

PEACE THROUGH DIALOGUE

by

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ABSTRACT

The paper is dedicated to look at some major steps for achieving peace, through a better dialogue among people of other cultures and civilizations, such as no speaking about past misdeeds, respect for others, tolerance of differences, a better knowledge and understanding of them, and attitudes toward real reconciliation.

ARTICLE OUTLINE

ABSTRACT

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Peace is a field of general interest. We all are interested on peace because, as the classics said, *Pax optima rerum*. But to love peace is not enough. For achieving it we have to know what we people can do to make it possible: to deepen our knowledge of ourselves, of our neighbours, and of other cultures and, consequently, to look for a better dialogue among people of other civilizations. What steps to follow in this dialogue will be the topic of the present article.

To achieve peace and concord there is nothing better than communication and personal contacts. Dialogue is a way of peace, quite suitable for solving interpersonal, national and international tensions. Peace and prosperity depend on increasing interaction with others, building bridges with other civilisations. And for this, dialogue is essential. The main problem is that most of us still do not know how to talk openly about race, culture, religion, and so on with members of other civilisations. We cannot understand each other, nor can we build a more moral, just and secure society, until we learn to talk with and listen to each other¹. For a true dialogue, as Whaling says, "you have to penetrate within the skin of the other". This means to enter, as much as possible, into the personal and religious experience of the other, whether he is a Hindu, a Muslim, a Jew, a Buddhist, or whatever.

We also have to encourage consideration that there is an indispensable interdependency between different social groups. All have a common destiny, a happiness that can not be reached unless we all have a reciprocal co-responsibility in our effort, individual and collective, for achieving peace.

None of the many strategies to achieve peace is the best one in absolute terms. The value of each alternative depends of the particular conditions of each situation. Consequently it is convenient to get enough information about the possible factors affecting a conflict, about their contexts, as well as the eventual steps to achieve the peace.

¹ Helen Fox`s provocative book teaches us how to engage in honest dialogues about races [see: Fox, H (2001) *When Race Breaks Out*. New York: Peter Lang]

1. Not to speak about past misdeeds which may elicit future revenges

The first step should be trying to prevent future revenges, forgetting past quarrels and mutual bad memories about misdeeds and misunderstandings. It is what we doctors recommend our patients: "Don't pick the wound, but let it heal".

This kind of strategy is nothing new. A contribution of archaeology to contemporary debates about what's going on in places where peace is being sought, has been made by archaeologist Jonathan Haas of Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History. The Semai people of Malaysia never fight. Whenever two tribe members have a conflict, it is resolved with words. The village leader calls a meeting to discuss the dispute. When the talking finally stops, the village leader makes a ruling. Then he orders everyone present never to speak of the dispute again, and that is the end of it². It is no secret that the vast majority of the world's societies are nothing like the peaceful Semai. But it is rewarding to realise that we are able to be like them, as stated by the SSV, twenty odd years ago.

Peace seems to conflict with justice; the one deletes the past, the other acts on it. Simple justice would be revenge masqueraded as justice, perpetuating bitterness and divisions, civil war. South Africa attempted to find a middle way, neither trying to wipe away the past or prosecuting the guilty. Its Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was set up by President Nelson Mandela after apartheid, in terms of the *Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act*, No 34 of 1995. The mandate of the Commission was to bear witness to, record and in some cases grant amnesty to the perpetrators of crimes relating to human rights violations, reparation and rehabilitation. It sought truth and then reconciliation... and politically established a transitional government based on national unity. Fortunately, whatever problems the country has now, the revenge that many predicted has not happened. South Africa TRC heard statements from over 20.000 victims and perpetrators of apartheid. A study of nearly 4.000 people, published by the SA Institute for Justice and Reconciliation found that 76% of black respondents believed that TRC had done a good job, but only 37% of whites agreed; and 72% of blacks approved of amnesties

²Crenson M «Proving that war pre-dates history" Associated Press (June 10, 2001)

for crimes committed under apartheid, while only 39% of whites did. Are blacks more magnanimous in their forgiveness, or just more naïve in relation to TRC achievements because of having lower education or more ill information about the topic? But over half of all blacks thought whites untrustworthy, half found hard to imagine having a white friend (only a fifth said that they had ever eaten a meal with a white person), and roughly a fifth thought the country would be better off without whites.

TRC was considered a success, and other troubled countries seek to emulate it, tasked with discovering and revealing past wrongdoing by a government, in the hope of resolving conflict left over from the past. Similar human-rights commissions have been set up in other countries. Wikipedia lists 12 of them: Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, Fiji, Ghana, Guatemala, Liberia, Morocco, Panama, Peru, Sierra Leone, and Timor Leste. Yet the signs are that rarely if ever much truth has been aired or reconciliation achieved.

2. Respect others' opinions: agree to disagree

Pretending to be close friends of our enemies from the beginning might be a little bit unrealistic, except perhaps in the seldom occasion when there is 'love at first sight'. Usually it may be better to start agreeing to disagree, i.e., respecting others and their different opinions. The later US President Gerald Ford put it under the following motto: “you can disagree without being disagreeable”. As a matter of fact, “good business has very little to do with liking each other and a lot to do with working together with respect, and that includes respectful disagreement”³. This respectful disagreement -not harmony, nor close friendships- is key to business success; it encourages a more constructive debate which results in more profitable decisions.

³ Brooke Harrington, assistant professor of sociology, published his findings in the 2001 *Research in the Sociology of Organisations*. He illustrates why family businesses frequently get into trouble: people may be reluctant to contradict a family member; close friendships inhibit discussion. A similar danger is present in all work organizations, since most recruit new hires through the friendship networks of current employees, because they have similar sources of information and ways of thinking.

Limiting freedom of expression also goes against the ideal of a free and open world, where people write in computers, transmit via satellites, reproduce photocopies and distribute by fax. As the 007 Secret Agent says in the James Bond's film *Tomorrow never dies* (1997), "Words are the new weapons, and satellites the new artillery". In the 1980s, communication and information technology underwent a revolution that eventually caused the erosion of information control by dictatorships. It was impossible to open a closed society and, at the same time, to control people's behavior. For example, when one of the four Chernobyl reactors melted (1986), Gorbachev realized that the 'open and free world' had revealed the truth while the 'closed Communist world' was unable to conceal it. In spite of trying for two weeks to stop information from reaching the Russian population, it was already revealed to the rest of the world. Openness makes people free. As George H. W. Bush said in the NATO 40th Anniversary (May 1989), "Glasnost may be a Russian word, but Openness is a western concept".

Dialogue, therefore, has to be grounded on non-violence and mutual respect.

3. Tolerance and understanding

The existence of ethnic discrimination is a fact in many places, even where ethnic minorities are richer than the majority among whom they live -for instance, the Chinese in South East Asia, the Indians in East and South Africa, the Jews in most places. Where ethnic antagonism leads to bloodshed is usually because politicians have inflamed passions to secure their own grip on power, such as the tribal wars in the Balkans and Rwanda and the violence in rural Zimbabwe.

A psychological trick consists of stressing the differences between 'us and them' in an attempt to rationalize and justify otherwise unjustifiable feelings and behaviors: stressing our virtues and mitigating our weaknesses, and, simultaneously, stressing defects of others, projecting on others our own failings, they -gays, handicapped, Communists or fascists, gypsies, or just 'immigrants'- become the scapegoat, responsible for all of our social problems. Madan Das Devi, a leader of the

RSS (*Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, 'National Association of Volunteers')⁴, defines *Hindutva* (Hindu-ness) as "a way of life which accepts that all ways reach to one place, which is God". This educational appeal to 'patriotic tolerance' sounds unobjectionable, but it can become rather nationalism, instead of healthy patriotism⁵. In practice, this may be just rhetoric, leading to excesses of the zealots -as the *Bajrang Dal* (the young wing of the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad*, 'World Hindu Council') is accused of-, attacking members of non-Hindu minorities, regarded as threats. In some of Gujarat's textbooks, for example, Muslims, Christians and Parsis are described as 'foreigners'. It is easier to accept discriminatory measures against 'foreigners' than putting into practice norms of living together, tolerance, assimilation and rationality.

This problem is expressed in our daily life by the phrase 'not getting it', referring to instances where people place very different values on the same fundamental motive. A common example is the 'odd couple' where one person places a high value on order (the desire to organize) and the other places a similarly high value on flexibility. The person who values order cannot understand how anybody could prefer flexibility, and the person who values flexibility thinks the person who values order is stiff and should loosen up. Other example of 'not getting it' includes the person who values saving versus the individual who values spending; the person who values risk versus the individual who values safety; and so on for each elemental or basic value driven behavior. 'Not getting it' seems to occur to some degree when people have contrasting values, but it does not seem to occur when people have contrasting skills, abilities, or personality traits. According to Steven Reiss, it has three consequences: (1) miscommunication and misunderstanding, (2) dehumanizing and devaluing, and (3) aggressive or intrusive efforts to change or remove the other person. It is the classical process of dehumanizing the enemies, stressing their very different values, which are 'obviously' lower than ours.

Another example of how people can be motivated to dehumanize others consists in contrasting morals --or more generally contrasting values. We have an

⁴ RSS is the mother organisation of the Indian BJP (*Banaratiyah Party*) dedicated to 'character building' through *shakkas* (daily group exercise sessions in which members in military-style khaki shorts drill with sticks and salute a saffron flag).

⁵ By patriotism we understand the love of the place and people we belong to; and by nationalism, the believe that our place and people are the best ones.

unfortunate example right now in the Middle East. Westerners place a much higher value on fairness (basic desire idealism) and on freedom (basic desire independence). James Baker has publicly mocked our hopes for “a flowering of Jeffersonian democracy along the banks of the Euphrates”⁶. Taliban and Iraqis values are so different from ours that, when we focus on their values, we lose all sympathy for them. They become 'evil'. We cannot understand how anybody could prefer their values, unless something went wrong in their upbringing, brain chemistry, etc.

A mutual process of dehumanization, separate from the desires for revenge and self-defence, reduces the strength of motivational forces that might deter us from attacking people who are like-minded in terms of our values. I suspect this process plays a role in war and also in understanding in the complex interplay between war, morals, and religion. Any government that wants to lower the threshold for its citizens' support of war can best accomplish this goal by focusing media propaganda on contrasting values.

We have also mentioned 'immigrants'. No logic supports the hostility shown toward them, decent people seeking to better their lives, contributing to the common good and usually doing jobs that locals will not do. Immigrants generally bring with them qualities of thrift, hard work and enterprise, becoming an economical push for the country where they arrive. For instance, only a policy of European solidarity open to a strong immigration can guarantee the economical welfare of a continent where the birth rate is continuously decreasing. But even from a narrower point of view, if immigrants are selfishly and wrongly matched to hostile beggars, sharing is a way of keeping the peace with potentially hostile beggars, as the famous ethologist Blurton Jones proposed. Objecting to immigration, calling them job-stealers, spongers or who knows what else, is just a response to baser instincts, a deep-rooted suspicion of outsiders. Fear of an excessive number of foreigners is based on the lack of comprehension that we can live together having simultaneously different identities. We have still not learned that accepting human beings from other countries, with habits and cultures that might be different from ours, does not mean an inevitable losing of our own identity and patriotism.

⁶ The eclipse of neoconservatism. *The Economist* 12/2/06

On the contrary, the teaching of **history shows tolerance** and harmony between different cultures, instead of discriminative interpretations. A couple of examples come to my mind:

- A. Maybe the Battle of the Boyne (12 July 1690: William of Orange beat Catholics in Ireland) and the Battle of Kosovo (28 June 1389: Tsar Lazer of Serbia was defeated by the Ottomans, which led to 500 years of Muslim subjugation, and even more of self-pity under Turks; in 1914 an ardent Serb nationalist, Gavrilo Princip, marked it by killing Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria) should be seen as reasons to show religious tolerance, not bigotry.
- B. Maybe the zealots who incite their fellows Hindus to attack Muslims (as they did in 1992 in Uttar Pradesh, tearing down the Babri Mosque in the town of Ayodhya, because it was built -four centuries ago- on the site of a temple of the Hindu god Ram) should dwell on the humdrum Hindu-Muslim harmony that has long existed in the Indian subcontinent along with the periodic communal discord.
- C. Maybe Israelis should look into Arab as well as Jewish history (many believe that their modern state should have the same boundaries as the biblical land) and discover another dispossessed people; this would lead to conclude that Arabs and Jews had better try to get along together as equals... just a lovely dream.

Tolerance is a great ethic challenge of a pluralist society. It is an attitude of respect towards others, because of their human dignity, and to others' projects (those diverse projects that make one feel happy, each one according to their own peculiar convictions -personal, religious, or philosophical. Being convinced that their own ethic is the only possible may attract incomprehension against those who do not share the same ideals, but understand in a different way what is worthy). In few words, tolerance, may be the route to harmony and prosperity

But this 'capacity of tolerance' does not necessarily imply that *todo vale*, that every thing is o.k. As opposed to intolerance and prejudice, the eagerness to be tolerant however may not lead to an almost wilful blindness to one's own premises, in

the name of 'cultural sensitivities'⁷. This is incoherent because it would lead to an absolute moral relativism, which, besides being absurd, is wrong ($2+2\neq5$), and consequently unacceptable at least for those who believe in the existence of an objective truth.

Respect for others has its limits though: absolute values, i.e., those convictions of justice compatibles to everybody, those common values accepted by all, which are the necessary basis so that each can find happiness as it is understood and believed by him/her, such as human rights, or, at least, without renouncing to our own respect⁸.

4. Better knowledge of other cultures

How can we expect new generations to be more tolerant than those before, when ignorance naturally gives rise to mistrust and even hatred? asks John Elliot, Professor of History at Oxford. Learning about the cultures, customs and religions of our neighbours will help us to understand them better. Prejudice is born out of ignorance. We are suspicious of the things we know nothing about. As Gordon Anderson recently pointed out, knowledge has always being used as an instrument of power: "those who control education control the future"⁹. Education therefore is very important for tolerance and understanding of other cultures.

Cultures are not singular things; they are bundles of characteristics highly ambiguous in their definitions: language, religion, history, customs, institutions... So,

⁷ An example of this strategy of an almost wilful blindness to the 'cultural sensitivity' of liberals is shown in a Isaiah Berlin's *Notes on Prejudice*, reproduced in *The New York Review of Books*, vol 48, issue 16, p. 12 (October 18, 2001): "Few things have done more harm than the belief on the part of individuals or groups that he or she or they are in sole possession of the truth: especially about how to live, what to be and do and that those who differ from them are not merely mistaken, but wicked or mad: & need restraining or suppressing. It is a terrible and dangerous arrogance to believe that you alone are right: have a magical eye which sees the truth: and that others cannot be right if they disagree."

⁸ Better than tolerance, I prefer to talk about respect and understanding, because in the concept of tolerance it seems to be also included a certain acceptance of injustice or at least a kind of pretending to ignore it.

⁹ G.L. Anderson, *Relations of Knowledge to Values*. AAR Presentation, 17 November 2006.

in Islam, tradition is good; and departure of tradition is presumed to be bad until proven otherwise; yet, at the same time, it is also a monotheistic religion that encourages rationalism and science (we should not forget that Islam kept science alive during the medieval Dark Ages of Christianity). Equally, Confucian tradition shows periods of great scientific innovation and times of technological backwardness and isolation; nowadays, what seems important about that tradition is its encouragement of hard work, saving and investment for the future, plus its emphasis on co-operation towards a single end. This explains why the tradition has helped Asian economical growth¹⁰.

Of course there are cultural differences in values, attributes and beliefs relevant to aggression and violence among small groups. For instance, in gangs of young men, a concern for appearing tough and courageous is likely to lead to violence. People may self-select into violent-prone groups; persons who have delinquent friends are more likely to enforce delinquency, due both to peer influence and self-selection¹¹. But differential association may accentuate behavioral differences that already exist among members of different groups. Certain segments of a population may be socialized to have stronger values associated with violence than other members. According to the sub-culture of violence thesis these values are particularly likely to lead to retaliation when a person has been provoked¹². Nisbet found in USA evidence for regional difference in some values related to violence: Southerners are more favorable in their attitudes toward war, approval of corporal punishment, violence for self-protection and in response to insults¹³. Our research group, studying moral justification of various kinds of aggressive acts in diverse situations, shows that patterns of moral approval in different nations of four

¹⁰ Influence of culture and civilisation on international conflict. *The Economist*, Nov. 9 1996

¹¹ Matsueda, R.L. (1988), The current state of differential association theory. *Crime and Delinquency* 34: 277-306

¹² according to the sub-culture of violence thesis. See Tedeschi, JT & Felson, RB (1994) *Violence, Aggression and Coercive Actions* Washington DC: APA (1994)

¹³ Nisbet, RE (1993), Violence and US regional culture, *American Psychologist* 48: 441-449

continents are only, to some extent, common in the contemporary world, while differences among countries in these attitudes are culturally bound¹⁴.

Taking an extreme position, one could argue that cultures are so complicated that they can never be used to explain behavior accurately. The same culture embraces such conflicting features that it can produce wholly different effects at different times. Even worse, when affecting how people behave, cultures never operate in isolation; they are always part of a wider mix, including government policies, personal leadership, technological or economic changes. Since one effect may have multiple causes, how do you know whether it is culture -and not something else- which has caused some effect?

Multiculturalism is a valuable resource for enriching the tradition of pluralism. Bhikhu Parekh says that it means "a community which is creating, guaranteeing, encouraging spaces within different communities are able to grow at their own pace (...), creating a public space in which these communities are able to interact, enrich the existent culture and create a new consensual culture in which they recognize reflections of their own identity"¹⁵. Diversity of cultures thus is a source of creativity, and the greatest creativity occurs at the friction age of cultures, as Eliot¹⁶ put it.

We live in a world of multiple literacies, and understanding them should eliminate ethnocentrism rather than promote it. The old racism was grounded on the superiority of whites and the presentation of Anglo European culture (*WASPs*) as the definition of civilization. The new racism, instead of a racial superiority, is shown as cultural uniformity, monoculturalism and democratic values imposed on the world.

¹⁴ Ramirez, JM (2001) Moral Approval of Aggressive Acts by Urban Students (A Cross-national Study in Four Continents). In: Ramirez, JM & Richardson, DS (eds.) *Cross-cultural Approaches to Aggression and Reconciliation*. Huntington: NovaScience, (2001) pp. 61-71; (2007), Justification Of Aggression In Several Asian And European Countries With Different Religious And Cultural Background. *ISSBD Newsletter* (in press)

¹⁵ Parekh, B (1989), cited in Giroux, HA (1993) *Living dangerously. Multiculturalism and the Politics of Difference*. New York: Peter Lang , p. 145

¹⁶ Eliot, TS (1948) *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*. London: Faber and Faber (5th reprint, 1983).

Cultural differences would reject the notion of a narrow nationalism rooted in the identifications of an *a priori* given common or undifferentiated original culture.

Transcending the barriers of race, religion and language does not mean renouncing our own cultural, racial or religious identity. We should not cut ourselves off from our own system of reference, from our own deep roots from which our culture springs. It is not giving '*café para todos*', as we say in my own language; i.e., not applying the same to all. "We do not need a common culture, just a common ground for dialogue"¹⁷, a universal prospective open to the most suitable for each situation. In each space one has to maintain the most adequate form according to its own characteristics, avoiding those solutions which history has shown to be not adequate for that society.

In the world of cars the history of the Ford Mondeo gives us an interesting example of how can fail an intent of unnecessary 'universalization', of equalization, ignoring the peculiar characteristics of each country, culture or civilization. Although the car was designed to be super-compatible and universal, the reality was that it was in conflict with the tendencies and preferences of each country. Consequently it was not able to please the prospective buyers in any place. In Germany, it was considered to be a middleclass car, and therefore they continued to prefer the more aristocratic BMW. In USA, it was considered to be a small car, and therefore they continued to prefer their pick-ups, which are closer to the classic American values. Only in South America it considered to be a luxury car. Corollary: if one wants an effective globalization of the market, a certain national and immediate aura has to be expressed too. This was done, for example, with the Jaguar X-Type, which in reality is quite similar to a Ford Mondeo camouflaged with an aristocratic Britishness, adding much chrome, wood and leather.

Among some universal truths, UN includes "the understanding that even though the world is divided by many particularisms we are united as human

¹⁷ Giroux, HA (1993) *Living dangerously. Multiculturalism and the Politics of Difference*. New York: Peter Lang

community"¹⁸. What is important is not superiority but pluralism and tolerance among civilizations.

5. Avoiding historical abuses against other cultures

History is what makes nations what they are, giving them their character, their institutions, their identity. But it is not easy to draw the right conclusions about one's **history**, because it is a **matter of interpretation as well as evidence**, of judgment as well as knowledge. Many tend to overlook other points of view, or simply draw conclusions that others reject. It is too easy to use history for disreputable purposes. That is what makes it so open to abuse. That is why nations differ markedly in their uses of history:

a) Very few nations are ready to look at their past with an open mind in pursuit of **self-improvement**. They are, not surprisingly, the rarest. In recent years perhaps only Germany has been unambiguously prepared to confront its past in order to remake itself. It took the enormity of the Holocaust to bring about the necessity of self-examination, and perhaps anything less terrible might not have been enough. In my opinion, they have done it admirably, looking long and hard into the rear-view mirror. Few people other than the Germans are ready to be honest in their *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*¹⁹. Finally, Germany has 'come of age' to pursue its own interest and to take its rightful place in the order of the world, without its old guilt

¹⁸ Message of Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations. In: Roblat, J (ed) (2001) *The Long Roads to Peace*, Singapur: World Scientific, p. 67

¹⁹ Germany, bound by the inhibitions of its past, prisoner of its own history, was reluctant even to send troops abroad on humanitarian reasons; for example, during the Gulf War, it contributed only cash to the allied effort. 1999 marked a milestone since Germany regained full sovereignty in its foreign affairs after its unification. For the first time since the WW2, a post-war taboo about sending soldiers abroad to fight was broken. Gerhard Schröder, proposed an unlimited 'active solidarity' of Germany, ready to take risks, 'even military ones' in the fight against terrorism: "10 years ago, nobody would even thought that we could take active part in an international conflict. Now (after the cold war, the reunification of Germany, and the recuperation of German sovereignty), we can say that the era of the German post-war has become part of the past (...) The argument that we cannot take part (in military missions abroad) because our history no longer holds true" (11/10/01, in the Bundestag). German troops were sent into armed combat to help out in trouble spots in Kosovo, and nowadays in Afghanistan and Irak.

complex, which has its historical origin during long periods of confusion in the 19th and 20th centuries.

b) Other nations are more concerned about using history to justify failure, surliness or even aggression. This is the school of history known as **self-pity**. Slobodan Milosevic used St. Vitus's Day 1989 to exploit the Serbs' many festering fears as the start of his campaign to take over the whole of Yugoslavia²⁰.

c) Some, for whatever motive, merely indulge in **self-delusion**: France, which for nearly half a century chose not to delve into the unpleasant experience of occupation. Its unspoken consensus was that nothing would be gained by questioning the assertion that the French had won the war, and that absolutely everyone was a member of the *Resistance*. Or Italy, which put itself on the side of the winners of the WW2 thanks to a *Resistenza* whose real force is questioned off the record by many Italians.

d) Those new countries that have so little history may fall into the temptation of inventing themselves through **self-deception**. Many of the greatest events of their history are often due to imagination. Invented history is not peculiar to new nations, however. For instance, most Scots probably believe that they are descendents of a long line of whisky-drinking, kilt-clad Caledonians, even if, in fact, claret was their national drink until last century, and the kilt is a relatively modern English invention).

A chip-on-shoulder view of history wherever there is a residual sense of grievance, is in effect victim hood. It is a variant of the Shakespearean maxim about busying giddy minds with foreign quarrels, preventing them from falling prey to foreign aggression. For example, Li Peng justified the communist grip on power in China as "vigilance against the imperialist strategy of peaceful evolution". Vietnamese can point to the brutality they have suffered from successive Chinese, French and American oppressors. Afrikaners never cease to claim inspiration from the *Voortrekkers* who were pitted against both the British and the blacks.

"The one duty we owe to history is to **rewrite it**", Oscar Wilde said. When officials start to rewrite their textbooks to reveal the uglier aspect of their nation's history, it is nearly always a sign that the country is maturing. Most people dwell on

20 This day remembers their defeat by the Turks in the Battle of Kosovo.

the laudable, suppress the inglorious, and embellish the rest. If it is not possible to have too much history, it is certainly possible to spend too much time looking into it. After all, the whole of the future still remains to be rewritten²¹.

6. Attitudes toward real reconciliation.

Reconciliation is a characteristic of the post-conflict, of a stable peace. We are in position of achieving it only when the previous steps -pre-conflict, and conflict *proprie dicta*-, have been resolved, through a series of alternatives which allow us to reach specific goals. Reconciliation normalizes the relationship, restoring tolerance and co-operation. In restoring a harmonious social relationship there is participation from a constellation of interrelated cognitive, moral, emotional, and behavioral tendencies that in part define the individual²².

Then we will need mutual forgiveness. Forgiving others is a valuable gift for ourselves, and even the most grudge-bearing people can learn how to do it, as Stanford psychologist Carl Thoresen suggested²³. Mounting evidence shows there are emotional and physical health payoffs from the act of forgiveness. But forgiving doesn't mean condoning or deciding to forget offenses, or even necessarily reconciling with offenders, he says. "It means giving up the right to be aggravated and angry, and the desire to strike back." Without the difficult but necessary forgiveness, a lasting peace cannot be reached. To seek peace through forgiveness is a life's program, and it is a worthwhile risk even to the extent of heroism. But one cannot forget that forgiveness also has its own demands: truth (recognition of the crime) and justice (reparation), together with the guarantee that it will not be repeated.

²¹ See: Uses and abuses of history, *The Economist*, 21Dec 1996

²² De Waal, FBS (1996), *Good natured*, Cambridge: Harvard U.P.; and Keltner D & Potegal M (1997), Appeasement and Reconciliation, *Aggressive Behavior* 23: 309-314

²³ Thoresen's team has developed a six-session group treatment that helps people to forgive. "Learning to forgive can benefit the forgiver. People who took Stanford treatment report positive effects" 2001 American Psychological Association meeting.

In a similar way as "a seaman has a lover in each port", according to an old song, I feel I have a friend in each place, and I'm very grateful. We will become real citizens of the world, as I often feel myself. We feel like brothers, remembering our humanity, and forgetting the rest, as the Russell-Einstein Manifesto advocated more than half a century ago.

The most practical project to construct peace demands the participation of all parties, their co-operation. Working together, trying to form joint projects and being useful are very difficult things to do... but it is really worthwhile to try. As Antonio Machado, a Spanish poet, says: "*Caminante, no hay camino; se hace camino al andar.*" (walker, there is no path; the path is made in the walking).

I am aware that these ideas may be easier said than done, It is very simple to talk or to write presenting ideas about peace (intellectuals need to be kept honest, tolerant, and solidarian towards humankind), but it is difficult to implement them (we academicians are not purer than other people). Patience needs to become a habit so that we can deal with our life in a better and more pleasant way. There is much goodwill; but there is also a lot of greed, selfishness, ignorance, racial, religious and linguistic prejudice. The fight is far from over but, in the words of Willem de Zwijger, *it is not necessary to hope in order to undertake, nor to succeed in order to persevere*²⁴. At the beginning of the 21st century, in spite of what we are experiencing in this very moment, peace among people is not a far distant utopia anymore.

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²⁴ cited by André L. Mechelync, summarising the concerns of the Pugwash movement (2001) *Ploughshare*: 13, p. 1

