SD: Hello Dominique, and welcome. I am very happy to have the opportunity to talk to on Flow.

DG: It very nice for me too, thank-you for inviting me.

SD: You have studied different ways of how we address each other, from humour to violence, but you’ve focused on polemics, on pamphlets, verbal conflicts during the last...

DG: 40 years. In fact, I started when I was a student in the second year of my master's, doing my thesis at Sherbrooke, when I discovered a literary conflict at the beginning of the 20th century in Quebec, a Quebec conflict between regionalists and exotics. But there was also theoretical side because it was a time, in the 80s, where were lot of things were being written in France, and perhaps elsewhere in the world, I don't know, but in France there was lot of work that was on the polemical and on the pamphlet. So I arrived a little after these great works and I did the synthesis of all that and it determined the whole course of my career.

SD: And I find it interesting because in a recent discussion with Nino Gabrielli, at the time of the launch of your last book, about five months ago, you said that personally, and I quote, “conflict bothers me.” And yet, I get the impression that you are not against the controversy. Quite the opposite.

DG: No, you're right. In fact, there’s a bit of ambivalence in me. That is to say that I myself when I find myself in a conflict, it can unsettle me, especially if it is a personal conflict with people with whom I would like to have good relations. But also when conflicts descend and we can no longer talk calmly it bothers me a lot, indeed. If there is confrontation but with a sort of capacity, of mutual recognition that we give ourselves the right to express opinions, everything is fine with even if we disagree, even if there are oppositions. On the other hand, when there is just cul-de-sac in the dialogue, it bothers me considerably. And that's maybe one of the reasons why I was interested in this question.

SD: But sometimes in polemical controversy... we end up slaying the opponent. So that's not at all the style that you prefer?

DG: That I prefer? No, in my relationships, I always give a chance to the other. And then I tend to recognize my mistakes, that is to say, accept that the other is right. I am able to do, I am able to do this.

So, I know that in the world, and I think there are different styles, are different approaches, I'm not against the fact that some people like controversy and make it a kind of game that they find fun in. We see it, there are chroniclers who probably have fun provoking and even arousing the discontent.

 And that’s because they have chosen their clan, they have their own friends, they are part of a group that supports them and it doesn't matter that there are adversaries. In fact, for them, they understood that it is part of social life, that there are adversaries whom we can hit and then without shame and even finding some pleasure.

SD: Yes, I want to return to the of pleasure that I find very important. To understand the attraction of the controversy. But before that, I want to talk about Quebec, where we are. Because, speaking of the last two books you wrote, you noticed that here Quebec, folks are not so comfortable with the controversy. And there is even the expression... "no squabbles in my cabin."

SD: That's right. So... Because... Because... In fact, Quebec... We're going talk about the Francophone Quebec because I don't know how it works in, you can tell me, maybe, on the English side. For the Francophones as you know, we were a people who, after the English conquest, had to protect itself. And so, the main values of this people was family, religion. It was the meeting places and places where there had to be a certain consensus, where we had to hold each other up, help each other. Despite everything, there have always been fractures. It's normal. But we have this somewhat family mentality, where we form a small group. And in short it's more difficult in a small clan to create conflicts.

 SD: Well it's bit easy to create them, but it's hard to...

DG: To them take on. That's it. Whereas in more urban contexts, where there are different social classes and with different social groups, in that context, it doesn't matter. As I said about people who love polemicizing, as long as they have their own group that supports them, they have a job, they are not threatened in their lives. From that moment on, they don’t have to seek consensus and can accept that there are differences. But in Quebec, for long time, we have been tight knit. It's an expression that has circulated a lot. And then, had to raise your hat before authority. So, the time has changed of course, because the population is diversifying. But I see there a form of explanation for this aversion of the French-speaking Quebeckers for disagreements.

But with my anthology, what I showed is that, in end, that criticism has always existed. Yes. And then... Sometimes also it happened in a playful way. So, in short...

SD: But it's more on the public stage.

DG: On the public stage, that's it. But there are taboos. There are taboos within the Francophone scene. We see it in artists, for example. We must always recognize what I call the family with a big F, and we can call the nation too. Quebeckers are very shocked when an artist, for example, succeeds abroad, but begins to scorn Quebec. We don't accept easily that people who are supposed to represent our culture show us scorn.

SD: But contempt is difficult to accept.

DG: For everyone, I imagine. But I think there are societies that so strong in their culture. For example, in France, there were writers who obviously who reviled against France. And obviously, it doesn't mean that they made everyone love them but there room for that too. Because it's a society that has quite solid to accept an opposition internally, within itself in this way. In Quebec, given that we are a society that has always wanted... to take its place, that it is not recognized as a nation-state. And I won't hide that we are a society that has suffered a lot from Quebec bashing, coming from the Anglophone society which for several decades was richer, more prosperous, etc. So we are a little bit afraid for this reason, also in relation to ourselves. It's like if are uncomfortable when there's dissent inside. It's always the mentality, that we have to join together tightly to face the opposition coming from outside.

SD: Interesting. So the historical context is very important and very different from the context in France, which everyone knows, and France is famous for... the biting word play, the little sentences.

DG: In the history of the pamphlet in France, because there were some that were published, anthologies that were published, where there are words of such a meanness that we don't find, that we haven't seen in Quebec. It's almost murderous sometimes. So yes, they have the cult of wit and it even existed from the time of the court of Louis XIV. Where... for example, the worst thing that could happen to a courtier is to fall into ridicule and therefore be exiled from good society. So they developed this culture.

SD: We understood then there are reasons why here in Quebec, in Francophone Quebec, there is a certain distance with the idea of polemics. But in your opinion, are there positive aspects of a verbal conflict, which could even serve society?

 DG: Yes, absolutely. And I was talking about my master's thesis which was on the conflict between regionalists and exotics. You see, I came to this conclusion, while working on these texts, that these quarrels between clans, between different types of thought, ways of conceiving literature... these quarrels allowed... made progress for the cause of literature. Because it forced the belligerents, those who faced criticism, to define their position. And so through that they developed a critical language, they developed critical framework for literature. And even on side of institutions, it caused publishing houses to emerge, literary essays that were published, essays that were... polemical. In some essays from the 30s, the notion of combat is often in the title. Yes, it had positive sides. And the polemics themselves, I was talking about the literary milieu but in all environments, it can generate good things. That is to say that it also allows expression of divergent ideas and that's a good sign for democracy. If there is a complete consensus in our society, it's worrying.

There are tensions. There are conflicts that live in a society and it's normal. Obviously we can define it as a form of violence, but it's not a violence as a passage to the act, to the act violence. It’s that there are tensions. In the end, polemics, verbal confrontation, allows the expression of, to allow us to understand where these tensions are.

And it allows, for example, the dominated, when they can speak, to show or denounce their situation of domination. A society that allows the dominated and marginalized to express their frustration, their anger, it's a good sign. It can give...

SD: It can give you what’s necessary to better harmonize society.

DG: Yes, exactly. It can lead to social transformation.

SD: On the other hand, I see that in today's public debates, we often hope that it will lead to good of the community and with facts. We just spoke about how it may improve the society, but I see that the polemicist sometimes has other ends, not positive ones.

13:10

DG: Yes, I see what you mean. Yes, that's a fact.

SD: It's more like a game of force, no?

DG: We can also polemicize to affirm a domination, to protect ourselves against a threat. And so we crush our enemies to prevent them from speaking.

There are polemists who don’t necessarily have a great ethics, and they simply polemicize or provoke to go and get... to arouse interest and so they work for their own celebrity, so to speak, “exposure,” to say it in... The fact of being... Speaking loudly, without rhyme or reason. And sometimes when we read from one column to another, or from one article to another, we see that they contradict themselves. But basically, it's just that, in the language of social media, to generate “clicks.” It's just to stay at the top of their wave and keep their position in society.

SD: So, coherence is not even important, the issues even sometimes, as much as popularity.

DG: Popularity is driving it. And we also have that in Quebec with what we call the “trash radio”. Especially in Quebec City.

SD: They still exist, no?

DG: Yes but they have a little, they have undergone some challenges in court. I think they are a little more... Fearful. But it still exists. So, these people who complain without rhyme or reason, who will stimulate anger in the population, who are not analyzing the situation, which are extremely complex, but who are simply going to play with the frustrations.

But the analyses I read on this subject show that, in fact, it doesn't prodcue very good results. Because there is a problem in understanding itself. It's like they don't really understand the situation. The good kind of polemics is the one that nonetheless develops an argument.

SD: So it's not that polemics are good or bad, it's how we manage it.

DG: Yes, in fact there is a form of irresponsibility often among these provocateurs. They throw balls, they explode, but then they disappear and wash their hands. So it's as if they don't accept the responsibility for what they generate.

 SD: It's very interesting because I see that it's used sometimes to reinforce positions. I see, as everyone has seen recently, that it can create polarization if we listen a little too much to this kind of polemicists.

DG: Yes, it's very, very present. On social networks on YouTube. There's the phenomenon of influencers now too.

SD: Do you want to talk a little bit about what's happening now in the United States?

DG: We can talk about it, but I have to tell you that I'm not a specialist. So my point of view is that of a Canadian who reads the newspapers. And then what I have to say about it, very sincerely, I don't think it goes beyond what others say. But hey...

However, from the point of view of analysis of the polemical phenomenom, we certainly are seeing somehting that is happening now that is quite new and that is disconcerting. Because what we see around Trump is the success of categorical statements which can easily be proven to be wrong, which are based on falsehood, but which are said in such a way that it provokes positive results for Trump. So it assures him the support of a certain part of the population.

From my point view, from someone who analyzes polemics, it's a pretty surprising phenomenon. We've been used to up to today, that from the moment a speech, was shown to be false or in bad faith, it wasn't big success.

SD: But what you think about the insults that he or his camp, uses... famously at the rally at Madison (Square) Garden, where his intervenors or himself used words like to describe people as garbage, blacks like watermelons, etc.

DG: Yeah, an adversary as a fool.

SD: Yes, as a prostitute, even. An antichrist. So it's more of a... when it's just pure insults? How do you see it?

DG: But in fact, we can question the discourse... people who use insults like that. But the question to ask is: how is it that it is received favorably? So there is a certain part of society that must be analyzed also to understand why there are people who don’t mind that but, who on the contrary, support that. So there are expectations within the population. And that's what's most worrying.

I would say. I will tell you frankly that I have no answer to give you this. It's a complex situation and too recent phenomenon.

SD: There's something, what you're saying, that strikes me a little. First of all, there's a certain number of people who are attracted...

DG: Yes, it's looking for passions. You know, in the world of Aristotle, there was Logos, which is reason, Ethos, is the impression that the orator gives, the confidence that he can inspire, and Pathos, which is not just to say things that are pathetic, emotional but to go and look for the emotions of the audience. And here, obviously, we waken... We awaken a certain desire to take on opponents. You know, what I see in this is the whole mechanism of the “bouc emissaire”

SD: Excuse me?

DG: The scapegoat okay. In English... It's the animal we sacrifice.

SD: Okay, yes, yes, yes.

DG: And around which the community... The sacrifice allows society to form these bonds around a figure who considered to bearer of evil. So there is a form of demonization of the other that is done through insults and suddenly people who poorly understand where their frustration comes from say, here is the answer to our frustration. If we eliminate this evil, well, we'll feel better. History proves that to be a great illusion, but it works.

SD: Yes, because it's easy, I think. I want to compare that and the idea that you explored a little with the attacks *ad hominem* and *ad personam*. I was quite familiar with *ad hominem*. I taught a little through a course I gave in Cegep when I spoke of Galilee. that he was treated as heretic. I talked to my students about how this argument was unjust because it didn't take consideration of the science at all. But do you see that *ad hominem* attacks can be just...

DG: Yes, that was part of the reflection of my book, *Un Québec polémique*. I addressed the question of the Ethos and also the attack against an anti-ethos, that is say a figure. So the ethos refers, as I said earlier, to the person.

Is someone honest? Is someone competent? When we express something, we say we offer ideas, of course, but we also ourselves. And we know that the effect of our discourse is partly based on the impression we give to others. So this is a component that should not be neglected.

But there is a consequence to that, that say that for whoever receives the discourse, for the opponents, when they will contest the ideas of the other, they will contest these ideas, but they will associate these ideas with the person of the other too. And so, sometimes, the contestation of the person of the other is associated with the contestation of the ideas.

For case of Galileo, the Church refused the thesis. And so, as this thesis was going against the dogma, so necessarily it was the thought of a unbeliever. So, but first it was the thesis that was refuted, not the person. They didn't say, Galilee, you're wrong because you in such a city. And the people who were in that city are all...

 SD: No!

 DG: In other situations, you know, it’s common, for people who listen to politicians, it doesn’t matter what that person says, ... I’m going to use a québécoise expression, “I don’t like their face.” As we say in québécois, “I don’t like their face” (with strong accent). You see, it is their appearance that speaks.

For example, at the time, it's an example that I gave in my book, Pauline Marois. had social platforms. There were people who said, we don't believe in her honesty because look at how she dresses. She lives in a mansion. She's a great bourgeoise. She dresses with designer name brands. So she can't be close to people. That's really an attack *ad personam*. We llook at the way the other person dresses, his hairstyle, his social standing.

SD: Some people might have seen that as an attack against women, with the jewelry, with a certain attention to clothes, but was that what you think?

DG: There was that too. There was maybe a misogyny within, behind. So you see, that's really ad personam because it's not... It's like if we wanted to oppose the discourse of a person with what she is as person.

But in other moments, we will take it to the other, but it also derives from the words he will say. For example, this is another example that is found in my book at the time. You know how he is François Legault. Sometimes he gives himself look of a good father of a family with the big common sense and then ...

There are people who appreciate that. But there are others who say that he infantilizes the population. And they dislike not only what he says, but the way he says things. They say, he is paternalist, is condescending. You see we are sensitive to that. We are always sensitive to the way a person says things. And not only what they say, exactly.

And sometimes what is said... contradicts the way it is said. And we are even sensitive to the way things are said more than to the things themselves, to what is said. So the attack *ad hominem* is part of the game of the interlocutor, the game of dialogue. And you asked me, is it justified in certain circumstances? It is. Because let's take a politician who’s been accused of corruption. Can we trust this person when she then proposes economic measures? And so it's legitimate to have a doubt about the honesty of a person who already has...

SD: Certainly.

DG: Or someone who's obviously lying, pronounces lies. Well, we must evaluate the person. We have to designate them as not really reliable. That's an *ad hominem* attack*.* We judge the person, and through their discourse and through their way of being – way of being in the discourse, let's it. Not its way of in sense of they dress or how ... Okay. So it's... The border between *ad perso*nam and *ad hominem* is a bit blurry but let's say that, I would say, to summarize things, *ad personam* is more gratuitous. These attacks are more gratuitous and that... Sometimes, I'll give an example to how complex can be.

A discussion about racism. You know, like me, that we won't be received in the same way if we are black, or someone of color, and white. Someone, a white person who speaks about racism, he comes in and we tell him, but you... You don’t have the authority to talk about it because you don't live it. So these are elements, we are in the *ad personam* here because we at the other person but what he is as a person, before he even proposes ideas. So we don't give him legitimacy to take a position on a question that concerns racism. All of plays into social perception.

SD: And this can alsocome from the places of publication. the idea of the person himself, how do we judge the credibility of the persona. You talked about... In your book, *A Quebec Polemique* the example of Pierre Foglia and Jean Larose. But I don't know if there are other very important or in cases in the history of Quebec that illustrate the same issues of staging?

DG: When we gather all the elements that contribute to the image we of a person. Regardless of what that person said, regardless of the content of their speech... Of course, there is Ethos, the impression that that person has produced with his way of expressing things. But there are other elements that relate to the person herself. We talked about race earlier, or if it is gender, if you are a man or woman, it's not received in same way.

Age. Sometimes we say that some people are ageist, when we judge someone else based on their age. These are elements that we cannot dissociate from the person of the other, which are intrinsic. But there are also environmental aspects. For example, you speak about the place of publication. If I publish in The Gazette it is not the same as in the Globe and Mail. Or in the States, it is more extreme, for example if I express something it is not the same thing on CNN or Fox. It determines in part the reception that this speech will obtain.

SD: In part, you say, but I see that in great part. Because when I see a person that I know in a certain way and I have certain expectations of this person, who publishes in a certain publication, where I have certain confidence, I can read the same sentence, completely differently.

DG: Absolutely. Absolutely. It conditions our reception.

DG: Here in Quebec, in the French-speaking we don't receive texts of duty in same way as the Montreal Journal. The chroniclers of the *Journal de Montreal*, by a certain intellectuals, are less considered than someone who would publish in *Le Devoir*.

SD: Yes, it's interesting for everyone here who is listening who may not be so familiar with our publications here. I thought about that, and just to put it in a way that may be even easier to understand, I thought of Marshall McLuhan who said in English, the medium is the message.

DG: And with that, see... Yes, it's exactly in same direction.

SD: Yes, exactly. And the place and all that is the medium of polemics. And so that's the message too.

DG: Absolutely.

SD: Let's finally talk about history. You wrote recently, and also before, a lot about the history of exchanges in Quebec. And about the polemics you wrote in the 80s, sorry the 90s, a very charged decade here in Quebec because it was marked by the 1995 referendum where the choice was to separate Quebec from Canada and become a country. And then you wrote the *Anthology of pamphlet and polemics in Quebec from 1800 to 2000.*

And I want to say that I chose Quebec as my home and my adopted province, in the sense that I decided to come here 20 years ago. So I don't know all the characters you mentioned, even in the most recent years. And it was truly an education.

But I also discovered the idea that the polemics appear in times of crisis. And you have talked lot about the crises during the history of of monarchism, or of the most recent issues like feminism, Quebec independence, cultural ecologism, etc. And do you have an idea to help us open up this whole story? An example that you can tell of an exchange, particularly perhaps, which launched one one launched one of these movements, who created conditions to push this forward?

DG: We could talk about the 19th century, conflict between the Reds and the Ultra-Montains. The Reds were liberal thinkers. The Ultra-Montains were people who wanted to... wanted the event of a... a political power that gave a larger place to Catholicism, so it was linked to the teaching of the Papacy, of the Vatican. Obviously, are European influences. What was happening here was coming from the conflicts that took in Europe, in France, in Italy and elsewhere. There were, and I have a number of examples in the anthology, clashes between writers, intellectuals, the word didn't exist at the time, we'll call that, liberals and the Ultramontains, who were often held religious offices. But also journalists who made a profession of faith towards the Vatican. And there were many confrontations and sharp crises. For example, the Reds, the liberal thinkers, had founded the Canadian Insititute in the 1840s, I’m not giving a precise date, but we are in those years there. And that was a place of gathering, of exchanges, of thinking, of philosophy. They discussed social discussed literature, theology, in fact, everything that can be discussed, language, etc. But in an optics of great freedom. Or with a possibility of questioning too. These are thinkers who were inspired by the philosophy of the Enlightenment too.

So they had created this institute, they organized conferences, they had a library, a library that also books that had been classified on the Index by the Church. So, for example, books by Protestants, Protestant or even writers like Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas. So obviously, the presence of this group disturbed the religious authorities of the time. There were great bishops of the time, for example, Monseigneur Bourget, who opposed not only what was discussed, but also the articles that these liberal thinkers wrote. And some of them, among the liberals, without saying it very openly, were atheists too.

So, the religious authorities who claimed to serve as a guide to population, they opposed them and there was lot of censorship. And even, it went as far as the closure of the Canadian Institute and the dismantling of its library. So here, was an act of power exercised against this group. So we have lot of written, that is to say that there were thinkers who have been squarely ostracized, who have been put outside of the society.

There is even one, who was the printer of the Reds, who when he died, since he had made declarations of atheism, he was refused a Catholic burial in a Catholic cemetery. It caused a lot of disarray, even of trials, going all the way up to the Vatican. And finally, they came to kind of compromise. Because what happened when people were excommunicated, it's not just being outside the Church. At that time, it was to be put outside of society. To lose your job. Everyone turns away from you, you no longer have a social life.

So the consequences were very, very serious. So you that was one of the most dramatic of this kind of conflict: religious, ideological and social at the time.

 SD: Thank-you. When I think about history, I also think about the change of genre that was used to launch polemics, like poetry, the epigram, and after that it was more books, and nowadays it's more newspapers.

 DG: And Twitter.

SD: OK. Excuse me. Certainly. We'll get there. Do you think there was better effectiveness in certain genres than in others?

DG: Well, the big revolution for polemics is the appearance of newspapers in large numbers.

Before, the polemical exchanges that existed before, you say it sometimes in the form of poems or epigrams, it was in very, very restricted at the court for example, the epigrams that thrown by writers to ridicule the other. So it was in a very, very restricted simply people lettered, obviously, who had access to that.

In short, it developed from newspapers, it's especially that there is a form of democratization because all this goes hand with an increased education. The population has increasing access to education and is able to read newspapers and books.

 SD: So it's everyone, the whole society has changed, not just the genre of exchange.

DG: Journalism. In Quebec, the pamphlet, the controversy, was born with journalism. That's very, very clear.

SD: We're going touch on Twitter, but not right now. Because I just to stay a little while in the idea of history. And you also mentioned that the episodes – and maybe that's one of reasons why you tried to bring all this together – is to remind us of what has been forgotten. And maybe it's normal to forget, forget a lot of details in the exchanges. But on other hand, you wrote that feelings exist like “a veil that expands, becoming omnipresent.” And you don't know the details, but you have rather a feeling. No? And if we continue with feelings that are fuzzy, a little bit... Just accepted without really knowing what happened and why and at what time. Does that pose risks for society? To accept, or maybe even make decisions based on feelings received like that?

DG: Well, yes, it's certain that... But it also with the phenomenon of ignorance. To forget is also related to ignorance, of what has been before us. In fact, the anthology, the idea of an anthology like that, even if it doesn't as far as in 2024, it stops in 2000.

But it's also showing that the world doesn't appear with us. There were predecessors, that there some burning questions today that have also debated before. We also that there questions that have also been forgotten, that say that the issues have disappeared.

And also, we can see, and is something I put forward in the introduction, say, look, there was another way to discuss things too, in other times. We kind of forgot, there were other possibilities too. ,

Because of course, contrary to today, where things circulate very, very quickly, and are forgotten very very quickly, because we are in consume and throw away culture, even from the point of view of ideas. It's such a crazy race that we can't absorb ideas. So, contrary to our era, which is focused on speed, speed, etc. In other eras, we used to take time. Even on the practical side... When we wrote an article, it wasn't published the same day. We had two or three days before it appeared. Today...

SD: The very instant.

DG: Yes, that's it. And then the reply arrived a week later. Well, we had time to munch, we had the time to... You know, the problem today is that everything is based on impulsion. You say we haven't been arrived to talk about X or Twitter yet,

SD: We can, we're on it. But we can...

DG: It's always the mood of moment, the impulse that dominates. Sometimes people regret it because ... And then the next day they my God, I should have thought more about it.

SD: Or maybe we can wish for the idea that everyone, not just writers and journalists, but everyone can express with more feedback and more thought.

DG: Yes, that would be desirable. But I would tell you that the problem behind all this is that is no instance that divides the good things from the bad ones. Because we were talking about polemics in newspapers It's still there. So the directions of the newspapers could choose not to a text. Either because it was poorly written or sometimes it was for ideological too. But let's say that was a selection that was made. And today, on social media there is no selection. That is to say, everyone can decide to block one or another. But let's say that anyone can intervene, even people who barely know how write. Well then, it's... We are confronted with that.

Do we know that when we ask Facebook... Facebook does it have a certain point of view on publications? They will sometimes censor. They are very, very sharp on questions, for example, representation of nudity, things like that. On the contrary, they are not so much, in fact, not at all, on subject of opinions and especially not in the way they are expressed. Other times in the newspapers, there were insults, swear words, sacred words, or blasphemies, it was rejected. Today, all this abounds. And so there are things that come out that are free against the others, violent, hateful. We are in the discourse of the hateful.

And then we get out of field of controversy when we enter hateful discourse. In fact, there are polemics that lead to hate... For example, Louis Frechette, was a liberal in 19th century, ends an article against ultra-mountain saying, “I hate you, bastard.” But it's preceded by three pages of arguments. So it's not just... “You bunch of rotten, you shit.” It’s that, it’s not limited to that. Excuse me.

SD: No. It’s perfect, it’s appropriate.

DG: If there is a problem now, it is there. We are cultivating a discourse of hate that is very threatening for people.

SD: Yes, it very dangerous for people in their private lives also, as we have seen, it is very dangerous against politicians.

DG: There are even death threats. So we're there. We didn't have that in other times. It wasn't in the newspapers.

SD: To finish on a positive note, I want to ask about the differences within our private exchanges, face-to- face. If you have any advice, we are just before Christmas too, so maybe we can talk about Christmas...

DG: Are there subjects to avoid?

SD: Or a way to talk about things and to express our different opinions without causing major explosions?

DG: Well, listen, everyone handles it their own way. But I would say that we should perhaps notice one thing. It's often when we become emotional in a discussion, it's often because, deep down, we don't have an argument. We lack an argument.

I say that because I observed it with myself. I saw that when I became emotional and I had a tendency to raise my tone, it's because I was missing some argument. When I know my subject, I can speak more calmly in general and try to make myself understood.

There is that, there is also ... We should question our identifications. What do we identify with? And why do we identify with many groups that are fighting? Even when it comes to very distant things that do not affect us directly.

It always fascinates me to see here in Montreal or in North America, for example, on the conflict between Israel and Palestine, the way people become...extremely emotional. I understand that there is empathy, that can be for people who suffer, but there is something else in this case. Such an empathy, we don't feel it for what is happening in Sudan, for example, or elsewhere in the world. We have it especially for this particular conflict. So we should accept to question how we are invested in this debate and why.

I don't believe in simple answer of saying, well, I'm for justice and I think there are injustices. Yes, there is that, but there is something else. Because as I pointed out, there are other injustices in the world that don't provoke as much emotion. So how does it happen that suddenly there are certain conflicts that make, that there is a phenomenon of total identification one cause rather than another? And a difficulty in taking a distance?

Without causing the result that we get to a ridiculous spot where a family from Montreal suddenly starts to fight, and where we start to hate our brother because he's part of one group rather than another. So that's... It's part of the invitation to wisdom. I know it doesn't much help because it's everyone who has do for themselves. So I don't have a recipe applicable to everyone.

SD: No,

DG: But... we can see also from a pragmatic point of view, that is to say: What does that give us?

SD: I like that you once wrote about the conversation, that the objective of conversation is rather the relationship, the relationship with the other. And maybe we can also remember that while we discuss things.

DG: Yes, because what is at stake often, when I was saying, we identify with one cause or another, often it's like a facade, a front for personal affirmation. We want, and there's frustration that's created, when we want, for example, to put ourselves above the other, to claim to be right.

And that's why I don't have a response that would be valid for everyone, because everyone has to examine their own relationship with their loved ones. Why create a relationship of strength like that with our loved ones? What are we trying to prove, in the end? Because it's true that sometimes the subject of the debate is secondary, in relation to something that more fundamental. “Who am I to you? Who are you to me?” That's the bottom line. Reciprocal recognition. And fractures are created when this recognition is not experienced. When we feel that other does not recognize us, and vice versa, when we do not see the other.

SD: Dominique Garand I hope it was a nice conversation for you, as it was for me.

DG: I really liked it. And I want thank you. It was really nice. Good-bye to your listeners and listeners. Merci.

(Translation generated by Riverside and reviewed by Sheila Das)