

September Eleven: A Metaphor of Tragedy and Transgression

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Abstract: Basing himself on September 11, as a metaphor, the author discusses the notion of violence and traces its deep-rooted causes. Finally the author sees the answer to the violence in the emergence of a new “explorative” myth and in the cosmic confidence of love.

Keywords: Mystery, mastery, myth, violence, peace, community.

When one alone dreams, it remains a dream
but when many join in the dream, it becomes a reality.
Archbishop Romero

0. Introduction

If September Eleven (2001) has shown anything then it is this: events of such magnitude are not mere happenings that die out unnoticed or just fade away; rather they enter the realm of language and have a life of their own in the form of metaphor. Metaphors are in fact linguistic avatars that keep the original event alive. Long after the event metaphors keep the fire alive that was ignited by the event. Life-giving metaphors fan fires that spread warmth and light; they promote life. If, however, they are anti-life their flames of hate and frustration wreak havoc and devastation. September Eleven is a metaphor of the latter sort for it was born in violence and it breeds violence. Both the sides (the terrorists and those fighting terrorism) to whom we owe this metaphor are wholly and undeniably violent though both may proclaim that their real and final goal is justice (in case of the former) and security and peace (in case of the latter). The terrorists by definition (and probably by their own proclamation) use terror-tactics to achieve their ends. And those fighting terrorism have recourse to methods that human right activists would unhesitatingly declare to be unacceptable; their violence is on a scale that is much

greater than that of the terrorists themselves.¹ But strangely both share a common belief that *the ultimate solution to any dispute lies in the use of violence.*²

What seems to escape their notice is that such a stance is tantamount to asserting that it is the strongest person, the strongest group, the strongest party, the strongest nation, the strongest multinational company or corporation that sets the norm for what is ultimately right. In the long run might arrogates to itself the position that it alone is right. It is this conviction that persuades nations to continually keep on arming themselves and updating their arsenal so that they remain, if not stronger than, at least as strong as their neighbours. It is this conviction that has led to the economy depending to a great extent on the ammunition industry.³ It is this conviction that has created a situation in which the most powerful nation dictates to the rest of the world how political and economic problems are to be solved and in the process transgresses accepted forms of treating prisoners and respecting weaker nation states with different visions of God, World and Man.⁴

At work behind all this is the Mantra: the more powerful a nation, the more secure it is. Here deterrence is the magic word. Though deterrence may prevent a war the cost of deterrence is not less tragic.⁵ In the case of India and Pakistan, for instance, the astronomical sums spent on armies and ammunitions have kept the majority of their peoples in misery.⁶ War brings misery on all; but deterrence keeps those whom our armies are meant to protect perpetually poor.⁷

This is in no way to say that war is to be preferred to deterrence. This is only to point out the disastrous consequences of a mentality that believes only war and violence can solve regional, national and international problems. Politicians take us for a ride when they make us believe that where there is no deterrence war is a real possibility.

Those who agonize over the innocent victims of such violence realize that it is impossible for a belief like this to deliver the goods. Violence can only produce through a spiraling effect further violence. The path of violence is basically a negative path, a path of

destruction and more destruction because more sophisticated weapons only mean more extensive and more speedy destruction. Weapons may prevent war but they cannot lead to peace.⁸

Simplistic as this philosophy sounds so widespread is its adherence. One encounters it not only in the military sphere; it is at work also in the social, economic, political, cultural and religious fields as well. The more powerful a lobby is the more it is convinced that its position is more right than that of the less powerful lobbies. The stronger a nation the more right it believes it has vis-à-vis the weaker nations.

After the attack on the World Trade Centre and on the Pentagon, the map of the political world has changed and is changing. Friends have been jilted and in some case enemies have turned friends. The battle-lines are being drawn differently: the terrorists vis-à-vis those fighting terrorism; not like before the capitalist camp against the socialist, or the North-South divide.

The point that should make us pause to think is this: Is not the present situation in fact a consequence of the war-mentality itself? On the background of a war-mentality can there be any solution that is not violent? The fight against terrorism is a *war* that is not less violent than the attacks of the terrorists and therefore cannot really be the solution we are seeking. It is really part of the problem.

1. The Metaphor of September Eleven

Metaphors are born, not created. The birth of a metaphor is an ex-expression (what is pressed out) of a specific state of affairs and it symbolizes a deeper process in reality.⁹ Not every happening in history gets baptized with a name. Only privileged events enter the sphere of language in the form of metaphors. The power of a metaphor is in proportion to the diverse responses it evokes. The “holocaust” is one such metaphor. But metaphors are not only negative; there are positive metaphors too like Amnesty International, Greenpeace and Narmada Bachao Andolan.

A metaphor is a world in miniature. It evokes a world depending on the kind of metaphor it is. Amnesty International evokes not

only a sense of justice in the face of injustice meted out to helpless prisoners; it also brings to mind the selflessness, dedication and commitment of some people to helping such prisoners get justice. The vast but almost impenetrable world of unjust practices towards prisoners is one aspect of the metaphor; and the other is the goodness of people that makes them risk their lives – selflessly – in the cause of persons caught up in a helpless, perhaps even hopeless, situation. Since such a world is not a cold rational world but a world where commitment is at work it touches one to the quick – provided one is sensitive to issues of justice and fair-play.

The fatal day of September Eleven has become so powerful a metaphor that like a flash of lightning it has revealed unambiguously the true positions of the world's nation-states. Putting it simplistically (and this is what is happening most of the time), September Eleven has allegedly divided the world into those who are for and those who are against terror. This is how the calamitous day is being understood at least for the time being. Without doubt September Eleven is a violent metaphor. It is also a tragic metaphor because there is going to be no end to the spiral of violence and counter-violence that it has engendered.¹⁰

September Eleven evokes strong emotions on all sides. For some it is the embodiment of terror; hence their determination to fight against terrorism and to wipe out the terrorists by all conceivable means. For others it is part of the holy war against injustice in the form of capitalism, consumerism and cultural imperialism. For these September Eleven was a declaration of war; the first salvo was meticulously planned and precisely fired against the symbols of the world's military might and economic power.

But this is only the tip of the iceberg. A metaphor is not like ornamental language that is in effect superfluous and therefore dispensable. Being in the nature of evocative language, a metaphor is not limited to a specific dimension of reality as does, for example, informative/descriptive language but evokes all possible levels of reality. Looking at our metaphor more closely we discover that it is a symptom of the clash of two ways of thinking, almost a clash of two civilizations (as Huntington had foretold – a thesis we were not prepared to accept when he presented it). The clash that September

Eleven embodies illustrates the power of the metaphor. In its tragic expression it highlights the inability (or perhaps the unwillingness?) of the two sides to make the effort to understand the other, to communicate peacefully and to dialogue and settle their differences non-violently.

Deeper still it is a tragic testimony to the growing inhumanity of the world's economic¹¹ and political order, on the one hand, and to the increasing vulnerability of religion to being hijacked for political and ideological purposes, on the other. To believe that the economic and political order of the world has nothing to do with terrorism is to live in a fool's paradise. But as Indians we believe that the economic and political sins of the first world are not exempt from the law of Karma. Some day they will have to reckon with the consequences. Indeed the reckoning appears to have begun already. Is it, for instance, an accident that the so-called "muslim" terrorists are from those very "Islamic" countries whose autocratic rulers are being supported by those who are fighting terrorism?

September Eleven has unfortunately and without any real basis given Islam a bad name. This has as much to do with a media that is biased against Islam as with religious leaders who have very little of the spirit of that noble religion. The media insist on speaking of "Islamic" terrorists, hardly noticing the contradiction between the religion of peace ("Islam") and terrorism. Terrorists cannot by any definition be associated with religion, even if they profess to belong to and act in the name of a religion. Similarly, leaders with political ambitions who for social, economic and political reasons take religion and their followers for a ride and consequently cannot be given the name of "religious" leaders, even if they claim to be religious.

Furthermore, our metaphor has also fanned the flames of fanaticism, chauvinism and fundamentalism. Fanaticism because the reaction to one kind of fanaticism is another kind of fanaticism. Chauvinism and nationalism that are emerging in some countries are a far cry from the kind of democratic behaviour their founding fathers dreamed of for their people. The reaction to this variety of nationalism will be also of a negative kind. There is no reason to believe that the Law of Karma will make an exception in the case of these countries.

Our metaphor has however brought forth in some cases heroism and humane behaviour in the best sense and in the highest degree. People have forgotten their differences and have risen to the occasion to be of service to the victims and their families. In a way, September 11 has created a wave of “sympathy and compassion” all over the world. People of good will have shown their feelings of community and solidarity across all distinctions of political, economic, social and cultural systems. They have not only condemned the dastardly action of the terrorists and expressed their genuine feelings of disgust. Indirectly they have shown that such suffering has in a strange way united the world – to some extent.

All this and more is symbolized by the destruction of the towers and the terrorists along with their victims in the metaphor of September Eleven.¹² What, however, we need to examine further is what the metaphor is silent about.

2. The Myth of Might is Right

Human history could generally be summarized as the on-going explicitation of the war-mentality that has dominated human consciousness. The war-mentality refers to that consciousness that implicitly but very effectively takes for granted that in the last analysis only war and violence can solve all disputes.¹³

It is such an aggressive background that is operative in our cultures. This is equally true of the way we understand [and practise] our religions and of our approach to the world of human beings. Rarely and in exceptionally few moments do cultures refuse to fan the flames of hate and division but historically speaking, religions have more often than not jumped on the band wagon of war and violence to solve disputes and disagreements.¹⁴

Similarly, relations between individuals and societies are founded on the basis of strength and aggression, and not on the basis of love and the greater common good. Cultures, however advanced, have mostly violence in-built in their systems, their protestations to the contrary notwithstanding. Indeed the more advanced a culture is the more it appears to invent increasingly violent modes of relating and dominating. This is so true today that peace has merely come to mean “no war”. Vis-à-vis such a situation the generalization that

there is hardly any culture that can be said to be a culture of dialogue will not seem too far off the mark. If at all, it is only the dialogue of “arms” that seems to make sense on the war-horizon. Consequently all dialogue is merely about the quantum of arsenal. A nation is judged to be great in proportion to its military might, not its humanizing, liberating and holistic qualities, to say nothing about dialogue, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Economic relationships are a good example of the way a war-horizon functions. A so-called good economic theory rarely talks of the greater common good of the majority of human beings but mostly aims at the good of a nation or a group of people ruling a nation, overlooking and perhaps even taking into account the “collateral damage” done to weaker peoples and nations. Social relations are not about liberating people but about building infrastructures that protect “us” against “them” and are generally tilted in favour of the rich and the strong against the poor and the weak.

Personal relationships are no better. They turn out to be more like business relationships where the question is who gets the most or the better of the relationship. Relationships between men and women are a matter of conquest (if it is a question of love) or of commodity (if it is a matter of employing someone) or subordination (as in the case of patriarchy).

The war-mentality is most evident in the way we are going about the world around us. The sense of mystery about rivers, oceans, air, mountains, valleys, animals, forests, etc. seems to be disappearing as fast as some of the species of life. Instrumentalization of nature has come to be our ‘normal’ mode of interacting with the world.

Not surprisingly, then training for war is a top priority of nation states, completely overlooking, if not neglecting, training for peace. Hence peace which is paraphrased as the absence of war is said to be something that victorious armies bring about; not a peace that is of the nature of a gift which people of good will receive [from above] when they work for an egalitarian society where justice is the foundation and harmony the goal.

3. **Paradigm Shift: From an Exploitative to an Explorative Myth**

In such a context we have to reflect on the meaning and implications of the horizon of peace. We have neither the experience nor the imagination to really understand what this means. We only have our negative experiences deriving from the horizon of war and aggression. But we also have the yearning for peace, a peace that pervades all areas of life, a peace that surpasses all understanding.

Here questions like the following may arise:

How would the horizon of peace work in our respective fields? What kind of societies and what kind of a world order can it bring about? How can it deal with and revive the smaller and simpler cultures that are being condemned to die? What kind of systems of education can it provide? How can it approach Mother Earth in a peace-ful way? What holistic understandings of religions can it promote? What kind of peace treaties can it help work out for warring nations? What kind of models can ensure healthy, egalitarian and complementary relationships between men and women?

The paradigm shift has to be from the horizon of war which is exploitative to the horizon of peace which is explorative. The former lays stress on 'doing', the latter on 'discovering'. The dominance of the doing-model leads to overconfidence and hybris because it is exploitative. The discovering-model suggests a relational approach because it is explorative. The former aims at 'mastery' of the world, the latter discovers 'mystery' (depth-dimension) in every single thing. Doing has to be guided by discovering. That implies that doing has to be subordinated to discovering if exploitation and manipulation are to be avoided.

The task may seem to be almost impossible but we have no alternative except to begin from the very beginning and start spelling out our ideas, our yearnings and our dreams about a world that is founded on peace and rejects every form of violence as a solution.

To accomplish this task we need to develop a hermeneutic of suspicion which challenges the traditional expressions and formulations of the values and meaning-structures of our cultures. To put it positively, we have to ask ourselves the following:

Are our cultures open to other cultures? Do they promote dialogue with and understanding of other cultures or they suffer from a superiority complex and look down upon other cultures? Are they outgoing, ready to learn from others or do they believe that they are self-sufficient and so have nothing to learn from others?

3.1 The 'Exploitative' Myth and the Attitude of Mastery

The paradigm of making-and-manipulating is founded on reason. This could be paraphrased in the following manner: In the long run reason is sufficient to find solutions for all our problems if we work hard enough to solve them. Accordingly all our reliance is solely on human reason and human capability. Ever since the enlightenment the stress on reason has been increasing, indeed to such an extent that today reason is gradually being taken to be not only the single most important faculty of humans; it is even considered to be the highest. Human reason along with human capability is supposed to have no limits at all. We have reached a state where we have come to believe that we can do anything. It is only a matter of time and patience.

Reason analyses and reasons out step by step the different layers of an argument or a situation. Our age makes use of reason to see how we can subdue and exploit persons, nations and Mother Earth and, if possible, bring everyone and everything under our control. Reason has become the ultimate authority on which we build our life and our civilization. Though there are many who believe in the immaculate conception of science, the brain child of reason, there are others who are not willing to buy this. Reason, they say, can function at a certain level only and so is unable to have access to other levels of reality. If we live and act only on the basis of reason (as we usually do) then the will-to-power becomes the dominating factor in our lives. This is the foundation of the exploitative mentality.

Raimon Panikkar has, in his characteristic manner, drawn attention to the inordinate homage we pay to reason in the following three Sutras¹⁵:

a) Reason is not the whole of Logos. b) Logos is not the whole of Man. c) Man is not the whole of Being.

In contrast, our present model of constructing the world of meaning is built on the supremacy of human reason, the self-sufficiency of human capability and the centrality of the human being in the world. Making, doing, producing as reason tells us to do – this is the myth that animates our age, a myth which to a great extent neglects the attitude of being open to and discovering the other dimensions of reality.

It is true that reason like light brightens the way and therefore is indispensable. Indispensable? Yes, but not sufficient. We also need understanding to recognize that the way that is lighted up is really our way. Reason reasons out but it is the understanding that understands. Reason analyses and deduces but it cannot do so without understanding. Reason is based on understanding. Without understanding reason cannot function. Any reason in order to be reasonable has to be understood but understanding cannot be reasoned out. Hence, to neglect the realm of understanding and to focus on reason alone is to have a one-sided view of the understanding process.

As a matter of fact reason does not constitute the whole range of human consciousness. Human consciousness is more than reason; it also includes understanding. Take, for instance, a joke. It cannot be reasoned out; it needs to be understood. Or again, take love. Love is not founded on reason though one may seek reasons for love. Love needs to be experienced, understood and enjoyed. In other words, there are areas in life where reason cannot enter, much less function.

But today's Mantra is different: Make love, not war! That is to say, both love and war are reduced to the same level, the level of making and manipulating. We are led to believe that love like war can be made! Humans can make anything today. And reason supports and says: You may do whatever you can! Do whatever you are capable of. The effect of this is that we have begun to believe that *we can accomplish anything! We are self-sufficient!* With that we have succumbed to the old temptation of wanting to be like God!

Now the self-sufficiency of human reason and human capability are clear symptoms of the disease which the Greeks called *hybris*. *Hybris* is overconfidence, overconfidence in oneself and that

too to the extent of being blind to the claims of reality on us. See where this attitude has led humankind.

First, look at the phenomenon of *militarization*: its scope, its scale, and its strength!¹⁶ *Nuclearization* will henceforth remain a permanent threat! Compare the preparations for war with preparations for peace, to say nothing about improving conditions in the rural areas.

Second, take *globalization*: some of its aspects are a new form of *colonization*, a form that is now riding roughshod over small cultures and in the process is simply ignoring the smaller systems!¹⁷

Third, see what the overall state of the *environment* is! In some cases the damage, we are told, is beyond repair.¹⁸

Fourth, examine the dominant *political and economic systems* which are at work in nations that are said to be products of the enlightenment, systems that have no place for their own poor and helpless, to say nothing of the poor peoples of the world!¹⁹

Fifth, scrutinize the *social systems* of our times and see how the weak, the aged and the helpless are pitted against the bold, the bright and the beautiful and ask whether *women, especially in India*, can escape the age-old discriminations and prejudices.

Sixth, probe into the *religious traditions* of the world and examine whether they are *liberative* and liberating systems or whether they are systems that *legitimize* oppression and discrimination.

Could one have a more inhumane world where the luxury of the few is paid for by the misery of the vast majority, where peace is understood as no war, and where the question of the humanity of women and dalits is hardly considered to be an important issue?

The happening of September Eleven is a symbol of *hybris* on the side of terrorists as well as on that of the anti-terrorists. Both are convinced that *they* can defeat the other side, that *they* can lead people to victory, justice and prosperity! What is implied is the conviction that human beings are totally self-sufficient. Of a piece with this kind of thinking are the characteristic points of departure of the mind-set of our times: Action, not passion, reason, not reasonableness, initiative, not inspiration. The attitude of discovering-and-receiving

as a constitutive element is lacking to a great degree. We are all falling prey to this malaise.

It is from this perspective, I suggest, that we have to view our present predicament and to become aware of the source of the gigantic problems that we are facing. Whatever problem we may be tackling, be it that of women or of war, of poverty or of population we have to ensure that we do not neglect major areas of life, and that our solutions do not become part of the problem by introducing side-effects that are worse than the problems we set out to solve (like in the case of nuclear energy). September Eleven stands as an epitome of such a path. *But the very fact that the exploitative myth draws attention to what is lacking in our present situation could help in the emergence of a new myth and a new attitude.* With that I mean the explorative myth and the attitude of discovering.

3.2 The Explorative Myth and the Attitude of ‘Discovering’

The explorative myth is characterized by discovering-and-receiving.

What is discovering? The attitude of discovering presupposes openness. When I am listening to a joke, for instance, I am not reasoning out, rather I am pondering over and opening up to what is being said. And it is precisely *understanding* (and not reasoning about) what is being said that *makes* me break out into laughter. I do not break out into laughter by myself and on my own, as it were. It is the bottom-line of the joke that makes me break out into laughter. To enjoy a joke one needs openness to an aspect of life over which one has no control. You have to let go even though you are not sure where the bottom-line of the joke is going to hit you. Laughter is the resonance of the joke. It is a response that is not determined by reason but is evoked when one is open to ‘receiving’ a joke and discovering its bottom-line.²⁰ Such opening up is a *response* but a response is not something passive. At the same time it is not a producing, a making, a doing. As a response it is in the nature of a resonance. But no joke however powerful is going to make a person laugh who has no sense of humour, that is, a person who is not open to the humorous side of life.

If discovering presupposes openness, openness presupposes the attitude of receiving what is discovered. Just gazing at what is discovered is not enough; we have to receive what is discovered. An open person is not like an open box! Openness in a person has something dynamic to it. Indeed receiving is so closely linked to being open and discovering that without receiving both of them would be mere words. It is the attitude of receiving that gives them the finishing touch.

More importantly, however, when we receive and really take in we do so with much attention, otherwise it becomes a mechanical transfer. When we receive something or someone we do so with heightened awareness. We concentrate and focus on and listen to, and ponder over what is being said. In this way receiving is connected with listening, concentrating, pondering in the heart, understanding.²¹

3.3 The Mastery and the Mystery Models

The difference between the two attitudes is that of mastery and mystery. In the doing attitude guided by reason we see the mastery attitude at work. Doing has an important part to play in our lives but the doing of the mastery attitude is really our un-doing. It is a doing from a will to power, control, and mastery. It is one-sided and partial, and is the product of blind overconfidence, emerging as it does from blindness and leading to deeper blindness. It instrumentalizes everything and everyone. We see this clearly in the problems that our world is facing today. The mastery attitude is symbolic of our lack of faith (hope and love).

The mystery attitude is one of openness, an openness that takes one in the direction of wholeness and harmony. It does not take boundaries for granted but ever seeks to go beyond them. The doing that emerges from the mystery attitude is like laughter that emerges when we catch a joke. It flows spontaneously without an act of the will. It springs from what we have understood and comes out from a heart that is opened up.

4. Openness to the Way of the Spirit

To my mind, a very good example of the discovering-and-receiving attitude is to be found in the pericope of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35).

“And their eyes were *opened* and they *recognized* him; and he vanished out of their sight. They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road and *opened* to us the Scriptures?” Lk 24: 31-32

The attitude of openness is a gift of the Spirit! Only She can open us up, only She can help us to understand and to discern. And if something makes sense to us, we have to remember that it is She who makes meaning in life possible. If this Spirit were to animate us and our world we would be in a position to withstand the power of money and militarization, to struggle against injustice and instrumentalization and to overcome problems like sex and gender differences.

In other words, this is the age of the Spirit, the Advisor, the Counsellor, the Consoler, the Inspirer, the one who renews the face of the universe and of human history. It is from her that we have to implore an attitude that is totally absent in the happening of September Eleven, namely, *trust in the force of love and not trust in the love of force*.²² Armed forces cannot annihilate terrorism totally but only forces armed with the Spirit of love and justice can do that.

How do we go about this? To teach someone to love, to write a poem, to crack a joke is indeed a difficult, if not impossible, task. But we can be open to love, open to poetry, music and art, open to learn to laugh at ourselves. We can support people who are capable of doing this. We can open our eyes to the many good things that are happening in this world, search for people in the world who are doing wonderful things in their own small way. The positive attitude of mystery is one of openness and hope while that of mastery is one of calculation and expectation. It is openness that we need to cultivate, openness to a world which is the sacrament of God’s love and which Christians call creation.

The way towards a solution is to cultivate and give priority in our lives to the world of the Spirit, to the mystery attitude from which alone genuine doing and making emerge. If we wish to learn from history then we have to remember that any doing which is manipulative will be our undoing. But a doing that emerges from receiving, hearing, listening, understanding and contemplating will bring out the right kind of response!

That is to say, our paradigm has to change: from the doing mode to the discovering mode, from the manipulative attitude to the mystery attitude, from the primacy of reasoning to the primacy of responding and resonating.

The solution then lies not in the primacy of doing but in that of discovering. Discovering the presence and work of the Spirit in the world.

In that case September Eleven could evoke a new meaning and bring forth a new world: a passover from a metaphor of tragedy and transgression to a metaphor of transcendence and transformation. Not a world of hybris but a world of hope, hope in the world of the Spirit, not in the world of matter. Not neglecting human effort but relying on and in communication with a world that is our first beginning and final fulfilment. Transcendence is not 'something' that is other-worldly but 'something' that houses our being, 'something' that turns the house of our being into a home, 'something' that teaches us to discern between a house and a home. This is Jesus' paradigm of the kingdom of God, that is, of a world which is our ultimate home. The transformation that follows from this has to do with "love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal 5:23).

Thus September Eleven could be both a warning and a reminder. A warning that if we and our world continue moving in the disastrous direction of that ruinous day the future will indeed be bleak, that is, if there is going to be any future at all. And a reminder that there is the path of dialogue and mutual understanding between cultures that in the long run is the only way for the survival of human beings and their planet. Peace is not just 'no war' but an attitude that has the concern of the whole universe at heart and listens and learns from the perspective of the welfare of all beings.²³ One of the important ways to peace is dialogue at all levels. For dialogue is an expression of 'cosmic confidence'. As Panikkar puts it:

Cosmic confidence is not trust in the world, confidence in the cosmos. It is the confidence *of* the cosmos itself, of which we form a part inasmuch as we simply are. It is a subjective genitive: the confidence itself is a cosmic fact of which we are more or less aware, and which we presuppose all the time. If the cosmos, understood here as a name

for the entire reality, had not an intrinsic 'consistency' and were not the very source of all our values, we could not develop that basic attitude which is at the root of all our thoughts and feelings".²⁴

In other words, cosmic confidence refers to the Spirit of love and understanding at work in the world. Cosmic confidence means being animated and led by that Spirit. In the very tragedy of September Eleven there is the real possibility of the birth of a new paradigm of dialogue and discernment and the arrival of a new age where the Divine Mystery will teach us new ways and we shall learn to walk new paths. All our 'doing' will then be in the nature of a response to the divine initiative. Though we may not beat our swords into ploughshares and our spears into pruning hooks (because the age of nuclear missiles that cannot be recycled has replaced them²⁵), nation shall learn to dialogue with nation, "neither shall they learn war any more."²⁶

Notes

1. See what the Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade has to say, <http://www.ncf.ca/coat/>

September 11: A pretext for war" (Saturday, April 27) Join us to hear two speakers: Michel Choussudovsky and Barrie Zwicker. (at Montpetit Hall, 125 University Ave., University of Ottawa).

In their presentations, Barrie and Michel will discuss how the terrorist attacks of September 11 have been used as a pretext to unleash the so-called "War on Terrorism" whose real purpose is to project U.S. military, political and economic control over Central Asia and elsewhere. Barrie's controversial new video, "The Great Deception," will also be shown.

See also the warning given by the Inter-Faith 'Sign-on' Statement on Terrorism, National Council of Churches, USA, <http://web.archive.org/web/20010920003821/www.nccusa.org/news/interfaithstatement.html>:

Second, we offer a word of sober restraint as our nation discerns what its response will be. We share the deep anger toward those who so callously and massively destroy innocent lives, no matter what the grievances or injustices invoked. In the name of God we too demand that those responsible for these utterly evil acts be found and brought to justice. Those culpable must not escape accountability. But we must not, out of anger and vengeance, indiscriminately retaliate in ways that bring on even more loss of innocent life. We pray that President Bush and members of Congress will seek the wisdom of God as they decide

upon the appropriate response.

2. This belief however is not restricted only to these two groups but is pretty widespread . In a way one could even go so far as to state [as a working hypothesis] that this belief seems to constitute the base of all cultures except in the case of the Quackers and perhaps the Jains. See R. Panikkar, *Cultural Disarmament. The Way to Peace* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press 1995), Chapter Three, Toward a Philosophy of Peace. Nine *Sutras* on Peace, 13-25.
3. How flawed are arguments in favour of arms build-up is convincingly shown by Baker Spring from the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies in “Myths about Missile Defense and the Arms Race”, Published by The Heritage Foundation, 214 Massachusetts Ave., N.E. Washington, D.C. (July 13, 2000). <http://www.heritage.org/library/background/bgl385.html>

See also “Scientists’ Declaration on the Nuclear Arms Race” set forth by the Union of Concerned Scientists in August 1977. Though not fully in favour of total disarmament, the document states the following:

The arms race is in full swing! The roughly twelve thousand strategic warheads of today are likely to become thirty thousand long before the end of the century and the tens of thousands of tactical weapons augmented also. These increases and the improvements in missile accuracy, retargeting capability and invulnerability lead to greater “flexibility”—and so to the greater likelihood of starting nuclear weapons’ use. What results is the undermining of the balance of terror. New weapons now in sight will further decrease the stability of this delicate balance and will make the monitoring of future arms agreements more difficult, if not impossible, without gaining decisive military superiority for either side.

The superpowers’ belief that security rests with potent nuclear armaments is more and more shared by other nations. The strategic arms race stimulates the proliferation of nuclear weapons among nations some of which may be weak or irresponsible, and thus more likely to resort to the use of nuclear weapons in a local war. Such wars could easily widen, thus adding to the likelihood of a final immense nuclear holocaust between the superpowers.

More than ever it is urgent now to slow down and ultimately to stop the nuclear arms race, thus improving the stability of the nuclear stand off and setting the stage for reduction of the great inventories of weapons. By the year’s end, over 12,000 scientists and engineers had endorsed the Declaration.

4. Following R. Panikkar I shall employ Man only when the context refers to the three centres of Reality God, World and Man. These are the

substantivizations of the three primordial adjectives: the divine, the cosmic and the human.

5. See the summary of the Forum “The WTO and the Global War System which was organized by American and Canadian peace groups as part of civil society activities surrounding the Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization in Seattle in November, 1999.

The forum examined the links between economic globalization, the WTO and militarism. It looked at how the WTO’s promotion of economic globalization undermines security, creates conflict and promotes militarism. There were four speakers at the forum. Susan George opened the forum by discussing how the current economic system is creating economic and social strife around the world. Mark Ritchie then discussed the history of the Bretton Woods institutions and their original purpose to promote peace. Alice Slater discussed how nuclear weapons are defending American corporate interests, and how the U.S. Space Command envisions the militarization of space to defend American “interests and investments.” And Steven Staples closed the afternoon by discussing how the WTO promotes war economies by protecting military spending and the arms industry. He also offered case studies showing how corporations have been able to use WTO rules and dispute panels to block peace-building economic strategies of peace activists.

6. See the Canadian magazine *COAT* (Coalition to Oppose Arms Trade) 47 (March, 2002): Divide and Rule: Understanding the India-Pakistan Conflict. Apart from the historical information and comments on the supply of arms by Canadian Military companies there are useful charts giving details of military exports to India and Pakistan.
7. Panikkar, *Cultural Disarmament. The Way to Peace* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press 1995), 111, quotes Rodrigo c Carazo Odio, former president of Costa Rica and in 1983 president of the United Nations University of Peace (Teilhard Review 18 [1983]: 87): “in the developing nations there is one soldier for every 250 inhabitants, but one one physician for every 3,700.”
8. See Panikkar’s Nine Sutras on Peace, Chapter Three, Toward a Philosophy of Peace *Cultural Disarmament. The Way to Peace* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 15-23, esp. Sutras 3-5:
 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.
9. For a more precise usage of 'symbolize' than the popular usage see footnote no. 7 on K. Rahner and R. Panikkar.
10. An illustration of how the spiral of violence can be contained we have in the Buddhist tradition in the story of Prince Dighâvu of Kosala who remembering the advice of his dying father's advice about forgiveness spares the life of the one who has murdered his family and usurped his throne. Mahāvagga X.ii.3-20. Reference from George M. Soares-Prabhu, "'As we forgive': Interhuman forgiveness in the Teaching of Jesus," *Concilium* 184 (1986), 57.
11. See Aidan Rankin, *The Ecologist* 31:9 (November 2001), 47: "Economics, originally the science of household management, is reduced to number crunching, more a modern superstition than a science. Instead of treating it as the servant of humanity, we allow it to take on a life of its own and become our master. We worship economic forces and markets with a zeal uncomfortably close to religious mania."
12. See, for instance, Basarab Nicolescu, "The Unfathomable Pornography of Binary Thinking" *Bulletin Interactif du Centre International de Recherches et Études Transdisciplinaires* n° 16 – Février 2002 (Centre International de Recherches et Études Transdisciplinaires). <http://perso.club-internet.fr/nicol/ciret/> – 10 mars 2002,

Is it merely accidental that the new century begins with an act of horror that marks for ever the imagination of our generation and of those to come? The capacity of human beings to forget is certainly infinite, but it can't act on symbols. And it is precisely a symbol that was aimed at by the cold and implacable brain of an esoterico-technological engineer who conceived the act of staging the castration of the economic and financial power thought of, till now, as untouchable.

We can't keep silent and accept, certainly not in an involuntary way, what is at the end of the road: the self-destruction of our species. It is crucial to ask questions about the roots of this horror if one really wants to put oneself on the road to a new kind of learning reality.

One lesson I draw myself from the period we now live in, starting September 11, 2001, has to do with the unfathomable pornography of binary thinking. This phenomenon is not new. Modernity invented all kinds of deaths and ends as a consequence of binary thinking: the death of God, the death of man, the end of ideologies, the death of Nature, the end of history and – tomorrow – the end of science and the end of religions...

A second lesson I draw is the necessity to rethink the problem of the sacred. We *illuminated* the sacred in what we thought to be an act of freedom, of liberation of the human being. Thus appeared the reign of relativism in the name of which one can assert anything and also the

contrary of anything. The terrorist acts “in the name of God (or that of the Good)” and those who fight the terrorists act also “in the name of God (or that of the Good).” Which God? Are there as many Gods as there are religions?

I think that a new vision of learning must integrate the search of the transcultural and of the transreligious attitude. The transreligious attitude is not simply a utopian project – it is engraved in the very depths of our being. The transcultural (transreligious) designates the opening of all cultures (religions) to what cuts through them and transcends them. If the transcultural and transreligious attitude were to find their proper place in modernity, a war of civilizations could not take place.

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13. More appropriate than the expression “horizon of understanding” (or preunderstanding, Vorverständnis) is Panikkar’s usage of “myth”. Myth is not restricted to understanding only but is the comprehensive background of all our living, loving, believing and knowing. We cannot know myth directly but only indirectly through our beliefs, metaphors and values.
14. We do not have to go very far to illustrate this. The conflict between Croats, Bosnians and Serbs (an European example), or what is going on at the moment in Gujarat with some fanatical Hindus going after Muslims (an example in our own country which has preached Ahimsa for thousands of years) or the holy war of the Muslim terrorists and President Bush’s holy war against terrorists (an international example).
15. R. PANIKKAR: “The Myth of Pluralism: The Tower of Babel – A Meditation on Non-Violence”, in: *Cross-Currents* 29:2 (1979), S. 214-215.
16. See, for example, R. Panikkar, *Cultural Disarmament. The Way to Peace* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press 1995), 107:
The total cost of killing an ‘enemy’ in Julius Cesar’s time was \$1.00. World War I had to pay \$20,000. World War II, \$115,000. And the Vietnam War cost \$300,00 per dead enemy. In World War I, 90 percent of those killed were military; in World War II, 50 percent; and in the Vietnam War, only 10 percent (ninety percent of those killed were civilians). The Gulf War was even worse. (Data collected by Frank Barnaby of SIPRI, Stockholm.)
17. See John Feffer, “ Militarization in the Age of Globalization”, *New Global Affairs Commentary* available in its entirety at: <http://www.fpif.org/commentary/0111mic.html>.)

As a result of the September 11 attacks, the dangers of globalized militarism—the deregulation of weapons markets and the privatization of militaries—has become apparent even to the Bush administration. Weapons can end up anywhere; terrorists can raise funds in deregulated financial markets and unregulated black markets; private armies can rival state militaries. State subsidies for military production, protected by the security exception, have only increased the number of weapons available. In this new era, international institutions should permit government subsidies, investments, and taxes that scale down arms production, redirect funds from the military to the civilian sector, and otherwise dismantle the economic motor of globalized militarism. This is the one type of security exception to free trade regulations and budget restrictions that makes sense in a world awash in weapons.

18. See Thomas Berry, *The Great Work; Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), 199:

As happened at the moment when the amount of free oxygen in the atmosphere threatened to rise beyond its proper proportion and so destroy all living beings, so now awesome forces are let loose over the Earth. This time, however, the cause is from an industrial economy that is disturbing the geological structure and life-systems of the planet in a manner and to an extent that the Earth has never known previously. Many of the most elaborate expressions of life and grandeur and beauty that the planet has known are now threatened in their survival. All this is a consequence of human activity.

19. See the *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty*. <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/wdrpoverty/>

At the start of a new century, poverty remains a global problem of huge proportions. Of the world's 6 billion people, 2.8 billion live on less than \$2 a day and 1.2 billion on less than \$1 a day. Eight out of every 100 infants do not live to see their fifth birthday. Nine of every 100 boys and 14 of every 100 girls who reach school age do not attend school. Poverty is also evident in poor people's lack of political power and voice and in their extreme vulnerability to ill health, economic dislocation, personal violence and natural disasters. And the scourge of HIV/AIDS, the frequency and brutality of civil conflicts, and rising disparities between the rich countries and the developing world have increased the sense of deprivation and injustice for many.

20. But obviously openness alone is not enough to enjoy a joke. One has to belong to the region or the culture where the joke is at home. Normally one takes this aspect for granted when one cracks a joke.
21. Understanding means following what is said, what is happening. Following however can be taken in two senses: One, to follow something

as when we say, “Do you follow what I am saying?” And two, following in the sense that someone following someone as the disciples followed Jesus. But the two meanings of understanding are very different indeed because they function on two very different levels of awareness. The first kind of following is really what we usually call understanding and the second refers to ‘what makes sense’. We cannot understand love as we, for instance, understand the dynamics of a story (first level). On the other hand, even if we do not understand the phenomenon of love it still could very well make sense to us (second level). If the first level refers to understanding, the second refers to faith. This is an ontological approach to faith. It builds on the openness of our being. In a very primordial sense faith is the openness of our being.²¹ It is here that myth emerges and resides. Whatever change of attitude is desired and is desirable it has to take place here. Understanding and believing, being two poles of the same continuum, are intimately related but not identical. Believing surpasses understanding. Beliefs are not the same as believing. They are the *expressions* of believing. An act of faith is not to be identified with its expression. It is the expression that understanding concentrates on.

22. Cfr St Augustine’s words (Letter to Darius, 229, 2): “It is more glorious a thing to slay wars themselves with the word than human beings with the sword; and to win or keep peace with peace than with war.” Quoted from R. Panikkar, *Cultural Disarmament. The Way to Peace* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press 1995), 61. See also George M. Soares-Prabhu, “The Synoptic Love-Commandment. The Dimensions of Love in the Teaching of Jesus”, *Theology of Liberation: An Indian Biblical Perspective*, (Ed). Francis X. D’Sa (Pune: Jnanadeepa Vidyapeeth Theology Series Vol 4, 2001), 110-125.
23. See the “Manifesto 2000 for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence”, Building a Culture of Peace *COAT* 41 (July 2000).
24. “A Self-Critical Dialogue”, *The Intercultural Challenge of Raimon Panikkar*, Joseph Prabhu (Ed.) (New York: Orbis, 1996), 281. Panikkar elaborates and clarifies what he means by cosmic confidence: “Cosmic confidence is not our interpretation of the world. It is that awareness which makes any interpretation possible. What the principle of non-contradiction does in the logical field the cosmic confidence performs in the ultimate order of reality.” Ibid.
25. See “Plowshares vs. Depleted Uranium”, *COAT* 41 (July 2000), <http://www.ncf.ca/coat/>
26. Isa 2:3-4.

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