

How Shall We Live Together?

Fayssal ZIAT^{1*}, Yamina BENSAHLA^{2*}

¹Department of Philosophy, Echahid Cheikh Larbi Tebessi University, Tebessa, Algeria.
Human Sciences Research Unit for Philosophical, Social and Humanistic Studies.

²Department of Philosophy, University of Oran 2 Mohamed Ben Ahmed, Oran, Algeria.
Human Sciences Research Unit for Philosophical, Social and Humanistic Studies.

* E-mail : fayssal.ziat@univ-tebessa.dz ; bensahla.amina@univ-oran2.dz

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Abstract

Living with and for others, without racism or ethnic discrimination in cultural and civilisational classification, is a task through which Claude Lévi-Strauss sought to realise the principle of cultural and civilisational fairness and to overcome the obstacles of historical classification according to all forms of exclusion that label so-called primitive peoples as savage, barbaric, and outside civilisation. Similarly, philosophising, as conceived by Spinoza, is a project of learning to live happily, yet it is also a matter of learning to live together; one of the most assured manifestations of philosophical insight is the capacity to preserve harmonious modes of life. Individuals in today's world, in what may be termed "advanced modernity", find themselves in a strange paradox: never before has life appeared so sacred. On the one hand, we protect and preserve it, taking care not to squander it; greater efforts than ever are made to keep death at bay. On the other hand, do we truly live at all? Our existence is becoming increasingly confined, isolated from the world, and rooted in seclusion. We are witnessing a pervasive individualism that now leads to the rejection of collective existence, with a noticeable inclination toward the virtualization of existence. This leads us to question the meaning of life (is it sufficient merely to remain alive for as long as possible, as if in a state of breath suspension?) and the human condition (do we truly wish to avoid living together?).

Keywords: living together, modernity, individualism, virtual existence, sanctity of life.

Introduction

The history of humanity, with its immense achievements as well as the continuing and escalating conflicts among human groups and the enormous destruction and natural and unnatural disasters that follow from them, highlights the problem of human coexistence and its increasing difficulty, that is, living together. Hence, the urgent need to learn how to live with others arises. In fact, this urgency is intensifying. Massive collective migrations of people and the worsening, tragic situation of terrorism occurring not only in countries experiencing wars but also everywhere, particularly through inhumane acts, further reinforce this need. Apart from the ongoing war in Ukraine resulting from the Russian attack and the conflict between Israel and Palestine, it suffices to reflect on the tragic events in Paris, Brussels, Nice, Munich, and Berlin,

which occurred in 2012 and thereafter and for a period of time in countries such as Turkey and Syria, as well as in Myanmar, Haiti, and elsewhere. We may ask: Is it truly possible to live together in peace, tranquillity, and harmony? In such circumstances, not only institutions but also every individual is called upon to take a position regarding the situation to the extent that this requires effective policy and, at the same time, educational and training measures at all levels (Chang, 2024, pp. 26–27).

Living together, in terms of including the other/others and difference/diversity, is a multidimensional issue that is not limited solely to the contexts of the family and the school but also encompasses the contexts of work and civic coexistence, as well as relations between genders, ages, races, religions, languages, ideologies, and between countries and continents.

In this article, attention is focused on the educational approach that emphasises learning to live together with others. The title recalls the theme of the forty-sixth session of the International Conference on Education (ICE), organised by UNESCO—the International Bureau of Education (Geneva, 5–8 September 2001): *Education for All for Learning to Live Together: Contents and Learning Strategies—Problems and Solutions*, particularly the report by John Daniel entitled *Learning to Live Together: A Priority Challenge at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century*.

An explicit proposal at the international level for learning to live together can be found in the report of the Faure Commission (1972), *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today, and Tomorrow*, as well as in the well-known 1996 Delors Report, prepared by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century under the chairmanship of Jacques Delors, from whom the report derives its name. The Delors Report, entitled *Learning: The Treasure Within*, has become a fundamental reference for subsequent initiatives and reflections by the same body and by other educational and pedagogical publications.

The Faure Report, issued 50 years ago, emphasised the need to prepare people capable of communicating with others in society. Hence, the need for an education that teaches increased: how to live, how to learn, how to acquire new knowledge throughout life, how to think freely and critically, how to love the world and make it more humane, and how to realise itself through work.

Undoubtedly, learning to live with others represents a decisive educational challenge in our time, and it is an indispensable task that must be strengthened in all areas of human coexistence. Numerous initiatives by international bodies fully recognise this, particularly the recent report entitled *Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education* (November 2021), in which UNESCO once again emphasises the need to build relationships with others, with our environment, and with technology. There is also the International Day of Living Together in Peace, celebrated by UNESCO (May 16) (Chang, 2024, p. 27).

Research Problem

From the foregoing, it is evident that there is an urgent need for this new orientation to live together, given its capacity to meet human needs and to frame its subject through theoretical

and methodological tools and critical instruments. Hence, this contemporary orientation has emerged, with the goal of reconstructing our relationships with others.

To clarify the concept of this new orientation, the research attempts to examine the topic through several questions that will be subject to discussion and analysis:

What is meant by living together? How has this concept evolved?

Can we truly live in lasting peace?

Significance of the Study

- The significance of the research lies in the topic's importance and its fundamental role in the right to live peacefully with others. No individual, organisation, or institution can achieve meaningful progress unless it establishes a foundation of living together capable of developing sufficient human capacity.
- "Living together" is the fundamental element in constructing human discourse; no civilisation can exist without an active, critical practice of living together.
- This contributes to the resolution of problems confronting civilist discourse to produce knowledge characterised by creativity and innovation.

Research Methodology

This research relies on several approaches and mechanisms, the most important of which are as follows:

- **The analytical–deductive approach**, through which an analytical study will be conducted of the foundations of coexistence and its impact on humanity as a whole.
- **The inductive approach**, particularly when issues related to coexistence are being examined, involves analysing them and deriving certain conclusions.

With respect to the mechanisms employed, the study utilises definition and redefinition when reconstructing the concept, as well as definition by contrast and definition by delimitation, to regulate and specify concepts.

1. Concept of Living Together

The term "*living*" is associated with the themes of "life", "existence", and "human beings". It is not possible to separate the human right to live from human responsibilities toward the world and the universe, given that the human being is both a living and a thinking entity. These concepts may overlap because they carry closely related indications and neighboring meanings. What differentiates them is the addition that clarifies, specialises, and makes the meaning clearer, such as the expressions "peaceful coexistence", "shared living", and "dignified living". These are linguistic and discursive formations and ready-made slogans that accompany daily life and dominate news scenes, advertising campaigns, and voluntary initiatives, as well as preaching and educational forums, in approaching self-composition alongside openness to the other to achieve intellectual balance and psychological harmony (Muhammad, 2021, pp. 10–11).

Living encompasses a set of dispositions (*qawāmāt*) and foundations (*qāmāt*). The term *qawām* refers to “that by which the existence of a thing materially or immaterially is established” (Abduh, 1994, p. 165). The term “*shared*” refers to “a defined group and, consequently, the generality of human beings... a complete group, a common interest, a comprehensive group, or a large defined and affiliated group”. The term “*coexistence*” denotes neighbourhood and copresence, which increase to the level of cooperation.

Three conditions for living together among living beings are proposed as follows:

1. If an individual has a relationship with others, the individual must be aware of this relationship.
2. The relationships between coexisting living beings must be reciprocal.
3. Every living being coexisting with other living beings must hold the same conception of the relationship as that held by its counterpart.

This shared conception produces a collective representation, namely, “we”. Nevertheless, this conception always arises from an individual living being (Young, 2013, pp. 278–285).

The first condition is that the possibility of living together begins with the existence of conscious and independent living beings. Those capable of living together must be aware of their coexistence with other living beings. In the absence of such awareness, the relationship between two coexisting entities would be reduced to mere coexistence rather than living together. Only conscious beings can live with others. In this context, the concept of awareness includes understanding that an individual's relations with others constitute essential components of their social bonds. Of course, nonconscious entities may also be connected with others, for example, the relations between objects and human beings. However, such relations are either determined by others or remain unrecognised by the nonconscious entities themselves. Therefore, shared living is possible only in relationships between conscious individual beings (Kwon, 2025, pp. 5236–5237).

The second condition is that the relationship of living together must be reciprocal. If the relationship is not reciprocal, then a relationship imposed unilaterally by a conscious being upon a nonconscious entity could also be regarded as a relationship of shared living. For example, the relationships between natural objects and human beings constitute a highly complex network of mutual relations. Nevertheless, it is not comparable to the relationships between human beings themselves. That is, the relationship between natural objects and human beings is one of shared existence rather than one of living together. However, we may imagine something as although it were a being capable of living with us. Through such imagination, we may perceive and regard something as a being capable of living like a human. Human beings may live with objects authorised through their imagination or unilateral recognition, but the authorised objects themselves cannot do so. Humans and objects can live together. However, this is merely an imagined relationship, although it is sometimes possible and useful. The relationship between humans and objects is not reciprocal. Moreover, if we claim that the relationship of living together is not reciprocal, then we should be able to acknowledge universally that humans and objects can live together as described above. However, since we distinguish between being

together and living together, the relationship between an object and a human cannot be considered a universal relationship of living together. Consequently, at least two people are required to live together, and they must be capable of establishing a reciprocal relationship. This finding indicates that beings who live together in a reciprocal relationship must be conscious individuals because a lack of awareness of its relationship with others is incapable of establishing a reciprocal relationship with any other being.

The third condition is that beings capable of establishing a reciprocal relationship must also be capable of sharing the same conception (Kwon, 2025, pp. 5236–5237).

Second: Living with Others—A Necessary Utopia

As the Italian philosopher R. Mancini indicates, “utopia” must now be understood not as the representation of what is desirable yet impossible but rather as an awareness of everything that we can express at the height of our authentic humanity and as a choice for the courage of dignity that manifests itself when we reject what is degrading and false (Mancini, 2019, p. 2). Living together means living with others in harmony, as is evident in the formulation of the third “pillar” of education referred to in the Delors Report. However, who are the others? Moreover, why do we live together? Behind this question lies an anthropological issue and a fundamental challenge, brilliantly highlighted by John Daniel, who argues that learning to live with others means recognising people's right to remain “others”. As will become clear later, this cannot, in my view, be achieved without learning to love others; that is, wishing good for them, which implies going beyond oneself by overcoming selfishness, convinced that love cannot exist without the capacity and courage for dedication, sacrifice, and renunciation.

From this perspective, while there is in fact an urgent need to develop a personalist anthropology that restores recognition of the dignity of every human being in support of a culture of life and for life, a commitment simultaneously emerges among all individuals and institutions to the common good. The scope of discourse thus expands to include the perspective of integral ecology and awareness of our human values.

Interconnection exists not only among human beings but also between us and the whole of creation, as illustrated in the encyclicals of Pope Francis: *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home* (May 24 2015) and *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship* (October 3 2020). In reality, there can be no separation within this process; otherwise, the true meaning of ecology would be emptied of any home.

Thus, living together with others constitutes an ideal of an ethical and political nature, a utopia, and above all, an indispensable commitment for individuals. The capacity to live together accompanies sound human development. Moreover, institutions bear the responsibility of defending human dignity and serving as guarantors and promoters of peaceful coexistence, as clearly stated in the aforementioned encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, of Pope Francis. Consequently, the challenge centres upon education, which should be supported by wise policies, and upon the necessity of realising the dream of a world in which sustainable development is attainable (Strategy for Sustainable Development 2005–2014; UNESCO, 2020), where every human being

seeks to live a life conscious of their own dignity and that of others. The *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* declaration defines the 17 Sustainable Development Goals for the period 2016–2030, clearly representing the most comprehensive global plan for building a better world for people and our planet by 2030.

This demanding task constitutes a challenge for all, particularly for educators. In this regard, the observation of Z. Bauman is highly significant: “Never in human history have teachers faced a challenge comparable to that posed by the present transformation. Quite simply, we have never been in such a situation before. We still have to learn the art of living in a world saturated with information in our case, a world that has become profoundly multicultural. Likewise, we must learn the art of preparing human beings to live such a life, which is far more difficult” (Mancini, 2019, p. 28). If speaking of learning to live together appears, on the one hand, to be somewhat imaginary and contradictory in light of the tragic nature of our world, one that, as Pope Francis has indicated, is witnessing a third world war fought piecemeal and perhaps even looming more broadly living together, today more than ever, as Delors himself stated in the first chapter of the 1992 report, remains a necessary utopia because we are all part of the same human family. Indeed, not only the Bible and the monotheistic religions affirm this but also the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that “Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.”

More than seventy years have passed since the issuance of this declaration; nevertheless, guaranteeing human rights for all remains a distant aspiration, owing to the silence and inertia of those who should intervene to break the cycle of violence. Establishing the foundations of education for all, as proclaimed in the United Nations declaration (2011), resembles a “secular gospel” that ought to constitute an imperative duty for all those who bear educational responsibilities toward new generations, beginning with the family and the school. In this regard, there have been continuous and repeated reminders from both the United Nations and UNESCO, and similarly, there has been no lack of guidance from the Catholic Church (UNESCO, 2015).

Belief in our capacity to change ourselves and the world and to involve all of us in this endeavour provides an ideal response to the meaning of utopia, which, as R. Mancini states, “is a spirit that deepens our perspective on historical time. It is the spirit that allows us to look towards a transformation of reality that is neither given nor visible now, yet insist on coming into being and may find its place in history.”

Third: Foundations of Living Together

1. Recognition of the Other

Recognition does not merely mean accepting the existence of the other; rather, it signifies believing in the other's right to be different and to live with dignity. A cohesive society cannot be built without respect to the existence and diversity of its components.

2. Mutual Respect

Respect is not demanded; it is granted. When the other perceives genuine respect in you, it creates a sense of security. This, in turn, helps reduce social tensions and build balanced relationships.

3. Constructive Dialogue

Dialogue constitutes the most mature means of resolving disagreements, forming a realistic understanding of the other, and exchanging perspectives. Effective dialogue does not aim to impose an opinion but rather to reach common ground.

4. Social Justice

It is impossible to speak of genuine coexistence in the absence of justice. When individuals or groups feel oppressed or excluded, tension becomes inevitable. Justice is not limited to legal frameworks; it also encompasses employment opportunities, education, political representation, and freedom of expression.

5. Active Tolerance

Tolerance is not weakness but rather a spiritual and moral strength. It is the awareness that the world will never exist in a single uniform form and that diversity is a source of enrichment rather than a threat.

Fourth: Foundations of Education for Coexistence

1. The Role of the Family

The family is the first school of life. If a child grows up respecting others within the family, they will be more accepting of others within society. Therefore, parents must instil the values of plurality, openness, and compassion.

2. The Role of the School

Schools should provide curricula that stimulate critical thinking, reinforce the value of diversity, and encourage respect for others. Extracurricular activities, such as clubs and student dialogue initiatives, also play important roles in developing the skills necessary for coexistence.

3. Role of the Media

The media should serve as a partner in shaping positive collective awareness rather than as a tool of incitement or distortion. Influential media messages should be inclusive, disseminate a culture of peace and highlight successful examples of coexistence.

4. The Role of Religious Institutions

Religious discourse profoundly influences people's moral consciousness. When it emphasises the values of compassion, tolerance, and shared human principles, it helps create an environment that is more receptive to and respectful of others.

Fifth: Education for All as a Shared Way of Life

Since the establishment of the World Declaration on Education for All (1990), UNESCO has continuously sought to develop the means, mechanisms, and strategies for its implementation. The Delors Report (1996) more clearly highlights the close relationship between education and learning to live together.

Similarly, the 2015 Incheon Declaration shares the vision of the global Education for All programme, affirming its foundations in the World Conference held in Jomtien (1990), which was subsequently reaffirmed in Dakar (2000). Therefore, the 2015 World Forum aimed to ensure equitable, inclusive, and high-quality education, as well as lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2020. The close relationship between education for all and learning to live together is clearly reflected in the report of the forty-sixth session of the International Conference on Education organised by UNESCO—the International Bureau of Education (5–8 September 2001), previously mentioned at the outset: *Education for All for Learning to Live Together: Contents and Learning Strategies—Problems and Solutions*. Education for all constitutes a fundamental condition and a pathway for advancing the learning of how to live together.

Thus, what do we aim to achieve through education for all? The themes discussed in international forums clearly indicate that education for all primarily refers to the provision of education for everyone without discrimination based on gender, religion, race, language, and so forth. It also reflects the conviction that, for education to be effective for all, it must respond to the needs of every learner and be genuinely high-quality and inclusive.

In theoretical terms, inclusion has moved beyond mere integration from both organisational and pedagogical perspectives. It envisions attention to all learners, not only those with disabilities but also those who display special educational needs and those who experience any form of social deprivation arising from language, economic and cultural circumstances, religion, and, finally, all other learners, while taking into account their particular and personal situations as well as their learning styles. Hence, the call emerged for an educational approach that addresses everyone by valuing the potential of the entire classroom and thereby transforming it into an inclusive classroom. It represents a significant achievement in establishing a close relationship between the three conditions that conceive of inclusive education, quality education, and multicultural education as indispensable conditions, strategies, and pathways for education for all.

Awareness of this close interconnection is evident in UNESCO documents, as reflected in the title of an important joint seminar organised by the International Bureau of Education and the German Agency for International Cooperation on *Learning to Live Together* (Kigali, Rwanda, 13–17 October 2008), where learning to live together is regarded as directly linked to education in life skills, citizenship, peace, and human rights. Hence, there is a firm conviction that the implementation and guarantee of the right to education for all requires multidimensional action involving individuals and institutions across various fields. Without the commitment of all, it is impossible to live together in peace and harmony; indeed, humanity has no future without it, as was affirmed during the forty-eighth session of the International Conference on Education (Geneva, Switzerland, 25–28 November 2008): *Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future*.

Conclusion: Towards a Global Culture of Coexistence, or Learning to Live Together as Learning to Love

Living together is not merely a slogan raised at conferences; rather, it is a daily practice, a culture built, and a responsibility borne by every individual, institution, and society. In a world where interests and destinies are increasingly intertwined, we have no choice but to learn to live together not only to survive but also to flourish.

As the Lebanese poet Gibran Khalil Gibran stated,

"If there is no love among people, justice has no value, and law has no meaning."

In confronting the current circumstances mentioned above, not only wars and organised violence but also a historic climate catastrophe, we cannot remain indifferent and selfish without reflecting on what must be done. As we have seen, there has never been a lack of international and ecclesiastical guidelines aimed at improving human civilisation, particularly through the United Nations and UNESCO on the one hand and through the teaching authority of the Catholic Church and other religious institutions on the other.

An examination of international documents conducted thus far leads to the conclusion that all the so-called forms of "education for", such as education for all, quality education, inclusive education, solidarity-based education, integral education, multicultural education, and lifelong learning, are essentially methods, conditions, and strategies for learning to live together. Similarly, the principle of inclusion can be realised only through the development of genuine love for every person in relation to others and for every institution in relation to other institutions. Love, in other words, is the channel or instrument that concretely manifests effective and unconditional respect for the equal dignity of every human being and for all peoples and cultures.

The belief that all men and women belong to one family presupposes, in reality, that they are called to experience authentic and enriching love within families, the primary resource that must undoubtedly be restored, the place where we learn to love others, beginning with the selfless love that we receive freely from those through whom we are brought into the world.

The ordeal of the disintegration of family relationships and domestic violence reveals the paradox that, while all human beings need to experience love to learn love and live peacefully and harmoniously with others, certain patterns of life centred on individual success, selfish competitiveness, and the pursuit of the ephemeral and of wealth contradict this aspiration and render human beings less humane. It is sufficient to reflect on how far the word "love" has been emptied of its true meaning. Educating them, in fact, promotes humanity within every person.

As educators, we must maintain firm conviction in the necessary utopia. As educators, we must steadfastly uphold belief in the necessary utopia of learning to live together as a mission and calling for every human being and for humanity as a whole. This utopia is realised most fully through learning to love others as themselves, an essential ethical principle that runs throughout history.

Learning to live together, which implies learning to love, begins, for example, with the simplest of our actions: greeting others. In this regard, the political economist R. Petrella is correct in stating that the starting point of any other form of education should be that the first aim of the school system is "learning how to say good morning to others". According to the author, "saying

good morning to others” specifically means that the educational system is entrusted with teaching every citizen “to recognise the existence of others”, “to learn democracy and how to practise it”, and “to learn solidarity”.

The progress of any society is measured by the extent of its concern for marginalised groups. Therefore, rather than merely proclaiming the principle of inclusiveness, it is necessary to work towards making it a tangible reality by fostering through education a positive view of the other, practising justice with fairness, and ensuring respect for human rights; that is, loving others as brothers and sisters. This is what the Holy Scriptures affirm. Consequently, the loss and neglect of God's sovereignty and the commandment of love in our pursuit of true happiness create a chaotic world in constant conflict, despite the reminders and guidelines issued by international bodies such as the United Nations and UNESCO.

In conclusion, the statement contained in the document of the Congregation for Catholic Education (CEC, today: the Dicastery for Culture and Education), *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools*, may be endorsed. Living together for a civilisation of love, or rather, “the essential and strategic bond that links ‘the love of education’ and ‘education through love’ as two fundamental and inseparable elements, in which the gaze of the educator and the learner is mutually directed towards goodness, respect, and dialogue”.

Thus, only authentic and integral education is capable of achieving the objectives of living together and of building coexistence on the foundations of striving for the common good, mutual love, respect for all, and genuine inclusiveness. Will this remain a dream? We prefer to regard it as a necessity. As education specialists, we approach it as a challenge to be realised through gradual, progressive steps, taking into account the rhythms of all, yet with a determination that does not yield difficulties or problems. For us know of no other effective path to achieving genuine human coexistence founded upon fraternity and solidarity.

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