Introduction

Toward a philosophy and metapsychology of peace

The importance of securing international peace was recognized by the really great men of former generations. But the technical advances of our times have turned this ethical
postulate into a matter of life and death for civilized mankind today, and made the taking of an active part in the solution to the problem of peace a moral duty which no conscientious man can shirk.
(Albert Einstein 1984: 43) [1]

If we begin with the need to survive, we immediately see that peace is a primary requirement of the human condition itself.
(Johan Galtung, in Galtung and Ikeda 1995: 110)

Preface

- For millennia, philosophers, religious thinkers and political activists have written about and demonstrated for 'peace' and decried war. Yet a 'philosophy' of peace is still in its infancy. And while theorists, strategists, tacticians and planners of war and 'security studies' dominate both the academy and the halls of power, philosophers who profess and march for peace do so outside the mainstream philosophical curriculum, far removed from those with the power to make and enforce important political decisions, and often to the dismay and castigation of their more '*echt* philosophical' colleagues

Preface

- For over a century, psychologists and psychoanalysts have attempted to illuminate the often elusive and murky depths of the human psyche. But a 'depth psychology' of peace is also merely inchoate. Psychologists who research and teach peace, like their philosophical comrades, do so on the margins of their discipline, and usually as a supplement to more 'rigorous, scientific' investigations.

What is, and might be, peace?

- Perhaps 'peace' is like 'happiness', 'justice', 'health' and other human ideals, something every person and culture claims to desire and venerate, but which few if any achieve, at least on an enduring basis. Why are peace, justice and happiness so desirable, but also so intangible and elusive? But perhaps peace is different from happiness, since it seems to require social harmony and political enfranchisement, whereas happiness appears, at least in Western culture, to be largely an individual matter.

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- Alternatively, perhaps peace does indeed resemble individual happiness – always there, implicit in our psychological make-up and intermittently explicit in our social behaviour and cultural norms. Peace is a pre-condition for our emotional well-being, but a peaceful state of mind is subject to cognitive disruptions and aggressive eruptions.

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Eros and aggression, love and hate, are intermingled from birth to burial. Understanding and
pacifying our conflicted inner worlds – our need for and flight from love of ourselves and
others – is an intellectual and political project of the highest and most urgent order. This
undertaking must run in tandem with the necessity of comprehending and transforming the
conflicts rampant in our interpersonal and political realms of interaction and division.

peace

Peace is often defined or determined negatively. Peace is 'the absence of war'. Peace is '*non*violence'. Etc. We know peace by its absence.
We would agree that the Second World War was certainly not a time of peace, at least for
much of the Northern Hemisphere. But what about much of the Southern Hemisphere from
1919 to 1945? Were sub-Saharan Africa, most of Latin America, and the homelands of the
Anzus countries 'at peace' because they were *not* battlegrounds? And what about the period of
the 'Cold War'? Was that a 'Cold Peace' as well?

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These historical considerations lead us back to first, perhaps to 'ultimate', principles, regarding not just the meaning(s) of peace, but its 'essence', its ontology. Is peace like other theoretical terms–justice, freedom, virtue and equality, to name a few? Something intangible but which
virtually all rational people prize? Or is it even less tangible, less perceptible, an ideal without an
essence, an 'ideal type' (in Max Weber's formulation) but still bearing a 'family resemblance'
to other, more tangible human desiderata? *Perhaps peace is both an historical ideal and a term
whose meaning is in flux*, sometimes seemingly constant (as in 'inner peace of mind') but also
noteworthy for its relative absence on the field of history (as in 'world peace').

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Peace is dialectical. In this world, peace is neither a timeless essence – an unchanging ideal
substance – nor a mere name without a reference, a form without content. Peace should neither
be reified by essentialist metaphysics nor rendered otiose by postmodernist and sceptical
deconstruction.

Thinking peace

In thinking about and thinking peace, it is helpful to make clear distinctions between what
peace is and might be, and what peace is not and should not be. Thinking 'negatively' (critically
or dialectically), it is important to note that peace is not mere pacification: it is not active or
subtle domination and manipulation of less by more powerful actors (or -pacification). Peace is
also not quiescence and acquiescence by a 'pacified' population (+ pacification) fed 'bread and
circuses' by a 'benevolent' empire or autocrat.

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On the contrary,*peace in its progressive or dialectical mode denotes active individual and collective selfdetermination and emancipatory empowerment*. Peace entails continuous peacekeeping and
peacemaking. And peacemaking requires active and continual personal and collective transformation,
pacifistic rather than pacifying in its means of psychological and political development.

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Similarly, the belief system of those who both think and practise peace and who actively seek to attain it by peaceful (nonviolent) means – true pacifism – is not passivism. *Genuine pacifism is transformative and activist, employing nonviolent means of social and personal change to resist oppression,*
war, and injustice and to promote personal and social moral integrity and radical, peaceful means of transforming conflicts and actors.

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Given the history of the recent past and the current parlous state of our world, one might understandably be tempted to be sceptical about the prospects for enduring peace on earth in
an era (error?) of potential instantaneous global war with weapons of mass and vast destruction. But it is worth recalling that other political ideals once thought unachievable also came to pass.

and terrorism

The antithesis of peace is not conflict. Conflicts appear historically inevitable and may be socially desirable if they result in personal and/or political progress. Conflicts may, perhaps paradoxically, promote and increase peace and diminish violence if the conflicting parties negotiate in good faith to reach solutions to problems that are achievable and tolerable, if not ideal.

metapsychology of peace

'Metapsychology' is a term used by Freud to denote a number of essays he wrote just after the
start of the First World War, commencing with two papers written in 1915, 'Instincts and their
Vicissitudes' and 'The Unconscious', and continuing two years later with 'Mourning and
Melancholia'. In his 'Autobiographical Study', Freud said that what is meant by 'metapsychology' is 'a method of approach according to which every mental process is considered in relation to three coordinates, which I described as dynamic, topographical, and economic,
respectively; and this seemed to me to represent the furthest goal that psychology could achieve'

A spectral theory of peace

Peace is like light, intangible but discernible either by its absence or by its sporadic and often startling appearances (like a flash of lightning against a black sky). Peace is a background condition for the perception of everything else, a physical phenomenon affecting all sentient beings, something whose presence or absence is best measured on a continuum or spectrum.

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Peace ranges from what I shall call 'Strong, or Durable, Peace' (roughly equivalent to Johan Galtung's term 'Positive Peace' – a condition in which there is relatively robust justice, equity, and liberty, and relatively little violence and misery at the social level) to weak or fragile peace.
Strong peaceful cultures and societies reflexively promote personal harmony and satisfaction.

durable peace?

Peace is not and probably cannot be either perfect or unending – at least not on this island Earth
as we now know it. But that does not imply that peace is also chimerical and 'not in our genes.'
Rather peace, like justice and happiness, is an historically shifting condition of our individual

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and collective natures, of our psyches and polities, that at some times is less intangible and at
other historical moments shines in the most distant horizons of our imaginations and desires.
Peace is, like all desired and desirable human ideals and needs, always potentially within us,
even if difficult to discern and seemingly impossible to accomplish. The quest for peace may
seem quixotic, but that is part of it allure.
Peacemaking is and ought to be heroic. Peace is and must be the heroic quest of this new
millennium – if we are to survive.