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Philosophy and the Search for Peace



I. The Question of Peace

Peace is a most elusive phenomenon. Human beings universally desire it, yet it constantly evades our grasp. What peace exactly is mystifies the human mind since it belongs to the same order of vagueness as the timeless ideas of happiness, justice, and truth. According to our common linguistic usage, human beings are said to be “peaceful” or “at peace” and a particular people may be living “in a time of peace.” The essence of peace, it may be asserted, is intimately related to concrete human life and is by no means an abstract reality with no bearing on how human beings fare in this temporal world. But the reason why human beings desire peace in the first place is due to its unfortunate absence in human affairs. It is plausible that peace would have no meaning for human beings if it were a permanent part of existence and if it were not identified in contrast to its absence or lack against which it is measured and prized. One may suspect that peace receives its very nature in relation to its opposite, an equally mysterious reality, but which at its core is manifested in conflict, be it internal or external, personal or social. However, it is worth noting that the absence of peace, as with peace itself, is known only in the context of human living which has been upset and traumatized in some fundamental aspect. In light of this initial hypothesis, therefore, it is worthwhile studying the state of life which is not peace in order to determine what peace truly is.

In *Totality and Infinity* Emmanuel Levinas wrote that “the state of war suspends morality.”¹ These thought-provoking words serve as a meditation

1. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, translated by Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 21.

on the catastrophic impact that war inevitably has on the ethical dimension of human existence. As a Jew who lived through the terrors of the Second World War, Levinas was well aware of the chaos and irrationality that lie at the heart of hatred and violence, where the ethical categories and rules that normally govern our lives to promote peace no longer apply. The extreme examples of evil in recent human history, such as The Jewish Holocaust and the campaigns of genocide in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and the Sudan, have led many a philosopher to wonder about the root cause of evil and human conflict, spurred on more by horror and shock than by a more placid motivation. In light of such horrendous events, philosophers have been forced to ask whether one can legitimately philosophize after Auschwitz, given that reason has been paralyzed in the utter incomprehension of unadulterated evil.²

Yet, historically, philosophers have always been concerned about the challenge that evil poses for philosophical reflection, dating back to antiquity in thinkers such as Plotinus and St. Augustine and continued in modern times with Leibniz, Kant, and Schelling. Indeed, there seems to be unanimous agreement among philosophers that evil belongs to an irrational or non-rational realm of being which escapes being intelligibly grasped. This is why it is more appropriate to speak of the *mystery* of evil instead of the *problem* of evil, as Gabriel Marcel has repeatedly stressed. Although the history of philosophy is replete with attempts by thinkers to understand the inscrutable reality of evil and the pernicious forces that destroy human lives, a project which usually leads one to the brink of despair and with few answers, seldom have we in philosophy come across the same passion for, and interest in, the topic of peace. How to contend with a fact of life that threatens the very foundation of philosophical reflection is a challenge that surely moves every serious thinker to search for solutions. However, in this paper I would like to argue that philosophy should not be overly burdened with trying to make sense of why evil and unhappiness exist, but should rather endeavor to establish the conditions for peace that positively counter the destructive tendencies inherent in the human soul. Instead of analyzing evil theoretically and then losing one's mind over its complete obscurity, philosophy should be rather oriented towards strengthening the sovereignty of wisdom, truth, reason, and morality in a much fractured and broken world.

2. See Richard J. Bernstein, *Radical Evil: A Philosophical Investigation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002).

This is not done primarily by offering a philosophical theory or exposé of the essence of peace, as useful as this might be, but by developing a spirit of peacefulness and love that will influence the philosophical community, and the wider society, in a constructive manner. Philosophy does have a positive role to play in the building up and establishment of peace in our world, and I would like to outline here how exactly this can be done.

II. The Experience of Human Conflict

The starting-point for a philosophical investigation of peace has to be the consciousness of the raw fact of conflict in our human communities. Conflicts do differ in degree and type, from the more benign manifestations in sibling rivalries and interpersonal disputes to the more serious examples of violence, murder, and war. In each kind of human conflict, a tension is set up between individuals or groups which leads to an antagonistic exchange. This tension can be played out in three main ways: verbally, physically, or psycho-emotionally.

In a verbal conflict the two or more camps articulate their grievances and assail the opposing side through the use of words and ideas. For instance, schoolchildren are well-known to engage in name-calling if hostility erupts between them, and on a much grander scale, the Cold War was waged entirely by means of propaganda and on the front of diplomacy. This type of conflict can be viewed as a clash of ideologies where there is a dissonance or friction between two or more sets of rival ideas. It is important to recognize in this situation that the words and ideas are expressed and made public and that they are not simply thought and held privately. Put simply, only when one verbalizes the antagonism does it become an overt sign of conflict.

If the hostility is dire enough, then physical confrontation can ensue. The purpose of a physical conflict is to gain control of the other by dominating their physical body. Inflicting corporal punishment and torture, for instance, are means to achieving this kind of mastery of one's opponent. Moreover, war, the supreme example of physical conflict, is a form of violence that is waged proportionate to the physical and corporeal natures of individuals and states.

Finally, there is a psycho-emotional conflict that is carried out by the manipulation of feelings, moods, thoughts, and atmosphere. A particular

environment, such as the workplace or the family home, can be poisoned by non-verbal and non-physical forms of violence. These include acts of ignoring or the "silent treatment" that aim to ostracize and demean the other as well as explicit forms of discrimination that can be experienced by what ought to occur but does not, for example, the denial of certain rights and privileges to a group of people on the basis of sex or race. Such actions create an environment that is saturated with self-destructive emotions, such as sadness, hatred, or anger, that envelop persons in a vortex of negativity. The specific effect of a psycho-emotional conflict is the disturbance of the other's psychological and emotional state.³ This campaign is carried out to control and hence to injure the other through the manipulation of their minds and emotions. No doubt, an oppressive and debilitating atmosphere can in some cases lead to more harm than either verbal or physical abuse.

It is an irrefutable fact that we live in a world that is sadly beset by conflict. From our intimate family circles to the drama of international relations, conflict appears to be a widespread feature of life that crops up everywhere. Some philosophers have gone so far as to argue that conflict is a necessary and inescapable aspect of existence. The ancient thinker Heraclitus held that conflict and strife are the fundamental forces of the universe that give rise to the growth and decay of things.⁴ The political thought of Thomas Hobbes depicts the state of nature as one in which there is "war of every man against every man."⁵ And Friedrich Nietzsche has argued that the beginnings of human history gave witness to unimaginable brutality and violence as the Dionysian spirit exercised its will to power.⁶ On a metaphysical plane, Nicholas of Cusa and his disciple Giordano Bruno developed the theory of the coincidence of opposites (*coincidentia oppositorum*) which was a source of inspiration for the systems of the dialectic in

3. An interesting discussion of this topic can be found in Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

4. Heraclitus, *Fragments*, translated by T. M. Robinson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987). In fragment 53 (p. 37) Heraclitus writes: "War is the father of all, and king of all. He renders some gods, others men; he makes some slaves, others free"; and in fragment 80 (p. 49) he writes: "One must realize that war is common and justice strife, and that all things come to be through strife and are (so) ordained."

5. See *The Causes of Quarrel: Essays on Peace, War, and Thomas Hobbes*, edited by Peter Caws (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).

6. See Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 178–207; Rüdiger Safranski, *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*, translated by Shelley Frisch (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2002), 276–303.

the thought of Hegel and Marx, which regard history as a constant battle between opposites striving to achieve a state of unity and wholeness. To be sure, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel holds that war is a necessary moment in the realization of freedom and unity:

War is the Spirit and the form in which the essential moment of the ethical substance, the absolute freedom of the ethical *self* from every existential form, is present in its actual and authentic existence. While, on the one hand, war makes the individual *systems* of property and personal independence, as well as the *personality* of the individual himself, feel the power of the negative, on the other hand, this negativity is prominent in war as that which preserves the whole.⁷

Conflict has been traditionally viewed by thinkers to be somehow necessary to the development of human beings, and by extension, of a society into maturity, freedom and independence. Conflict has been interpreted by many as an acceptable means to achieving certain desirable ends, such as autonomy, that in the long run make for a prosperous and fulfilled life. The act of self-assertion certainly does form one's selfhood and individuality but it also creates the potentiality for interpersonal conflict. When I affirm my thoughts and wants against an other, insofar as I am distinct from an other, then I am simultaneously affirming my individuality, which is carved out from the unified community. Such an act has the effect of separating a person from others and thereby establishing a tension. This phenomenon of self-assertion is also evident in group dynamics on a larger scale. Entire communities and nations can assert their identity to such an extent that conflict with other communities and nations necessarily follows, as can be observed in the conflicts in Northern Ireland and Israel. The more we ponder the nature of conflict on the social and political level, the more it becomes clear that this situation has its roots in the souls of individuals who seek to oppose otherness and to defend self-interest. How are we to understand the inclination in human beings to create situations of conflict?

III. The Restlessness of the Human Soul

The view that conflict is a fundamental part of our humanity is not only a philosophical one, but also finds support in the theological tradition. The

7. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 288–89.

Old Testament recounts the story of Cain's murder of his brother Abel which sets the precedent for the rivalry and violence that have taken place between human beings throughout history. The disobedience of Adam and Eve led to their expulsion from the tranquil surroundings of the Garden of Eden, yet Cain's violence against Abel resulted in God's making him "a restless wanderer on the earth" (Genesis 4.12–14).⁸ No longer could Cain enjoy the peace and serenity that comes with a well-ordered domestic life, for roaming the earth as a nomad, without home and land, became the punishment for his crime. It is precisely in this Biblical story that the connection is made between sin and restlessness that is humanity's inheritance. On one interpretation, restlessness can be viewed as the result of sin, as in the specific case of Cain, but with respect to our situation, as heirs of our first parents' transgressions, I believe that it is more appropriate to understand it the other way around, namely, as sin being caused by the human being's restlessness. Expressed differently, it is my contention that the ceaseless and insatiable movement within each human soul is the ground of sin and is, furthermore, the chief cause for human conflict.

In the Christian tradition, however, restlessness has always been regarded as a natural aspect of our human predicament that can lead to a positive end. This idea is best represented by St. Augustine at the beginning of his *Confessions* where he tells us that our heart is restless until it rests in God.⁹ Ever since our separation from God in the Fall, human beings have been searching for a certain peace that can still our longing spirits, a peace that can only be found in God. Indubitably, nothing in this life can fully satisfy our deepest desires since we were made for union with God. So while we are alive on this earth, we all remain restless wanderers and pilgrims, constantly in search of our true resting place. The monastic tradition has described in detail the experience of *acedia*, a spiritual laziness, paralyzing apathy, and profound inner unhappiness, that afflicts contemplatives like a "midday demon" by diverting their attention from God and driving them to wander physically in an intoxicating stupor.¹⁰ *Acedia* deprives the monk

8. *The New American Bible*.

9. Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, translated by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3.

10. Jean-Charles Nault, "Acedia: Enemy of Spiritual Joy," *Communio* 31, no. 2 (2004): 236–59. On this topic of mindless and aimless wandering see the interesting study on the phenomenon of the *fugueur* or "mad traveler," an inexplicable condition in which individuals spontaneously set off on long travels without knowing why they are doing so or where they are going. Ian Hack-

of joy and peace and besets him with an overpowering sadness. The incessant agitation and torpor that characterize the human soul impels one to find rest in God. This ceaseless striving is, of course, the impulse underpinning philosophy as the pursuit of wisdom, and more widely, it forms the basis for all human endeavors that are focused on achieving the treasured goals of happiness and goodness.

Despite these noble aims, a good portion of humanity responds to this inherent restlessness, not by attempting to seek a veritable rest for one's soul in truth, but by allowing this motion to continue unabated. Such individuals are in constant movement without any prospect for rest because, simply put, they are not actively seeking rest. What is lacking in this scenario is a vision for truth and wisdom, a focus on a final and higher goal in the divine that motivates individuals to overcome the plague of purposeless movement that afflicts their earthly existence. Bernard of Clairvaux, in his short treatise *On Loving God (De diligendo Deo)*, refers to such people as the impious who walk about endlessly in circles.¹¹ They have no attachment to a vision that can channel all their energies to a determinate goal which can bring them deep and lasting peace; hence, they simply move for the sake of moving, culminating in spiritual exhaustion. Peace is embedded in contemplation as the human being gazes upon the truth.¹² Contemplation focuses the soul on the meaning of human existence and enables the soul to discover rest. Not to foresee an end to the motion in life is, as Friedrich Schelling has pointed out, an utterly unbearable situation in which existence assumes the appearance of a meaningless and vain activity.¹³ In

ing, *Mad Travelers: Reflections on the Reality of Transient Mental Illnesses* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002).

11. "The wicked, therefore, walk around in circles, naturally wanting whatever will satisfy their desires, yet foolishly rejecting that which would lead them to their true end, which is not in consumption but in consummation. Hence they exhaust themselves in vain instead of perfecting their lives by a blessed end. . . . By the very law of man's desire which makes him want what he lacks in place of what he has and grow weary of what he has in preference to what he lacks, once he has obtained and despised all in heaven and on earth, he will hasten toward the only one who is missing, the God of all. There he will rest, for just as there is no rest this side of eternity, so there will be no restlessness to bother him on the other side." Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God. An Analytical Commentary by Emero Stiegman* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1995), 22.

12. "The problem of contemplation and the problem of peace are not merely of one substance with each other, they are really one and the same problem." Gabriel Marcel, *Men Against Humanity*, translated by G. S. Fraser (London: Harvill Press, 1952), 118.

13. Friedrich W. J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung, 1841/42*, edited by Manfred Frank (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 254–55.

this sense, then, rest as a realistic goal, as the *finis quaerendi et inveniendi*, becomes the meaning that gives life its ultimate purpose.

Yet some people prefer to indulge in this natural movement of life and even go so far as to present this tumult as rest. It is easy to recognize this type of individual in today's world with the frenetic pace and increased pressures of urban life. The contemporary image of the capitalistic producer and consumer, the workaholic who is constantly abuzz with busyness and worry and who rarely takes time off to relax, tends actually, against our better judgment, to coalesce with our vision of the successful individual. Shrewd observers of modern forms of life have noticed this general phenomenon of motion without rest as a distinctive characteristic of a certain segment of society that has become quite noticeable in modernity. In fact, there tends to be agreement that an epochal shift occurred in modernity that saw a transition from "the blissful repose of the *vita contemplativa* to that of laborious reconstruction in the *vita activa*."¹⁴

Graeme Hunter has shown how Pascal was aware of the onslaught on rest that was taking place at the beginning of the modern period by a peculiar group of individuals referred to as libertines.¹⁵ Libertines were shallow, irreligious people who took pride in presenting themselves as independent thinkers, yet for Pascal their defining characteristic was that they sought rest through ceaseless activity.¹⁶ By absorbing themselves in constant motion and vain pursuits, libertines tried to set up an artificial peace in which they could live contentedly in their ignorance and fancy. But this façade is not convincing in the least, certainly not for Pascal, who strongly criticized the prevailing trend to escape reality in *divertissement*, the countless distractions of modern pleasures that aim to amuse, rather than edify the soul. This critique was taken up more recently by Martin Heidegger in his examination of the everydayness of human existence in the persona of *das Man* (the They), the superficial citizen who flees an authentic life by succumbing to the temptations of idle curiosity and chatter.¹⁷ No doubt, man

14. Elizabeth Brient, "From *Vita Contemplativa* to *Vita Activa*: Modern Instrumentalization of Theory and the Problem of Measure," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 9, no. 1 (2001): 24.

15. See Graeme Hunter, "Motion and rest in the *Pensées*—A note on Pascal's modernism," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 47, no. 2 (2000): 87–99.

16. See *ibid.*, 89–94.

17. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1962), 210–24.

has invented many ways to avoid assuming his responsibility to work for truth.

We live in a world where true rest and peace of mind are being constantly disturbed by the anxious agitation of people who feel compelled to persist in incessant motion. Increasingly, individuals find it difficult to be alone and still and quiet; instead, they are falsely comforted by the din of hectic activity. The main result of all this restlessness turns out to be the deprivation of thought and the flight from reality. Be this as it may, we have to ask ourselves how this form of restlessness can be the prime instigator of conflict which robs us of a genuine peace. Losing oneself in vain pursuits certainly does have the tinge of dissolute and reckless living, but can such a disposition lead to the misunderstandings and animosities that bar human beings from living in harmony with each other?

The state of agitation and restlessness gives rise to actions and behaviors that are the root cause of conflict. Without a calm and collected spirit, an individual can much more easily end up venting frustrations and forming damaging judgments that ultimately divide persons and communities instead of harmonize them. By unreflectively rushing to act and speak, the risk of provoking enmity is very high. Restlessness impels people to act without reflecting on the meaningfulness and purpose of their actions. As an illustration of this point, Pascal makes the intriguing claim in his *Pensées* that so much of the unhappiness in the world originates from people not being able to be content with their rest and solitude.¹⁸ Pascal adds that man's condition is one of "inconstancy, weariness, unrest" and that "our nature consists in motion."¹⁹ One could argue in this vein that leaders who wage wars do so largely to indulge their growing sense of restlessness and use this as an escape from their boredom. The truism that wars can be avoided if they are never started in the first place seems to escape the notice of the powers that be. If only people could sit still in their rooms and enjoy their rest!

18. "When I have occasionally set myself to consider the different distractions of men, the pains and perils to which they expose themselves at court or in war, whence arise so many quarrels, passions, bold and often bad ventures, etc., I have discovered that all the unhappiness of men arises from one single fact, that they cannot stay quietly in their own chamber. A man who has enough to live on, if he knew how to stay with pleasure at home, would not leave it to go to sea or to besiege a town. A commission in the army would not be bought so dearly, but that it is found insufferable not to budge from the town; and men only seek conversation and entering games, because they cannot remain with pleasure at home." Blaise Pascal, *Pascal's Pensées*, translated by W. F. Trotter (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1931), 39.

19. *Ibid.*, 37.

IV. Inner Peace and Love as the Basis of Interpersonal Peace

The inability to be at peace with oneself, if left untreated, inevitably results in the inability to be at peace with others. All human conflicts ultimately stem from disordered and restless souls who have not yet found peace of mind, and conversely, a safe and peaceful society is created by people who emanate a peace within themselves. It is important to recognize that social or interpersonal peace has its roots in the structure of the individual human soul. How close one is to achieving an inner peace is determined by the individual person's desire to know absolute truth and, hence, to be comforted by it, which is traditionally understood to be God. The goals that we willfully pursue bestow on our souls their shape and direction, which make us either virtuous or vicious, depending on the types of goals pursued. The Augustinian notion of an order of loves (*ordo amoris*), which was adopted by Max Scheler in his phenomenological anthropology, underscores the relation of the state of the soul with the quality and thus morality of human acts.²⁰ To put it as succinctly as possible, "whoever has the *ordo amoris* of a man has the man himself."²¹

The point that I want to emphasize in this discussion is that the foundation of social and political peace, that is, interpersonal peace, lies in the souls of individual human beings who have achieved an inner peace by arriving at a state of rest in truth. Such a thesis opposes the view that peace is established by means of the rule of law or a social contract, in general, by an ordering of society on rational grounds. Many political theorists, the most notable recent example being John Rawls, have formulated a conception of peace and justice that is anchored in a social contract between citizens who have rationally chosen the principles that govern their interaction in society.²² Moreover, my proposal also rejects the idea that genuine peace can be realized through physical means, such as by military force, a position famously stated in Carl von Clausewitz's classic study *On War*, which has been a tactic attempted throughout human history.²³ Recent examples

20. See Max Scheler, *Selected Philosophical Essays*, translated by David R. Lachterman (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 98–135.

21. *Ibid.*, 100.

22. See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), 102–68.

23. See W. B. Gallie, *Philosophers of Peace and War: Kant, Clausewitz, Marx, Engels and Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 37–65.

of a militarily imposed peace can be found in Cyprus, where the United Nations has been mediating a cease-fire between the Turkish and Greek inhabitants for the last forty years, and in Myanmar, where the unrest of the movement for democracy has been silenced by the military dictatorship. Both the rationalist and military conceptions of peace fail to achieve true peace because they ignore the actual source of peace in the inner reaches of the human soul.²⁴ How do such conceptions fail exactly?

It is one thing to bring about a situation which is free from conflict and it is another thing altogether to realize peace. The proposition that peace is identical with the absence of external signs of violence and war is severely misguided because it overlooks the fact that in a seemingly peaceful society the possibility for conflict can still be present in the hearts of many citizens. Although people can live side by side in a community without explicit conflict, animosity and hatred can lie dormant waiting to be brought to the surface. This powder-keg or time-bomb situation that can explode at the slightest provocation exposes the lie to the superficial peace of the moment. The racial tensions in the United States and the multiethnic rivalries of the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, where one day neighbors live together in fraternal harmony and the next day are murdering each other, demonstrate the volatility of interpersonal relations, despite an official guise of peace. It is a very tenuous conception of peace that regards it in privative terms as merely the absence of war.

A more adequate notion of peace takes into consideration the potentiality for conflict, not just its actuality. As C. A. J. Coady and Jeff Ross indicate in their discussion of Augustine's ideal of peace, "a peace must have something in it that at least quiets the dispositions to violence, hostility, and aggression that are typical of war, even if it does not eliminate them entirely."²⁵ To fulfill this condition, they advocate a conception of peace that is defined as an "ordered harmony" and "tranquillity of order," in

24. This critique of a rationalist conception of peace also extends to Kant's Stoic cosmopolitanism in his short tract *Toward Perpetual Peace (Vom Ewigen Frieden)* where he develops the idea of a confederation of states joined together by a just constitution. Kant believes that international peace can only come about if all states become republics and then agree on the principles of justice that will bind them in a peaceful union. This "highest political good" of a just order of world peace rests on the conception of a process of rational deliberation that frames the conditions of peace, a conception that I take to task in this paper. See Immanuel Kant, "Toward Perpetual Peace," in *Practical Philosophy*, translated by Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 311–51.

25. C. A. J. Coady and Jeff Ross, "St. Augustine and the Ideal of Peace," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 74, no. 1 (2000): 159.

which what is emphasized is a particular state of mind of individuals that is conducive to peace.²⁶ Removing the *disposition* to conflict and replacing it with a personal attitude of peace is the only viable path in the realization of social stability and prosperity. A revolution of thought has to occur, to borrow Kant's terminology, from a seething hostility to a warm sentiment of good will in the hearts and minds of all people if we ever hope to live amicably with one another.

Nonetheless, even if peace is achieved, this does not mean that differences between individuals and groups are abolished. On the contrary, peace does not efface difference and otherness, as if it could only exist in a cage of spiritless uniformity, but rather upholds it because of the realism that is the essence of peace. Respect and a love of others in their uniqueness and difference must be the disposition that forms our quest for peace. To be sure, this is not mere political correctness, an official policy of tolerance, or superficial politeness, but represents a genuine solicitude and concern for the well-being of others. The philosopher and social activist Jean Vanier echoes this same sentiment:

Real peace implies something deeper than polite acceptance of those who are different. It means meeting those who are different, appreciating them and their culture, and creating bonds of friendship with them. . . . Coexistence is a foundation, and it is important, but peace is something much deeper. To create peace we have to go further than just saying hello. We have to discover who the other person is and reveal who we are. As we listen to and really meet one another, we begin to see the work of God in the beauty and value, in the deepest personhood, of those who are different.²⁷

The problem with many of our societies today is that we all live together, but do not know each other; we coexist, but do so without any concern for our neighbor. It seems that the social peace that many of us enjoy in our countries, cities, and communities often comes at the huge price of ignoring the underlying tensions and injustices that feed feelings of resentment, anger, and hatred among people. What is needed is a spirit of openness

26. *Ibid.*, 158. In this article the authors outline three distinct theories of peace in Augustine's thought. First, the thin conception of peace is simply the absence of war. Second, the rich or thick conception of peace is a heavenly peace that accompanies our salvation and joyful union with God. Finally, the medium conception of peace is a more earthly type of peace of an ordered harmony based on the two following rules: not to harm anybody and to help everybody to the best of each person's ability.

27. Jean Vanier, *Finding Peace* (Toronto: Anansi, 2003), 41.

and reconciliation rooted in love, for by embracing the other in his or her uniqueness, we sow the seeds for a real meeting of hearts. In this regard, Gabriel Marcel has argued that our modern democracies must reside on the foundation of fraternity, a hetero-centric love for our fellow citizen, which binds us together and upholds our human dignity.²⁸ The current craze in the Western world with rights and freedoms, especially the right to equality, has the deleterious effect of segregating human beings from each other and pitting human against human. The notion of equality is an abstract, rational principle which is incapable of establishing true and genuine peace, unlike fraternity, which penetrates deep into the core of the human heart and creates stable and life-giving relationships among people.

V. Philosophy's Responsibility for Peace

Everyone has the responsibility to work for peace and this is no less the case for philosophers. In fact, philosophy has a special vocation to nurture a mindfulness for peace that leads to its concrete realization in our communities. This essential project, however, does not demand a radical restructuring of philosophic activity towards a new and unfamiliar end, but only asks philosophy to live up to its traditional nature as the pursuit of wisdom and truth. It is my firm conviction that peace cannot be divorced from truth, a truth that embraces a human being in rest and love.²⁹ Truth emancipates human beings from pernicious ideologies, quiets the restless human soul, and brings us closer together in a spirit of friendship and reconciliation. Yet, since we live in a world of diversity and difference, this truth cannot be monological or univocal in character, but must preserve

28. See Gabriel Marcel, *Philosophical Fragments 1904–1914 and The Philosopher and Peace*, translated by Lionel A. Blain (Notre Dame, Indiana: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1965), 7–19; *The Existential Background of Human Dignity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963), 130–33.

29. It is inconceivable how peace can be achieved without truth or on the basis of lies and falsehoods. Truth is the necessary prerequisite for trust and a spirit of mutual openness that unites human beings in solid, caring relationships. From a moral perspective, truth resides in the domain of conscience which not only aids one to discriminate between good and evil acts, but also enables one to recognize one's own moral failures, shortcomings and guilt. Only if I can acknowledge that I have committed wrong is it possible for reconciliation with the other to happen. Forgiveness is a major component of the process of establishing peace in the world and this occurs through the voice of conscience which is the beacon of truth in the human soul. For a discussion of this issue, see Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, translated by Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 75–99.

and incorporate difference within itself. In this sense, then, we can describe truth as a form of ecumenic wisdom, as Thomas Langan has argued, that is arrived at through respectful dialogue, a sharing of ideas, contemplation, and most importantly, hard work.³⁰ Indeed, truth is not offered to us on a silver platter, for it must be deliberately sought after and won through a focused and diligent will. This conscious awareness of the need to allow difference and otherness to flourish in philosophy has been a common theme in some philosophical circles over the last few decades, from the Derridean *différance* to the Levinasian Other, having grown out of an appreciation for the pluralistic and multicultural nature of our current societies, especially in the West.³¹ It is practically impossible to ignore the stark reality of diversity in the world and philosophy has been doing an admirable job in paying careful attention to this undeniable fact.

Still, truth that respects otherness and difference must not degenerate into a vacuous relativism where every idea and doctrine deserves to be equally accepted. The task facing philosophers in their quest for peace is the elimination of a hostile antagonism through a resolute determination to know truth in the context of a fruitful exchange of ideas. Although a certain degree of conflict belongs essentially to the forum of dialogue and debate, this kind of disagreement should reap positive results in a cooperative endeavor to achieve true knowledge and understanding. An argument should never be considered an end in itself, but a means to the apprehension of truth and the attainment of ecumenic wisdom. Constructive disagreement and intellectual justice, in the spirit of Alasdair MacIntyre's vision of the university³² and Jacques Maritain's view of philosophical cooperation,³³ that fundamentally aims at achieving genuine insight into truth, must be the standard by which interpersonal dialogue is executed. Resolving dis-

30. See Thomas Langan, *Tradition and Authenticity in the Search for Ecumenic Wisdom* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 200–201.

31. "The unity of plurality is peace, and not the coherence of the elements that constitute plurality. Peace therefore cannot be identified with the end of combats that cease for want of combatants, by the defeat of some and the victory of the others, that is, with cemeteries [sic] or future universal empires. Peace must be my peace, in a relation that starts from an I and goes to the other, in desire and goodness, where the I both maintains itself and exists without egoism." Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 306.

32. See Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry. Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition, being Gifford Lectures delivered in the University of Edinburgh in 1988* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 230–31.

33. See Jacques Maritain, "Philosophical Co-operation and Intellectual Justice," in *The Range of Reason* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), 30–50.

putes, instead of promoting them or allowing them to persist endlessly, is a fundamental attitude that philosophy can inculcate in others by example.

In relation to this pursuit of truth and wisdom, philosophy must continue to build up and strengthen the moral character of individuals. A person who is committed unswervingly to the ideals of reason, truth, wisdom, morality, and peace will stand firm in the world as a beacon of light and hope. When the political and social structures of human civilization begin to crumble all around and the moral fabric of cultures is untwined, the independence and fortitude of the philosopher will carry him or her forward through the uncertainty and darkness of such upheavals.³⁴ Peace can be established and maintained only if individual human beings place their trust in the highest ideals and virtues that are the foundation of happiness and joy. In a sense, we must become a law unto ourselves, as Aristotle describes the magnanimous human being,³⁵ and follow our conscience when external authority fails us. Even if we enter a state of serious conflict, such as war, morality need not be suspended, as Levinas suggested, because we still have the option and freedom to remain rooted in morality and peace against the current of the time. Put emphatically, peace need not be abandoned simply because the world on all sides is plunged into war and chaos.

The responsibility for peace strikes a powerful chord in the center of our humanity. There is no doubt that we all have to work together to create a world that is peaceful, yet in this essay I have been arguing that such a noble enterprise must begin in the soul of the individual human being. Each and every human being has the responsibility to make the personal choice for peace and orient his or her will towards truth; only then will the world become what we want it to become. In this task philosophy must endeavor to be a source of inspiration and leadership through the clarification of ideas and the resolute pursuit of truth. Emmanuel Levinas described peace as an eschatological reality, a phenomenon that beckons us from the uncharted, unknown future.³⁶ Peace, in a very real sense, is a reality which we desire for ourselves and for our world; it is not necessarily present, but it is

34. I would go so far as to describe the genuine philosopher, who is living up to his vocation, as a martyr, that is, a witness to truth. Being a martyr implies that some form of hardship and duress is placed on the individual as he or she testifies to the truth of conscience.

35. "The refined and well-bred man, therefore, will be as we have described, being as it were a law unto himself." See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, edited by Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), vol. 2, p. 1780, 1128a32-33.

36. "Of peace there can be only an eschatology." Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 24.

dreamed about and hoped for. In a chapter entitled "The World as it Could be Made" from *Roads to Freedom* (1918), a book composed during the dark days of World War I, Bertrand Russell expresses his vision of the world free from totalitarianism and conflict and at peace with itself, which each of us has the responsibility to realize:

The world that we must seek is a world in which the creative spirit is alive, in which life is an adventure full of joy and hope, based rather upon the impulse to construct than upon the desire to retain what we possess or to seize what is possessed by others. It must be a world in which affection has free play, in which love is purged of the instinct for domination, in which cruelty and envy have been dispelled by happiness and the unfettered development of all the instincts that build up life and fill it with mental delights. Such a world is possible; it waits only for men to wish to create it.³⁷

37. See Bertrand Russell, *Roads to Freedom* (London: Unwin, 1977), 154.