the junction of two theoretical elements created by Lewin: change and field theory. In order for there to be a change in behaviour, there must be a change in the psychological field of the individual who is a member of any social group. But we will also benefit from some of Lewin's commentators and some of the work that has been inspired by him and that has added fruitful theories and concepts to the question of social change. Three theories are especially worth noting: (1) field theory, (2) the stages of change and (3) the gateways to change.

### *Field theory*

Based on the metaphor of geography, Lewin constructed the concept of psychological space. It is a kind of extension of the psyche, a psychosocial extension where the individual evolves. "An individual's field, or living *space*, or psychological space, includes all the elements that he or she perceives. It is no longer a landscape but a mental reality".<sup>44</sup> The field, although specific to the individual, insofar as it is the individual who mentally reconstructs it, is at the same time a collective construction of the social environment to which the subject belongs. The subject then perceives in their own way what the group(s) have established in their social environment. The individuals can contribute consciously or unconsciously to this collective construction, achieved in consensus or resulting from a certain balance between antagonistic forces occupying the social space. That's why Lewin insists that change must be congruent with the rest of the learner's environment, behaviors, and personality, and that's why he sets up group activities, so that collective norms change as well.<sup>45</sup> We have already emphasised the idea that in order for there to be a change in behaviour, there must be a change in the field. We can also express this idea in the following way: for there to be a change in the field, there must be a change in the field, a dialectical relationship between the subject and the environment. The changing environment challenges the already existing perception of the subject.

<sup>44</sup> Faulx et al, "Redécouvrir Kurt Lewin".

<sup>45</sup> Burnes B. 2004. "Kurt Lewin and the Planned Approach to Change: A Re-appraisal", *Journal of Management Studies*. 41(6):977-1002 (cited in Faulx D, Nion C, Collière P and Capoen E. 2019. "Redécouvrir Kurt Lewin, un penseur-clé pour les formateurs de demain" [Rediscover Kurt Lewin, a key thinker for tomorrow's trainers], *Éducation Permanente* 3-4(220-221):228.

When faced with a problem of social conflict, the individual must learn with the rest of the group to which he or she belongs how to reasonably resolve these conflicts.<sup>46</sup> The fact that the forces of peaceful change are intensified through collective learning, the individual is able to reconstruct his psychological field so that it becomes, in his eyes, a field of multi-party or multi-partner dialogue and negotiation. A change in the field implies a cognitive, psycho-affective and behavioural development of the subject, as it is defined both by a particular cognitive structure (what the individual thinks and perceives) and by driving forces that condition action.<sup>47</sup>

### *Stages of change*

Lewin proposes a triad that has since become famous: (1) *thawing* (decrySTALLISATION), (2) *change* (change, movement, displacement) and (3) *refreezing* (recrySTALLISATION, stabilisation). This theory can be understood in the light of the notion of unstable equilibrium or quasi-stationary equilibrium.<sup>48</sup> The apparent stability of a system is none other than the result of the balance of forces in tension. The system may oscillate slightly, but it does not fundamentally change. Its homeostatic tendency means that if forces intensify on one side, opposing forces will also appear so that the system more or less regains its equilibrium.

*Thawing*, the first phase, consists of decrySTALLISING this unstable equilibrium by releasing the forces favourable to change or weakening the forces that are against it. Lewin considers the latter strategy to be the most effective.<sup>49</sup> According to Schein, thawing requires three conditions that are in reality three psychological, mental and affective processes: delegitimisation of the current state of affairs (status quo), the appearance of guilt or anxiety related to the current situation and psychological security about the future and conformity with the moral attitude.<sup>50</sup> *Change*, the second phase, is a process beginning the moment when the system is set in motion, but it cannot be said that the desired change will actually take place. Lewin emphasises the need to sustain and strengthen change during this phase and calls for incentives for change to persist for a certain period of time, otherwise it can quickly die out.<sup>51</sup> *Refreezing*, or recrySTALLISATION and stabilisation, the third phase, is the attainment of a new state of equilibrium following the implementation of group activities resulting in a change in collective norms. If the individual accepts to

46 Walsh I and Renaud A. 2010. "Translation theory revisited or change management translated. Application to a case of M&A requiring a change of information system", *Management & Future* 39(9):212.

47 Faulx et al, "Redécouvrir Kurt Lewin".

48 Lewin K. 1947. "Group decision and social change", in Newcomb TM and Hartley EL (ed). *Readings in Social Psychology*. New York: Henry Holt.

49 Allard-Poesi F. 2012. *Kurt Lewin, de la théorie du champ à une science du social* [Kurt Lewin, From Field Theory to a Science of the Social]. Paris: EMS.

50 Schein EH. 1996. "Kurt Lewin's Theory of Change in the Field and Classroom: Notes Toward a Managed Learning Model", *Systems Practice* 9(1):27-47.

51 Lewin, "Group decision and social change".

change, then they are in a logic of evolution or mutation of collective social norms. The individual changes with the change of his psychological field as a result of his involvement in a certain group dynamic, creating a kind of collective psychological field or a collective moral consciousness and a collective affectivity with practical aims, such as the establishment of a pact to live together or a democratic system for the resolution of conflicts.

The group dynamic, which differs from the psychology of the crowd, could only be activated in groups of reduced numbers, not exceeding twenty members, for example. So, to achieve a high level of generalisation of change, it is necessary to considerably multiply the organisations, clubs, associations and training groups with which we intervene to achieve this change. Social networks and the media could facilitate this task because of the ease of access to the general public, which does not represent crowds, but is made up of singular individuals, groups of friends or family, or groups formed from other types of social ties.

### *Gateways to change*

This is an operational theoretical model that initially emerged from the work of Lewin.<sup>52</sup> His disciple Kenneth Benne, both an influential philosopher of education and a theorist of organisational change, revisited it, and Daniel Faulx a psychologist and educational scientist came to shape it.<sup>53</sup> This model consists of six doors divided two by two over three areas: (1) the *field of cognition*, which includes the subject's perception of the world as well as their beliefs, concepts, and knowledge, (2) the *realm of values*, which includes, in addition to the person's moral principles, his or her reactions to other groups (attraction, belonging, hostility, repulsion) and (3) the *field of action*, which includes the person's motor skills and the way in which he or she controls his or her action, that is, the cognitive processes associated with one of his or her physical actions oriented towards his or her social environment (taking indicators, rectification, control, evaluation, reflection on goals, calculation of costs and other factors).

Under this model, to lead a change process, a trainer can access it through one of these six doors. The trainer may seek to modify cognitions, by means of a process of conceptual change, by confronting the trainee with a problem-situation that defies his assimilation patterns and by injecting new information and knowledge or by directing him to sources offering him this new information and knowledge. It can also play on social dynamics by creating an interactive context that is conducive to the evolution of norms. It also has the possibility of approaching change through action by facilitating the acquisition of new reactions and gestures. But it is always necessary to keep in mind the question of maintaining change, which requires repetition or recall, the multiplication of learning situations and the diversification of the methods applied and the examples proposed. Before closing this paragraph,

52 Lewin, "Problems of group dynamics and integration of the social sciences".

53 Benne K. 1976. "The Rehabilitation Process: An Assessment of Kurt Lewin's Perspectives", *Studies of Groups and Organizations* 1(1):26-42; Faulx et al, "Redécouvrir Kurt Lewin".

it might be beneficial to bring some new ideas to the table on the issue of change, with a particular focus on change in attitudes.

## CONCLUSION

Many African countries that have embarked on a process of political liberation have experienced or are experiencing difficult democratic transitions leading to serious tensions between the different political parties and forces. This has been the case in my native country, Tunisia, since the 2010-2011 revolution. The problem is so complex and ingrained in people's minds that it has not been radically resolved by the so-called "national dialogue" that began at the end of 2013. Achieving good national reconciliation requires more than just political compromise. This is a difficult challenge that should be addressed in a profound way that would touch the consciences of individuals.

The question of resolving social and political conflicts through negotiation can be studied from various angles. We have chosen to do so in this paper from a psychological and didactic point of view. The psychological factor that influences individual and collective consciousness is multidimensional. For this reason, we first presented the cognitive and cognitive-social foundations of the development of epistemic positions facilitating the resolution of open and complex problems, such as the problems of social and political conflicts, and secondly, we focused on the psychosocial aspects of the development of reflective thinking.

Changes in the psychological field, norms and attitudes towards the thorny issues of divergences and conflicts between groups that are part of the same society or belong to the same geographical area, in this case the African continent, include the following. First, school education in dialectical and relativistic thinking would enable future citizens to engage in a logic of negotiation and reconciliation. Second, a democratic and flexible (both disruptive and rebalancing) system of family education or associative training would promote the development of skills and abilities for reflective and non-binding problem-solving. Third, a positive group dynamic would promote the achievement of social change through a change in collective norms. Finally, the application of argumentative communication strategy could lead to a positive change in attitude.

Political leaders and leaders of society's vital forces will have a great interest in taking advantage of this multidimensional psychological approach to promote the construction of a general social and political climate where the values of dialogue, negotiation and living together take full advantage to maintain social and civil peace and achieve lasting national reconciliation in countries going through difficult or shaken democratic transitions by waves of political, social, ethnic and other conflicts.