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Glory to God in the Heavens and on Earth Peace to All Humans

The Quest for Peace and Its Pre-sub-positions

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Peace is participation in the harmony
of the rhythm of being.
Raimon Panikkar (1995: 15)

The Art of Peace is a celebration
of the bonding of heaven, earth, and humankind.
It is all that is true, good, and beautiful.
Morihei Ueshiba (2000)

0. Introduction

As I began jotting down my reflections on peace the Internet brought to my notice Robert Kaiser's 'A Thought for Christmas':

Do you know what would have happened
If it had been Three Wise Women
Instead of Three Wise Men?
They would have asked directions,
Arrived on time,
Helped deliver the baby,
Cleaned the stable,
Made a casserole,
Brought practical gifts and
There would be Peace on Earth.

But Matthew's Gospel speaks of wise men, and not of wise women, who set out in search of the Prince of Peace. Given the prevalence among us of the

patriarchal mode we might not be in a mood to take Kaiser's question and suggestion too seriously.

But does the patriarchal history of humans give witness to cultures which down the centuries, and not just at some period of time, have concentrated on peace, trained for peace, or which did not wage war or prepare for war or *believe* in war as a means of 'achieving peace'? Would it be unfounded to assert that war seems to be almost an invariant of culture, in-built so to say in the very systems of culture?.

Be that as it may, our understanding of peace is bedevilled by and centred around one complex of problems, that is, war. a) The quest for peace is invariably connected to, and understood and

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Abstract: Does the patriarchal history of humans give witness to cultures which down the centuries, and not just at some period of time, have concentrated on peace, trained for peace, or which did not wage war or prepare for war or believe in war as a means of 'achieving peace'? Would it be unfounded to assert that war seems to be almost an invariant of culture, in-built so to say in the very systems of culture? Be that as it may, our understanding of peace is bedevilled by and centred around one complex of problems, that is, war. a) The quest for peace is invariably connected to, and understood and aimed at primarily in the context of war.

aimed at primarily in the context of war; b) Peace is seen as something to be achieved by human effort; c) Working for peace has come to be equated with working for the cessation of bellicose activity; d) A positive understanding of and a positive preparation for peace appears to be absent in the pre-understanding of the diverse cultures of humankind. Perhaps this is too sweeping a statement but any exaggeration that it expresses can be forgiven if it challenges someone to falsify it on the basis of historical data.¹

There is, however, another important factor: Religions somehow connect peace with the ultimate goal of life. Whether it is peace, *Shanti* or *Shalom* it always refers to the state of ultimate freedom. It is hardly ever mentioned in the context of war. The peace that religions proclaim is not the absence of war. It is a peace that is ultimate, definitive and holistic.

There is in addition a third aspect, which although not on the same level as the first two, does claim an existential importance that leaves the first two way behind in the existential shade. Peace of mind is what ordinary citizens whether religious or otherwise, want.

The first strand has given rise to an armament industry of astronomic proportions, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Though the armament race is not as aggressive as it was a few years ago, it is very much alive and is the basis of the competition for world power status.² The second strand has given birth to an other-worldly understanding of religion. Religion thus understood has little or nothing to do with

daily life. And the third strand witnesses to a subjectivistic approach to life. All the three are like oil and water in as much as they do not affect or influence each other. Like parallel lines they do not meet, each going its own way. It is not at all rare that very religious persons are great defenders of the use of arms, especially nuclear weapons. Equally frequent is the phenomenon of 'deeply' religious persons who are totally uninterested in 'worldly' affairs. And the individual's search for peace of mind is neither slowed down nor dampened by the magnitude of the world problems.

On this background I would like to preface my reflections with Raimon Panikkar's nine Sutras on Peace (1995: 15-19).

1. Peace is participation in the harmony of the rhythm of being.
2. It is difficult to live without outer peace; it is impossible to live without inner peace. Their relationship is nondualistic (*advaitic*).
3. Peace is neither conquered for oneself nor imposed on others. Peace is received, as well as discovered, and created. It is a gift (of the Spirit).
4. Victory never leads to peace.
5. Military disarmament requires cultural disarmament.
6. In isolation, no culture, religion or tradition can resolve the problems of the world.
7. Peace pertains essentially to the order of *mythos*, not to that of *logos*.
8. Religion is a way to peace.

9. Only forgiveness, reconciliation, and ongoing dialogue lead to peace and shatter the law of *karma*.

Though my reflections have been influenced by these Sutras I alone bear responsibility for what follows.

1. Consciousness as Consciousness-of-the-World

In spite of the awkwardness of the phrase, 'being-in-the-world' is our normal state of consciousness. We are never aware of ourselves as subjects studying objects. Our everyday normal consciousness experiences a certain 'world', a panorama if you like. It is not objects that we perceive first and last but always a world or part of a world. Whether we are awake or in a dream we are experiencing a certain world. Within this world something or someone strikes us and we turn our attention to that thing or person. We study and concentrate on this thing or person, neglecting the world which surrounds them and in which they find themselves. And after we experience and know them we speak and write about what we know. The first stage is always that of *knowing* and the second stage that of *knowing about*. The former is the primal stage and the latter a derivative stage.

To know, in contradistinction to know about, is to experience a world, never a single object or person. Objects and persons without the world in which they find themselves are mere abstractions. Though human discourse (including speaking and writing) concentrates on objects and persons, it can become or remain authentic only in as much as

it evokes and keeps alive their **[real]** world.

1.1 Myth as the Background Consciousness

The world of our experience of being-in-the-world is not just an 'objective' world 'out there'. On the contrary! It comes to us filtered through the personal and societal mind-set of our culture and our times. Such a mind-set is our background consciousness; it is the concretization of the personal and historico-cultural experience of a people. This is the level which Raimon Panikkar has called 'myth' (Panikkar 1978) It is so called because we do not *see* the myth, *we see through* the myth in much the same way that we *see through* our glasses. It is not only a matter of perceptual seeing but in addition seeing in the sense of understanding, as when in a conversation, we say "I see".

In other words, 'being-in-the-world' and myth 'as the background of consciousness' are very much related. Not only can one not exist without the other, they mutually determine each other. If being-in-the-world lays stress on the perceptual aspect, myth is the aspect of meaning and meaningfulness. Though we cannot directly and at will bring about changes in our 'myth', changes do take place indirectly through what we do and what happens to us.

On this level then a vast majority of humankind finds peace as the absence of war and as the product of human effort. Till now it has hardly entered human consciousness that peace belongs to the realm of mystery, that peace can-

not be produced by human effort and that, as in love, one needs to open up and remove whatever prejudices and obstacles might stand in the way of discovering 'the way to [real] peace'.

Humans have been developing a certain kind of science and technology which, I submit, are deepening the myth of mastery and hybris. Others are working for a healthier environment, for human rights, for women's empowerment, etc. If the former are engaged in the process of making their own contribution towards the myth of mastery, the latter's contribution is giving birth to the myth of mystery and sacramentality.

1.11 The Myth of 'No War is Peace'

Today's mind-set equates peace with 'no war'. Cessation or absence of hostilities is the content of the understanding of peace of our age. Efforts to achieve peace are efforts that make sure that there is no war. Evidently the concentration is on avoiding war and if war does take place one has to ensure that it is brought to a speedy end. The aim is to build a society that does its best to avoid having recourse to war. Paradoxically, if war is sometimes unavoidable it is in order to make sure that a further war is avoided by all means. One takes all the measures possible to escape war. Somehow the focus of this way of thinking and acting is on 'no war'.

In a frame of consciousness like this it is not surprising that the weapons industry flourishes. It has to flourish as indeed it does in our times. Hardly any one questions the legitimacy of a massive arms industry. On the contrary, every country makes sure that it either produces

or has access to the most modern weapons. Weapons are needed to ensure that there is 'no war'. The way of weapons has become the way to peace. War is the means of preserving and achieving peace.

The myth³ of 'no war is peace' is so pervasive on the personal, national, and international levels that it is very difficult to imagine any kind of substantial change of attitude in this regard. As we said, in this approach peace has no positive content, it denotes the absence of war and strife.

1.12 The Hybris Myth

In our times the myth of 'no war is peace' is deepening and is being further reinforced by the dramatic emergence of another myth, namely, the hybris-myth. Hybris was the disease the Greek gods employed to destroy any person who became over-confident.⁴

Along with the rapid growth of technology in our age the conviction is also intensifying that humans are capable of doing anything and everything. There is no limit to human capability and creativity. While this may be true to a certain extent, it is giving rise to a number of other deleterious attitudes.

Firstly, it is true that there is no discernible limit to the capacity of humans to create. We have only to consider the changes that have taken place in the last hundred years, changes in our relationship to the world, changes in our understanding of the human person and changes in our attitudes towards the Divine or to religion for confirmation.

Secondly, the ability to do anything and everything is built on the para-

digm of 'mastery'. This paradigm considers the relationship of humans to the world as masters who [have to] subdue the earth. One day humans will be in a position to do anything and everything and achieve whatever they want. What humans formerly attributed to God, our age is convinced can now be accomplished by science and technology. Such a mentality is responsible for another [well-meaning] slogan 'make love, not war' – a slogan which is symptomatic of the paradigm of 'mastery' in which we find ourselves. Even love is 'makeable'; it can be produced by the will of humans. It is no more a gift, no more a grace. If now love can be produced by humans, then there is nothing which humans cannot make.

The implication of such a way of being-thinking-and-acting is that it leaves no room for mystery. It explains a smile through physio-chemical reactions, reduces love to lust and the joy of being to some emotional state of no importance. Reason is the first, last and final court of appeal. Where reason rules supreme there is understandably no place for mystery. In such a scheme of things reason is bound to triumph in the long run.

2. The Triumph of Reason

The triumph of reason manifests itself in three fields which are fundamental: the cosmic, the human and the divine. The effects are correspondingly the objectification of the world, the blindness of humans vis à vis the depth-dimension of reality and, consequently, the irrelevance of the realm of the Divine.

2.1 The Objectification of the World

The attitude of 'I-It' is indiscriminately extended to the world because the whole of reality is seen as a mere collection of objects. Everything is perceived as something that is manipulable, something that can be 'mastered'. Reality, it is held, can ultimately be reduced to a formula. The aim of all research is to work out this formula.

The objectifying attitude is now spreading in all directions. With reason as their light, humans have set out to realize whatever they can. The only criterion is their capability. If we can do something then we must do it, whatever the price we may have to pay for it. Ethics is built on the supremacy of human reason and supported by the belief that there is no limit to human capability.

2.2 The Blindness of Humans to the Depth-dimension of the World

The blindness that we are referring to is operative in different ways. In a reified world there is no room and no role for the givenness of things. What is denied is not merely the givenness of things but also that the givenness of things has any significance whatever. What alone matters is what we can do with what is given and what is there in the world.

The blindness of humans is also with regard to the way they understand themselves and their relationships to one another. Humans are understood and treated as individuals and not as persons. Consequently they behave as individuals and not as persons. As individuals their centre of gravity is their Ego but as persons they are con-

stituted by relationships. Persons are the way they relate.

2.3 The Irrelevance of Traditional Religion

In their effort to make sense of the origin of 'original sin' the biblical authors recognised the desire of humans to be like God at work in their relationship to God. This desire seems to have reached its culmination in our times and God has been replaced by science and technology or is either dead or has been dethroned or has become irrelevant.

Established religions as the department which looks after divine affairs have done their best to make themselves irrelevant in a variety of ways: by jumping on the bandwagon that increasingly relies on reason; by proclaiming a kind of God who is a super[human] being and who behaves in a super[human] manner; by reducing religion to religious practices, especially ritualistic practices, and to a kind of barter system in which favours are requested in exchange for things done, offered or sacrificed.

3. The Realm beyond Reason

Arguably all these attitudes and dynamics are closely related to a specific understanding of reason, reason as the last instance of appeal. The trouble with such a simplistic but wide-spread attitude is that it is like burying your head in sand. There are things in life which are beyond reason. If we think things through, we shall realize that reason cannot be the last instance since this stance itself would need to be justified. The reasons for the justification would in their turn demand reasons but this

would lead to an unending chain that takes us nowhere and explains nothing. In the last analysis, reason cannot be its own justification. The incessant cry for justification is the product of a consciousness that operates on an altogether different level. It is the background consciousness that can never be justified but which does not need any justification. We are conscious of so much but we are self-conscious of very little of this. There is little from the background consciousness that we can objectify. And yet our everyday consciousness is such that it is inextricably bound up with the world. Our normal everyday consciousness that accompanies all our conscious activity, not least the subject-object knowing, is first and foremost a consciousness of the world surrounding us. It is within this consciousness that all subject-object knowing takes place and finds its justification.

Such a consciousness goes way beyond the realm of reason. The explanation is simple. Such a consciousness is simply there and we have no explanation for it because we can never objectify it fully. But it accompanies us everywhere, in whatever we do and in whatever happens to us. Moreover, it is the realm in which things make sense and reason is sometimes found to be reasonable. It is the realm which remains unquestionable – until it encounters some challenge from elsewhere, that is, from outside itself.

The hybris myth is built on the negligence or even denial of this level of consciousness. Because of its givenness and of the impossibility of its objectification, it could be called the

level of mystery. To understand all this we need to introduce into our discussion a topic which has a bearing on the subject: The phenomenon of our background consciousness which is always and inescapably bound with up the world.

Contrary to the myth of mastery, the emerging myth of mystery and sacramentality recognizes the givenness of things, the gift-nature of humans and their world. The myth makes place for things which go beyond the grasp of reason but still make sense. It makes humans aware that there is a realm in reality which they cannot manipulate and control, and which they cannot produce at will. It makes humans sensitive to the dimension of wholeness, fullness, plenitude. Plenitude is not something which humans have to search for beyond the human and the cosmic dimensions; plenitude is the direction in which these dimensions move. The dynamics of the cosmic and the human dimensions are such that they naturally impel us to search for their wholeness, that is, for the wholeness of the human and the cosmic dimensions.

As we said, this is an emerging myth. In some humans in some sections of the world this myth is gradually making sense. It is slowing spreading in all directions. It is making sense to more and more people cutting across religious, political and social systems. At the same time it is deepening, that is, more and more areas of life are seen as being pervaded by something that is beyond human grasp and control. This does not mean that these persons are becoming more irrational or credulous,

or falling back into the superstitious, or having recourse to simplistic solutions.

The difference between these persons to whom the myth of mystery is making sense and those who are simply credulous and naïve, is to be sought in their relationship to humans and their world [to say nothing of their relationship to the Divine]. The former are showing for the first time in history a sensitivity to the sufferings of people other than those of their religion, their nation, their culture, their race, etc. The same is to be said of the state of the world, of the environment, not just in our own city and country but wherever the environment is in grave danger. We could sum this up in the following way, a way that corresponds to and promotes the dynamics of reality.

3.1 The Symbolic Nature of the World

In a matter of decades an altogether new attitude towards the various inhabitants of this universe has irrupted. Humans are becoming aware of their callous, manipulating and reifying manner of going about this world. They are now responding positively and creatively to the myriad claims that creation makes on them and an increasing number of movements are coming into existence which are attempting to respond to some of these claims, claims of the earth, the weather, the waters, the forests, the animals and fish, wild-life, etc. Humans are gradually realizing that creation is more than an object. There is more to life and creation than mere pragmatism and utility, more than mere reason and explanation and information. The world is

experienced as something that fascinates, sustains and opens up vistas that neither human reason nor imagination could ever conjure up. The world cannot be reduced to mere mathematical formulae. There is a depth-dimension that escapes human grasp and reason.

When we speak of the symbolic nature, the sacramentality, of the world we are referring to the fact that the world is not an object and never can be an object, that there is an element of sacredness and transcendence that escapes human manipulation, and that the object-aspect of the world is only one aspect but not the whole of the world-reality.

3.2 The Symbolizing Nature of Humans

Humans are retrieving their innate sense of symbol. As symbolizers, they are discoverers, not inventors, of the world of symbols. As noted above, a new mentality is emerging among humans of all nations, religions and political systems: a mentality that is cutting across all traditional borders that earlier were so characteristic of race and religion and culture. The value of human person is now being discovered afresh and appreciated in a way that was not present earlier. This is seen in the diverse movements that are emerging in our times: movements committed to the care of refugees and children and women, to the defence of primal people, to upholding and promoting awareness of human rights, even of the rights of prisoners and condemned persons, of prisoners of war, of asylum seekers, etc. These are not just movements that are

supported by gentlemen of leisure but by people committed to paying the price, both financially and in terms of personal risk and sacrifice.

A new attitude to human persons is now in the making. Commitment to religion and nation, in whose names wars were waged (and are still being waged in some parts of the globe), is no more so absolute and so unconditional. The human person and the world of the human are taking on a value that is new to many cultures. Antiquated, obsolete and irrelevant legislation is being revised. New legislation that respects the rights of the human person (and not just of the individual) and its duties towards the earth and its inhabitants is being enacted. Concerned and committed citizens are pointing out lacunae and ambiguities in national and international laws.

True, this symbolizing or sacramentality is far from having reached its climax, far from pervading the majority of humans. We still have a world-order that is determined and decided upon by a political and economic elite, not by the welfare of the majority. What we are saying is that a new attitude that is 'catholic' in intention and extension is in the making and is making its appearance all over the world.

3.3 The Search for Meaning

Formerly it was primarily religion that professed to help people find meaning in life. Today we have all kinds of non-institutional and secular movements that claim to offer meaning. The quest is no more restricted to religious and traditional institutions. New forms

of religiosity are emerging outside traditional walls. Religion is undergoing a re-vision and is being understood and professed in new and non-traditional ways. What formerly was promised by religions: peace, love, joy, freedom and justice, is now being offered by groups that are inspired by secular ideologies.

Committed citizens are finding meaning in movements that have little or nothing to do with traditional religions and institutions. And what is more important, in spite of bouts of fundamentalism and fanaticism, traditional religions are now engaged in some honest soul searching. The spirit of 'aggiornamento' is blowing not only in the Catholic and the Christian Churches but also in other religious traditions, not least in the secular fields as well.

4. Theses on Peace

What is the conclusion of our discussion? What has our discussion to do with peace? What has become of our quest for peace? On the background of our discussion we are now in a position to formulate our theses on the pre-suppositions of peace.

Thesis One: Peace is not a product of human effort.

Peace is not something that humans can produce. This realization is the first step that moves away from the myths of 'no war is peace' and of hybris. There are two aspects here which are intimately connected: one, peace cannot be produced by humans and two, moving away from a false understanding of peace. Being caught up in the illusion that peace can be produced

through intense pressure and meaningful negotiations, it is not at all an easy thing to free oneself from this illusion. Freedom from this illusion means changing one's direction by 180 degrees, means weakening one's bonds with the myths of 'no war is peace' and of hybris. Whereas both these myths (in reality they are merely two aspects of the same myth) rely on human determination and will power to produce peace, the realization that peace cannot be produced sets one in the diametrically opposite direction of a realm that cannot be manipulated by human will.

Thesis Two: Peace belongs to the realm of the non-manipulable.

Convictions are part of the universe of meaning which is not manipulable; that is why they make sense. To state this is to recognize that the human condition is subject to dimensions over which humans have no control. Convictions cannot be produced at will. They are brought forth by a combination of social conditions, societal attitudes and prejudices as well as by personal history. A certain amount of manipulation is done by the media but even they do not always or fully succeed. There is no fool proof way to ensure that one can manipulate successfully in much the same way that there is no foolproof way to ensure that the voters will choose the candidate on whose behalf one has been campaigning. There are things that simply escape human manipulation.

To produce changes in societal attitudes one has to work at various levels, while fully recognizing that in spite of all this work there is neither a recipe for nor a guarantee of success. Such a

recognition is the beginning of a new way of being.

Thesis Three: Peace is a process.

The new way of being is based on the insight that peace belongs to an altogether different dimension of being, a dimension over which humans have no direct control. However, this does not mean that the quest for peace exempts humans from working for peace! Paradoxically the contribution of humans is the most important factor in working for or against peace. It is humans who are connected with the peace process in a way that can promote or prevent its progress. Whatever they do accelerates, slows down or prevents the peace process.

Humans have a response-ability that needs to be cultivated in an integral manner. Humans are not just humans; they share in the cosmotheandric nature of reality. The process of peace becomes integral only when their cosmotheandric nature comes into its own. The process of peace is in fact a cosmotheandric process.

Thesis Four: The process of peace requires a holistic approach to reality.

Reality is pluralistic and manifests unity in diversity. The three constituents of reality, the cosmic, the human and the divine, are its three irreducible centres. Our approach to reality discloses these three centres. The dynamics of these centres are unique but interdependent. One cannot be without the other two but in such a manner that none can be reduced in any way to the others.

The world surrounding us (in which we live, move and have our being) comes to meet us; it reveals itself to us. In this it takes the initiative. Its dynamics are centripetal. The dynamics of the human, however, are centrifugal, that is, they move towards the world, they are not inward looking. And the dynamics of the divine are orbital, circular, all-pervading. The threefold dynamics (namely, the centripetal, the centrifugal and the orbital) are complementary; they are unique but at the same time they are mutually dependent. Only when these threefold dynamics are respected is the process of peace on the right track.

However, our approach to reality is now fragmented and subjectivistic. It needs integration which is not the same as uniformity. Integration refers to the wholeness that emerges from the dovetailing of their respective dynamics into what has been called *perichoresis* or *circumincessio*. The dynamics of the three dimensions have to be experienced and expressed harmoniously. Needless to repeat that such integration, such harmony, is not a one-time goal but an ongoing process.

In what does such harmony consist? How is such an integration possible? We are speaking of the integration of the three dimensions of reality. Humans in our times do not to a great extent respect the threefold dynamics of reality. As we saw earlier, the cosmic dimension is being objectified, that is, it is being reduced to an object; humans have become blind and are unable to perceive the wholeness of reality; the consequence is that life is becoming in-

creasingly meaningless. The search for meaning in life has become a major problem

We have to discover that the world is not a mere collection of objects but a living reality. It is not a mere 'It' but also a 'Thou'. The sacramentality of the universe refers to this fact. The sacramentality of humans is a response to the claim that the sacramentality of the universe makes on us, namely to discover and respect its 'Thou-aspect'. Only when the two eyes of sacramentality and sacramentality synchronize, will the birth of harmony and integration be possible.

Thesis Five: The sacramentality of the universe expresses the Dharma of the universe.

The discovery of the sacramentality of the universe is in effect an insight into the relational nature of the universe, a discovery of the way that every thing is related to every thing, that for anything to be it has to be connected with its surroundings, and related to history, time and space. The sacramentality of the universe expresses the fact that the whole network of reality's relationships is more than the sum of its parts. The whole is made present through its parts. To shake a person's hand is to welcome the [whole] person, not just the hand. The networking of the Dharma of all things is like that of a complex organism wherein every thing exists because of every thing. But our access to the whole is always through its parts. The sacramental nature of the universe is such that the whole exists in the parts and the parts in the whole. To neglect or hurt a part is

to neglect or hurt the whole. The Dharma of the universe is upheld only through the Dharma of its parts. The integral Dharma of the parts, however, always leads to the Dharma of the whole. In this scenario the work of humans brings to expression their experience of wholeness and integration.

Thesis Six: The sacramentality of humans is an expression of their religiosity.

The integral Dharma of the parts is discovered by the sacramentality of humans, that is, by a mentality whose perspective is holistic. If sacramentality is a characteristic of the cosmic dimension, sacramentality is the characteristic of the human dimension. Far from objectifying the cosmic dimension sacramentality focuses on the wholeness of reality, that is, it does not get stuck to the externals of things as it were. Sacramentality then reveals a world of symbols, not of objects. The difference between the two is this: Whereas an object has no depth-dimension a symbol makes present the symbolized reality, as the human body makes present the human person without being identical with it. The function of the symbol, like that of the body, is to make present the symbolized reality. Sacramentality discovers that reality is symbolic and that the really real is most adequately experienced as symbol and best expressed in symbolic language.

If one way of looking at religiosity is the search of the human for the divine in the cosmic then sacramentality is an expression of the authentically religious nature of humans. In this case religiosity can be paraphrased as the

quest for wholeness, fullness, plenitude. Such a religiosity brings forth a cosmic liturgy in which human work is understood as being not only for their survival and for the enjoyment of the good life, but also and much more for giving expression to the experience of wholeness and integration.

Thesis Seven: The quest for wholeness is the synchronization of the two eyes of the sacramentality of the universe and the sacramentality of humans.

Clearly the sacramental nature of the universe and the sacramental attitude of humans are complementary, one without the other is not possible and not genuine. The quest for wholeness ensures that the two work in tandem. The attitude of humans to humans, though different from their attitude to the universe, is not one of superiority but of complementarity: humans are part of the universe and the universe is part of humans. When this happens, that is, when the two eyes (sacramentality of the universe and the sacramentality of humans) synchronize the depth-dimension becomes manifest. Synchronize means that the sacramentality of the universe promotes work for the welfare of humans and vice versa, the sacramentality of humans promotes the welfare of the universe.

The welfare of the universe demands respect for the Dharma of each and every person and thing. It demands justice and a just order at every level. A just order requires a right understanding of things and their interrelationships. A just order requires that the world be treated not as a mere object but as the

dwelling place of the divine. The world matters because it is more than matter.

The welfare of humans is best promoted by freedom that helps them to be free internally and externally. Internal freedom refers to freedom from fears, anxieties, compulsions, obsessions, prejudices, etc., a freedom that allows one to function without internal compulsions. External freedom refers to freedom from the rigid and narrow borders of ethnicity, nationality, religion, culture, etc., a freedom that allows and promotes respect for the freedom of others. The rights of one group have to be such that they articulate and point to their duties in such a way that they promote the rights and point to the duties of other groups.

Thesis Eight: The ingredients of peace are justice, freedom and wholeness.

Because both justice and freedom belong to the order of the non-manipulable and so are bound to be understood differently in different cultures and situations, a holistic spirit has to pervade them and lead them in the direction of wholeness. This is a direction which every person and every tradition has to take if it is to overcome its one-sidedness. But no tradition alone is capable of this. This is a task that all traditions have to be engaged in if indeed they are serious about moving in the direction of wholeness. Justice and freedom without the striving for wholeness will be like the two eyes, each going its own separate ways. There can be no justice in the world order without freedom. A justice that is imposed from above (be it through a government or a dictatorial

system) can never be justice; it has to emerge in a scheme of things where freedom is of the essence. And a freedom that does not strive for a just world order can never be holistic and so will be very one-sided indeed. Real justice has to be open to and promote freedom; and genuine freedom has to lead to a deepening sense of justice. This is ensured wherever there is the quest for wholeness.

The three dimensions of reality, the symbolic nature of the universe promoting a just order in the universe, the symbolizing nature of humans enhancing the freedom of humans and the symbolized nature of the divine expressing the wholeness of the universe and the humans are the constituents of real peace. In other words, justice, freedom and wholeness are the pre-sub-positions of peace. *The path that leads to the discovery of the cosmotheandric nature of reality is the way to real peace.* The trinitarian character of reality poses a threefold challenge: to respect the specific dynamics of each of its dimensions. The prevalent form of globalization is a new form of colonialism which does not respect any dynamics, either of the human or of the cosmos and much less of the divine.

*Thesis Nine: The dialogue of cultures constitutes the programme of peace.*⁵

Translated into more pragmatic language the quest for wholeness implies among other things the dialogue of cultures. No culture alone is in a position to respond to the threefold dynamics of reality. All cultures will have to collaborate. There is no choice. The al-

ternative is chaos. Dialogue is a key ingredient in the process of peace. Though dialogue cannot directly create peace it can help prevent and foresee obstacles and hindrances to peace. Most importantly by showing the interdependence of cultures it can lay bare the insufficiency of every single culture and the need of mutual correction and cross-fertilization of cultures.

Cultures have their blind-spots and no culture by itself can discover them. It is only in and through encounters with other cultures that a culture can discover not only its own hidden (positive and negative) aspects, but also that there are elements that it does not possess. Through encounters with other cultures a culture can become aware of what it possesses but does not know well, as also what it does not possess and does not know.

The dialogue of cultures is not merely the need of the hour and our only way to survival. More than that it is our way to peace. Only in and through dialogue can culture work for justice and peace. Just as the synchronization of the two eyes deepens the sense of depth-vision, so too the synchronization of cultures brings out the sense of complementarity and belonging. It is the dialogue of cultures alone that can contribute to recognizing and overcoming the seven deadly sins of our cultures.

- a. Cultures suffer from the illusion that they are self-sufficient.
- b. They function like ghettos.
- c. They are blind to their weaknesses.
- d. They set themselves up as absolute [norm].

- e. Violence is inbuilt in the hidden nooks and corners of cultures.
- f. In diverse but subtle ways cultures legitimize violence.'
- g. Cultures are intolerant of other cultures.

In response to this, the dialogue of cultures brings to our notice what we may call its seven cardinal virtues:

- a. The dialogue of cultures promotes awareness of the interdependence of cultures.
- b. It leads them to function like parts of an organism.
- c. It makes them (1) recognize their own strengths & weaknesses and (2) the strengths and weaknesses of other cultures.
- d. It highlights the specific contribution of each culture without absolutizing it.
- e. It exposes the provocations to & the causes of violence at work in cultures.
- f. It encourages reconciliation as a new way of being culture.
- g. It makes a culture reach out to other cultures.

The dialogue of cultures alone can exorcize our cultures and open them up to their weaknesses and confirm them in their strengths. Far from reducing cultures to uniformity such a dialogue can bring out the best in each of them by taking us along the path of organic unity in enriching diversity. It alone can bring cultures to the realization that our

present understanding of peace is substantially deficient and that it has to travel not farther but in an altogether different direction – the direction of freedom, justice and wholeness.

One last but immensely important point: the dialogue of cultures can promote friendship among cultures, and where there is friendship there will be gratitude, not calculation. Where there is calculation the probability of war is great but where there is gratitude we can hope that war will be only a distant possibility. That however is neither the best nor the ultimate gift of gratitude; no war is only its side-effect. The crown of gratitude is peace, a peace that surpasses all understanding but whose symptoms are freedom, justice and the quest for wholeness.

5. Conclusion

Peace like love is not a product of human effort. Real peace cannot be produced, much less manipulated. Peace like love will happen when the conditions are appropriate and the constellations auspicious. We can, however, create conditions of dialogue, and dialogue can create conditions for the spirit of peace to descend upon us. However important the different kinds of dialogue may be, the dialogue of cultures has to take priority. Dialogue as the programme of the future can best be prepared by promoting conditions that are suitable for freedom, justice and the quest for wholeness.⁶

Endnotes

1. See the laudable initiative of The Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice for the 21st Century: "A culture of peace will be achieved when citizens of the world understand

global problems, have the skills to resolve conflicts and struggle for justice non-violently, live by international standards of human rights and equity, appreciate cultural diversity, and respect the Earth and each other.

“Such learning can only be achieved with systematic education for peace.” The Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice’s four major strands are:

- 1) Root Causes of War / Culture of Peace.
 - 2) International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law and Institutions
 - 3) Prevention, Resolution and Transformation of Violent Conflict and
 - 4) Disarmament and Human Security.
2. According to the World Bank in 1987 India spent \$3,200 million, Afghanistan \$1,300 million and Angola \$1,600 million. See Panikkar, *Cultural Disarmament. The Way to Peace*, 109, fn 31.
3. Myth is used here not in the antiquated sense that the Oxford Dictionary employs but in the sense of a way of being-thinking-and-acting that is characteristic of a (linguistic, ethnic, religious or cultural) community but which is so much taken for granted that it forms the unquestioned and unquestionable background of that community. Myth is something dynamic that is constantly undergoing change. Myth as the background of our consciousness is to a great extent not accessible but makes itself felt in the different thought patterns (‘myths’), values and attitudes that are specific to it. These function as the guide-lines along which the workings of the specific Mythos (of any community) take place. Mythos is that through which we know without knowing that we know it.
4. Hybris represents in effect the age-old temptation to be like God!
5. As I was finalizing this manuscript the Internet brought in the message of Pope John Paul II for the World Day of Peace, “Dialogue between Cultures for a Civilization of Love and Peace”! Among other things, he makes the following observations (Nr 9): “In this perspective, *dialogue between cultures* — the theme of this World Day of Peace Message — *emerges as an intrinsic demand of human nature itself, as well as of culture*. It is a dialogue which protects the distinctiveness of cultures as historical and creative expressions of the underlying unity of the human family, and which sustains understanding and communion between them. The notion of communion, which has its source in Christian revelation and finds its sublime prototype in the Triune God (cf. Jn 17:11, 21), never implies a dull uniformity or enforced homogenization or assimilation; rather it expresses the convergence of a multiform variety, and is therefore a sign of richness and a promise of growth.”
- “Dialogue leads to a recognition of diversity and opens the mind to the mutual acceptance and genuine collaboration demanded by the human family’s basic vocation to unity. As such, dialogue is a privileged means for building *the civilization of love and peace* that my revered predecessor Pope Paul VI indicated as the ideal to inspire cultural, social, political and economic life in our time. At the beginning of the Third Millennium, it is urgent that *the path of dialogue* be proposed once again to a world marked by excessive conflict and violence, a world at times discouraged and incapable of seeing signs of hope and peace.” (Cf. <http://www.vatican.va>)
6. See for example the press release by the Israel Interfaith Association 28 Dec. 2000. Chief Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron will be hosted a meeting, organized in cooperation with the Israel Interfaith Association, of most important Sheiks and Rabbis of Israel, in order to make the voice heard for the urgent need and the possibility of a religiously based peace process.

The meeting took place during Cinanukah and Id El Fitr, on Thursday 28 December 2000, with the participation of some twenty leading Sheiks and Rabbis of towns around the whole of Israel.

The Rabbis and Sheiks, led by Chief Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron (Sepharadi Chief Rabbi of Israel) and Sheik Adel Zeidan (National Supervisor of Mosques and Chair of the Muslim Leaders Association), all stressed the important role of religious leaders to promote mutual understanding and respect. They all said that the common perception of religious people as source of violent extremism is wrong and is a disgrace and determined that there is no way to talk in the name of God and at the same time encourage violence.

The Rabbis and the Sheiks called upon political leaders to leave the religious sites for joint discussion and care of religious leaders, who can reach spiritual understandings between them, as the people who are responsible for the religious sites in front of God.

All Sheiks and Rabbis blessed this historical meeting and agreed to establish a permanent forum for actual discussions (Website in English: <http://www.israel-interfaith.org.il>).

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