

a laboratory — a golden opportunity to advance and experiment with their own grandiose ideas of the way things ought to be. Almost immediately they perpetrated separation from their environment just as their cultural antecedents had done beginning with the tribes of Abraham. They built walls and fortified them, treating with the natives only when it was to their materialistic advantage. In a sense that could be interpreted as a declaration of war.

As a proud descendant of English and Scottish immigrants endowed with the traditions and education of a neoclassical heritage, I can attest to personal difficulties in avoiding the secure (though uptight) walls of analysis and classification which tends to give me the illusion that I, as an individual, necessarily stand alone as a separate entity against the tides of existence, against the sea of humanity and that, by God, *I had better overwhelm mine enemies before they overwhelm me.* Without apologizing for being proud of my personal skills and strengths, I have long erroneously assumed that strife means war when actually it only means struggle or turmoil. I have long associated the natural instinct for personal survival with a lust for power and the inevitability of war.

The transformation I mentioned near the beginning of this article has enabled me to start scrutinizing my cultural walls of what I call separatism: separatism of race, of nationality, of religion, of gender, separatism which emphasizes differences in existence and minimizes the common link of all phenomena. I am starting to understand anew and with more clarity (in the vein of those profound words of Theodore Roethke, "In a dark time, the eye begins to see" — words long printed in the masthead of the *North Coast Times Eagle*) that my proud bid for individualism and rationalism has separated me and still separates me from my instinctual awareness that unity and acceptance of my relationship to nature is more important (as a first step) to the cause of global peace than is my blind activism.

I have long understood the major difference between war and peace is that war is temporary, whereas peace (by virtual definition) is intrinsically eternal, or in colloquial earthly imagery, forever; if it's not forever, it's not peace, not truly. As a self-proclaimed atheist, I have made the mistake of disavowing the notion that anything lasts forever. That is one area in which Judeo/Christian religionists possess a greater understanding than I do.

I believe in evolution, and since I also believe that human evolution is strongly influenced by past, present and future cultural and social behavior and beliefs, I must also believe in my personal ability to make a quantum leap in order to break the impasse which previously prevented my total belief in the possibility and inevitability of global peace, for we shall achieve it, either through complete and personal worldwide understanding or through global obliteration.

Firm in the belief that planetary obliteration is neither necessary or acceptable, I am in the process of exploring and developing an unorthodox (though far from original) theory, or series of theories or foundations on which to construct avenues toward world peace. Since peace is a new field of endeavor for me and will therefore require a considerable amount of groping on my part, much of what I write here will also be new to me and even more organic than usual in the sense that many of the ideas expressed here will be formulated as I key them to my computer screen. In the hopes these thoughts will be worthy of considering, they should also be taken with a grain of salt for I am no Dag Hammarskjöld; in the land of orthodox negotiation and international diplomacy my ideas are not germane.

I suppose the key to understanding what I am thinking about peace is to be aware that I strongly believe war and other forms of mass murder are not part of the biological makeup of humanity. And further, even if science should determine a DNA linkage to mass violence it is still possible to bring such behavior to a cessation — if not through science then through evolution via exercise of restraint which would eventuate lack of need for that function and render it biologically obsolete. But without belaboring the question of whether or not war is inherent in human nature, I assert that it is not.

I sincerely believe the key to world peace lies in the love of life (*existence*) and being in constant awe of all its

*"Although I do not doubt the man called Jesus also possessed a thorough understanding of the nature of love, I am not speaking of the love to which devout Christians faithfully adhere, for as an atheist I don't believe in transcendent anything (except, perhaps, hot air) and I am automatically disqualified and rightfully so. Rather, I am attempting to refer to an acceptance of everything in existence as being of equal importance or consequence in the overall scheme of things; as a concept which I am just beginning to grasp, it is a monumentally iconoclastic blow to my cultural ego. If this line of blather smacks of 1960s drug induced dogma, it gets worse. My heretical new line of thinking leads me to conclude that I am molecularly related to everything and everybody else in the entire cosmos, even to George Bush, a notion that would no doubt horrify him more than it displeases and offends the culturally developed civilized egocentric sensibilities of the very me who writes these words and thinks these thoughts*



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ramifications. The more I think about it, the more convinced I become that the lack of reverence for all existence is the root cause for human violence. This irreverence often causes deep resentment, ridicule and sometimes violent behavior toward those few who profess love as a way of life or a path to peace. If I think about it in concrete representative terms, the two individuals who leap to the forefront of my mind are Mahatma Gandhi and Albert Schweitzer."

I have long been in awe of the magnitude of existence with its infinite levels and/or dimensions which stagger any attempt to understand or explain no matter what brand of icon is used to pinpoint them. Even so, I am beginning to believe the very vastness and elusiveness of the phenomenon of existence is not only (in itself) the ubiquitous and eternally sought for "secret of the universe," but it is also one of the primary characteristics which give my perspective evidence there is, indeed, a common thread which links each particle with every other particle and the whole of existence — the key contributing factor to my new found belief that peace on earth is possible, hopeful and perhaps (if we envision it) inevitable.

## THIS IS NOT JUST

I am convinced if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a *thing-oriented* society to a *person-oriented* society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism and militarism are incapable of being conquered....

A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the local betterment of the countries, and say: *This is not just.* It will look at our alliances with the landed gentry of Latin America and say: *This is not just.* The Western arrogance of feeling that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them is *not just.* A true revolution of values will lay hands on the world order and say of war: *This way of settling differences is not just.*

These are revolutionary times. All over the globe men and women are revolting against old systems of exploitation and oppression, and out of the wombs of a frail world new systems of justice and equality are being born. The shirtless and barefoot people of the land are rising up as never before. "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light." We in the West must support these revolutions. It is a sad fact that, because of comfort, complacency, a morbid fear of communism and our proneness to adjust in injustice, the Western nations that initiated so much of the revolutionary spirit of the modern world have now become the arch anti-revolutionaries.

Now let us begin. Now let us rededicate ourselves to the long and bitter — but beautiful — struggle for a new world. This is the calling of the children of God, and our brothers and sisters wait eagerly for our response. Shall we say the odds are too great? Shall we tell them the struggle is too hard? Will our message be that the forces of American life militate against their arrival as full men and women, and we send our regrets? Or will there be another message, of longing, of hope, of solidarity with their yearnings, of commitment to their cause, whatever the cost? The choice is ours, and though we might prefer it otherwise we must choose in this crucial moment of human history.

—MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR

The following was excerpted from the final portion of a speech Dr. King gave at Riverside Church in New York City, "Beyond Vietnam," on April 4, 1967, one year to the day before his assassination.

As I have intimated, I presently believe that civilized humanity's quest for concrete immediate answers and solutions has overcome many problems, but the resulting successes have also divorced the human species from its instinctive awareness of its origin as well as its relationship with the rest of nature. This hypothesis applies to me and shows I must strive to alter my line of thinking if I expect to work for global peace in an effective way. I must tear down my long established walls of prejudiced analytical reasoning which supplant understanding with a labyrinth of entanglement reduced to cut and dry options no matter how ruthless they are. I must learn to experience and feel more than I deduce.

Having begun to cast off many of the walls of my culture I must stop seeking absolutes. I must now start assuming. And this is the crux of what I am driving at. After years of unscholarly and perhaps haphazard research and rumination concerning the central nature of existence, I have concluded (despite the rather contradictory and unorthodox observations and subsequent deductions of David Hume and other eminent philosophers far more erudite than I am) that existence is, and I am not capable of deducing anything, only of assuming virtually everything.

Maybe I am an evolutionary throwback whose mind has not yet grasped the civilized notion that conditions are not the way they seem, that I am no less important to existence than everyone or everything else. And if that is so (my primitive outlook tells me), I must assume all existence and every part of it is no less important to the scheme of things than I am. As a mere primitive I am not only unable to grasp Hume's theory that nothing exists — my sense and instincts tell me otherwise — I am also unable to discern that as a human being I am more important than my cousin the rock that has helped me with life sustaining food from my cousin the deer and has saved my life in combat by being hurled at my cousin the mighty lion.

Perhaps it is my primitiveness that prevents me from comprehending that the species to which I categorically belong, the civilization of which I am a part, and the nation of which I am a citizen are any more divine than anything else in existence. I fail to understand why my powers of reasoning make me in any way superior (a highly questionable linguistic value conceived only by humanity and proportionate to the sophistication or complexity of a civilization or culture) to anything else or why I should construct, in the name of a nebulous transcendence of an evanescent ideal or illusory spirit, divisive walls to separate me from an organic relationship with my environment, a separation which ultimately transforms my view of nature from the condition of passivity to that of hostility. Whereas primitive humanity was an integral part of the landscape and accepted nature on its own terms, civilized humanity increasingly pushes the environment into the background and seems to regard its creator, the eternal plasma of existence (hence the age-old symbol of life springing from clay) as something to conquer and exploit, declaring war on everything in the way, including itself.

I am not ashamed to be human, neither am I a doom-sayer filled with despair at an imagined human annihilation. I feel we as a species can and will somehow and at some time arrive at an understanding that we must merge our powers of deductive reasoning with our long neglected instinctive awareness of the supreme value and inevitability of an intrinsically equitable and organic relationship with the rest of existence. Ironically, my hope for such a merger lies in my profound admiration of the very same human spirit I have just criticized as being the causal force behind the deterioration of our original instinctive awareness. The powers of reasoning (deductive and inductive alike) that have utilized their creative and constructive capacities to lead us to the brink of planetary disaster — if not absolute annihilation — can and will, I believe, achieve the merging of cultural creativity with instinctive understanding regarding intrinsic equitability of all existence, the factor which will snatch peace from the oft-ridiculed realm of sublime fantasy into the world of reality.

Although there is absolutely no reason to suppose that humanity will suddenly become altruistic in an inherently indifferent cosmos where existence itself is the common thread which links everything to everything else, I believe the same characteristic that led the human species to try to dominate nature will necessarily lead it back to harmony within the dynamics of ebb and flow and the other organically natural processes, which will be a major contributing factor to the ultimate cessation of the cancer of human warfare. The creative element in humankind will enable it to tear down the walls of imagined superiority in order to reestablish the umbilical connection with our origin.

Perhaps I am naïve, but (despite my deep love and respect for history as well as the very reasonable view that in order for peace to work it must first have historical precedent) I believe the road to global peace lies in the assumption of its inevitability. From my perspective, military preparation physically and psychologically not only causes war by inuring people around the globe to the possibilities of war but also virtually destroys hopes for a peaceful solution. Yet, if we convince ourselves that war is inevitable we as a result hasten to ensure its occurrence. War brings me to my knees in despair, but it also reinforces my strong belief in the powers of will and

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