

Dear Marco,

Together, we are supposed to come up with a conscious response to terror, a formula to end war. Sounds like an easy thing to do. I have to confess that, while I want to believe there is a way to bring absolute peace to the world, I am sometimes more inclined to think that conflict is just a necessary part of our existence, and that no matter how much we tell ourselves otherwise, we are deluded if we think it's ever going away. I'm driven to search for "the answer" anyway, however, and I know you have a tremendous faith in the benevolence of the Universe. So perhaps we can combine our abilities and, if nothing else, fill in a little piece of the great puzzle. Let's give it a shot.

I would like to begin with a metaphor invoked by Kenneth Burke in *Permanence and Change, An Anatomy of Purpose*: that of an unfortunate rat. Due to circumstances presumably beyond his control, the poor little rat finds himself the subject of a cruel scientific experiment in which a calloused researcher administers electric shock by pushing a button on the outside of the cage. The rat, of course, has knowledge of neither the researcher, nor the button. (Or, to use more pointed phraseology, he is *unconscious* of them). And so, while he attempts to eliminate the problem by reacting "in the direction of the disturbing agency" (presumably by biting at the wires or some similar behavior), he is unable to interact directly with the true source of his discomfort, and hence unable to end it. He thinks that his problem is the actual shock, but if he were able to understand the deeper causal forces at work, he would realize that the shock itself is just a manifestation of a more insidious form of malevolence.

And such is the case with those of us who are caught in the voodoo of war. We're aiming our weapons at the wrong thing. I think Luther was getting at this when he wrote, "we must remember that in this matter we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers of the darkness of this world (Eph. vi. 12), who may fill the world with bloodshed but cannot themselves be overcome thereby." (520) It's too bad western civilization seems to have forgotten his words, and hence, comes up with ballyhoo like "the war to end all wars," and, more recently, "the war on terror." There seems to be an almost relentless faith in the extremely thin notion that it is possible to put a stop to butchery and killing with more butchery and killing. But we don't have to think too deeply to realize that the current ***new*** war, if it continues much longer, is more likely to infect the world with terror the likes of which has never been imagined than it is to uproot that which now threatens us. [1] In fact, we don't have to think at all; we only have to look—just look—at the situation in the Middle East. Truly, war is a demon. And whether we lie to ourselves about it or not, as long as we fight wars, we feed the demon; the new war on terror is just fuel for the fire. God help us.

TALKING SOLUTIONS

So fighting wars isn't the answer. What is then? We'll get there, but just before we address that very important question, I would like to return to an earlier concern I believe deserves a more thoroughgoing analysis than we have so far given it: the notion that the current state of affairs is the best we can hope to achieve, and that war is written into the code of life, and we will therefore never be free of it. Marco, I have to tell you that—as much as I wish it were not the case—I am attracted to the reasoning behind such sentiments. After all, can you think of a time in the history of western civilization during which war and conflict have not been an issue? I can't. And, as you know, according to the actuarial scientists and the risk analysts, the best predictor of the future is

the past—the way things have always been is the way things are always going to be. And so maybe war really isn't going to go away.

As I've suggested already, however, I want to find an answer to the war-problem, no matter how cogent fatalist thinking of that kind initially appears, and, although I don't have any solid evidence, maybe I can here offer a few preliminary reasons why doing so might be valuable. First, I think it is important to remember that, even if the endeavor proves impossible, and there is in the end no way whatsoever to eliminate war, that doesn't necessarily mean we won't gain anything from making the attempt. "Reach for the stars, you might touch the sky;" you might achieve a percentage of what you hope to achieve, and even that percentage will make a difference. So whether or not we can wholly realize the utopian ideal, we might be able to take some steps in that direction by aiming for it, and if we can do that, we'll be better off than we are now. We have to be careful not to use the fact that the problem appears so pervasive and overwhelming as an excuse to do nothing, and simply accept the status quo. Instead, it is important to focus on the transformations that we *are* able to affect and begin with them.

Second, while I am sensitive to the appeal, I am not wholly convinced that there is a reason to believe in the absolute truth of a claim that war is going to be around forever. Things change. And while statistics and probability mapping can undoubtedly help us cope with the world, perhaps they are not the best tools to use when asking ourselves what is *possible*. Clearly, no one would make a huge objection if I said that, given other circumstances, I might have been an Olympic athlete or a famous filmmaker right now, even though I happen to be neither. Things could have turned out otherwise. And it is also possible to imagine a world where, with regards to war, things are different than they now happen to be. And if it is indeed the case that we *can* conceive of a peaceful world, are we really right in holding on to the belief that peace is *impossible*? [iii] Somehow, I am inclined to think that the word 'impossible' is a bit stanch here, and we would be more accurate if we instead predicated peace with a phrase like 'yet unprecedented,' or 'a revolutionary way of living,' or even 'something that will require unparalleled innovation to achieve.'

In spite of what I think, however, many people continue to say that peace *is* impossible, and not just in the we-can't-do-it-with-the-resources-we-have-so-far-acquired-way, but in the there's-no-way-in-hell-it's-ever-going-to-happen-so-don't-even-bother-thinking-about-it-way. I am reminded here of a scene from *Pleasantville*, in which the female protagonist, Jennifer, shocks the rest of her classmates by asking, "What's at the end of Main Street?" The teacher condescendingly replies, "why, everyone knows that the end of Main Street is just the beginning again," while the students stare incredulously, as if to suggest that it isn't possible to come up with a more preposterous question, and then burst into a volley of giggles. The point is that the citizens of Pleasantville, including the students, who should be engaged in real thinking, are unable or unwilling to make the conceptual shift needed to see outside of the interpretive framework that they bring to their experiences. They possess an unconscious bias, articulated so strongly in the direction of their own historically overdetermined subject position, that they are unable to recognize it, and therefore unable to see beyond it. They can't shift their point of view, or "think outside the box." Thus, they are prepared to say, without reservation, that their view of things is the correct and only one. "Everyone knows the end of Main Street is just the beginning again," is their mantra, just as ours sometimes seems to have become "the war rages on!" (As if it weren't bad enough that we, like the poor rat, have grown incapable of understanding our situation for what it really is, we choose to remain that way, holding on to our ignorance, paralyzed by our prejudices, and powerless to change things).

Finally, I am inspired by Freedman and Combs to begin to ask questions that might help to "open

up” what we could think of as *the spin cycle of war*, and to create common ground from which a “preferred reality,” one without war, might be more readily accessible. They argue that, by changing the language we use to describe the world and the narratives we use to structure our experience, we can literally alter the world itself. [iv] They suggest that one of the most compelling ways to do this involves asking questions that guide our attention into new avenues, in effect creating the world with the inquiries we make of it. Accordingly, in their own therapeutic practice, they have become masters of the skillfully constructed interrogative, testifying to the power of the rhetorical question to create change. I offer the following list of such questions, inspired by their work and concerned with the exception rather than the rule and the possible rather than the actual, as a way of changing the way we think about war and peace:

- *How would people treat one another in a perfectly peaceful world? Has there been a time when I have felt as though I treated others that way or was treated that way by others? If so, what motivated or enabled me to act that way? What was it like emotionally, spiritually, physically, psychologically? What other details can I remember?*
- *How does War get into my consciousness? What are the times and situations in which it seems to be the most able to affect me? What else do I need to have in my consciousness in order for War to thrive there? Have there been times when I felt free of War, as though it was unable to get into my mind and influence me? How did I achieve that freedom?*
- *What is the price I am paying when I allow War-consciousness to affect me, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, physically, and so forth? How much is it costing me in terms of my relationships, my self-esteem, my ability to find and fulfill my purpose in life, and my health?*
- *What would my experience of life be like if I had no consciousness of War? How would that be more pleasurable than my current experience of life? What kind of beliefs would I need to hold about the world in order to feel completely at peace? How might I begin to adopt some of those beliefs?*
- *Would I rather live each day with the underlying assumption that the whole universe is ultimately peaceful or ultimately war-filled? And moving from the level of the macrocosm to the microcosm, would I rather believe that I am a peaceful person or a war-driven person? What differences would show up in my attitudes and behaviors as a result of holding one set of beliefs or another?*

That list of questions probably isn't exhaustive, but it's a start. It also happens to be a nice way of leading into the crux of this letter. I think that an important and available way of changing the reality of war and terror is to change our language about it, and one of the easiest ways to restructure our language about something is to restructure the questions we ask ourselves about it, in virtue of the fact that different types of questions will give rise to different types of responses. So there's a start: A conscious response to terror involves asking questions that will infuse us with a spirit of peace. [v]

FIGURING IT OUT

Let's take a look at what four important historical figures have had to say about peace on earth, and then synthesize the information from the respective texts into something that will address the choices available to us during this particular historical period. As we shift our focus from perspective to perspective, we stand to perceive patterns and relationships among those perspectives that we wouldn't have thought of before. So let us go through the four figures now, and keep in mind this question as we do: *In what ways can unity be achieved among these four*

voices?

Figure 1: Relational Patterns and Tendencies

Condorcet:

- Submission to Reason
- Unity through equality
- Interpersonal
- Microcosm Awareness
- Non-hierarchical
- Mind

Christ:

- Submission to One Another
- Unity through love
- Transpersonal
- Macrocosm Awareness
- Non-hierarchical
- Spirit (Matter)

Hobbes:

- Submission to a Ruler
- Unity through fear (awe)
- Impersonal
- Macrocosm Awareness
- Hierarchical
- Mind (Matter)

Augustine:

- Submission to God
- Unity through confession
- Intrapersonal
- Microcosm Awareness
- Hierarchical
- Spirit

To imagine peace, point blank, is to imagine some way of systematizing the world so that people can get along with one another. As we can see from the grid above, it is possible to find a unique vision of how it might be possible to achieve world peace, thus conceived, in each text. When each of these visions is unpacked in relation to the other three, one obvious pattern that emerges is their unanimous advocacy of some kind of submission (or surrender). The importance of surrender, cannot, I think, be overestimated, particularly in virtue of its capacity to integrate two individuated hubs of consciousness into a single nexus through what Burke refers to as consubstantiation, or identification.^[vi] For to *surrender* (submit) the self is etymologically to give one's self to an entity beyond the boundary of the self. To do this, of course, is to somehow blur or extend that very boundary, and as a consequence, to achieve a sort of metaphysical unity between the self and the entity to which it is surrendered. We can see the implications of this concept, for example, in the following passage from *Leviathan*:

The only way to erect such a common power which may defend them...is to confer all their power and strength upon one man, or upon one assembly of men that may reduce all their wills, by majority of voices, unto one will; which is as much as to say, to appoint one man or assembly of men to speak for them; and everyone to *accept and acknowledge himself to be the author of whatsoever he that speaks for him shall act or cause to be acted in those things which concern the common peace and safety, and therein to submit their wills to his will, and their judgments to his judgment. This is more than consent or concord; it is a real unity of them all in one and the same person...*(38, emphasis mine)

Here, through the abrogation of rights and freedoms to a ruler, individuals are together identified as a "commonwealth." Thus, in a very legitimate sense, they can be thought of as one and the same being, and the result, as Hobbes would have it, is a system that conduces to peace among them.

DON'T BLAME THE SYSTEM

Before we deepen our analysis, it would, in fact, be helpful to remind ourselves of systems theory,

which has two central axioms, namely that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts,” and that changes in any component of a whole will necessarily have an effect on all its other components. In a broad sense, we can see humanity – or even “the universe” – as a system in which all human beings are fundamentally and inextricably interconnected. Careful reflection on this fact should engender an acute sense of responsibility within each of us, because it makes it impossible for us to distribute, or “dump” the blame for acts of war and terror onto a single person or group. We are *all* enrolled in the dynamics of the world; willingly or unwillingly, we all have a part to play.

In fact, the more we reflect, the more superfluous the notion of blame seems to be. Strict, discontinuous cause-effect relationships do not obtain in systems theory. “Causes” are just the effects of other causes. Moreover, effects can’t be said to terminate at a specific location on the space-time continuum. Instead, they go on forever, feeding into a perpetually self-weaving matrix of cumulative co-creation, wherein everything that emerges is, in a sense, born or evolved of everything else. It would be impossible, for example, to isolate a single cause of the events that took place on September 11th of last year. There are probably an infinite number of factors to consider, some of them hundreds of years in the making, which led to things happening the way they did. And even if we could isolate all the causal forces at play, we would have to ask ourselves what caused those forces in the first place. And even if we could determine that, we’d have to try and sort out all the relationships between all those forces; and such relationships would have their own causal implications. In the end, we’d be faced with an infinite regress, locating the causes of causes of causes, finding relationships between relationships between relationships, and on and on.

So we’ve done away with blame, but not with responsibility. This is a paradox we must all come to understand if ever we intend to liberate humanity from the shackles of war. We think we’ll be free when we can exercise control (blame and control are attributes of the same phenomenon; they are linked in terms of “the Other”), but in fact the converse is true. We’ll only discover freedom when we give control up, and take responsibility. According to C.S. Lewis, at their maximum, freedom and necessity differ not. (211-212) Hence, a conscious response to war is, as we have seen already, an act of surrender.

In any case, let us, for the sake of argument, personify the system that all humans together comprise, and call her “Eve.” Eve can be broken down in a number of different ways; each individual represents a very basic part, and groups of people may represent larger, more complex parts, as when religious, national, or political affiliations are shared. At present, Eve is sick, incapacitated, and infested with the disease of war. And as long as the discord between her various components continues, she remains sick, and we all suffer. In fact, we suffer in ways that we aren’t even aware of, because Eve has yet to experience wellbeing (conceived as a deep-seated, universal absence of both war and the threat of war), and our vitality is contingent upon hers.

Having developed this theory of Eve, it may be of value to leave ourselves open to the notion that, as with other systems, she can embody two levels of causation. Specifically, we can understand causation in systems to occur at both the *organic* and the *atomistic* levels. For example, when I reach down to pick up a pen, there are two different ways to think of it. On the one hand, there are a series of synapses in my brain, which cause electricity to run down certain nerves into my arm, which in turn triggers the production of adenosine triphosphate, activating my muscles, so that I grip the pen, and so forth. On the other hand, however, there is a *top-down* causal force, reflected by the fact that *I*, as a single, integrated entity, consciously reach down and pick up the pen.^[vii] And although we do not normally imagine the human collective this way,

perhaps it is not so unrealistic to think that Eve does, or could, also exemplify top-down causation. Are the individual cells in my body, after all, wholly aware of their relationship to one another in the organic sense? Who is to say that we are not like cells comprising a complex conscious being about which we are merely able to speculate? Whatever the case, let us simply hold the idea in the back of our minds as we go on to look at the four figures in detail.

SELF: CONFESSED

*I had now found the great pearl.
It remained for me to sell all I had and buy it, and that I could not do.
-Confessions: 8.1.2*

*Something we were withholding made us weak
Until we found it was ourselves.
-Robert Frost*

In the same way that Augustine suggests Adam prefigures Christ, let us entertain the notion that Augustine prefigures Eve, as conceived in the section above. As we do this, we can begin to see Augustine's account of his own growth as a model according to which we can imagine (or seek to bring about) a similar transformation in the human collective. We can, in other words, ask how Augustine was able to put a stop to the internal conflict he was experiencing so that we might broaden his recipe for unity into something applicable to humanity as a whole. In fact, there are several significant passages within his conversion narrative that are as revealing concerning peace at the interpersonal level as at the intrapersonal. The first of these that I would like to examine, in which he comments on the conversion of a renowned rhetorician, Victorinus, gives us an indication of the extent of his internal pain prior to his own religious transformation:

...and it seemed to me that Victorinus was a man as fortunate as he was courageous, inasmuch as he had found an opportunity to leave himself open to you [God]. This was the very thing that I was sighing for, being loaded with irons not loaded on me by others, but by my own iron will. The Enemy kept his hold on my powers of willing, and had made a chain of it for me, and bound me with it. My will was perverted, and it became a lust; I obeyed my lust as a slave, and it became a habit; I failed to resist my habit, and it became a need. It was with this series of interconnected links—for which reason I have called it a chain—that I was constrained in harsh servitude. But the new will which had sprung up within me—the will to worship you without seeking a return, and to enjoy you, O God, my only certain pleasure—was not yet capable of overcoming the former one, buttressed as it was by its very oldness. My two wills, the old, carnal will, and the new, spiritual will, were at war with one another, and in their discord rent my soul in pieces. (Confessions: 8.5.10)

Clearly, the state of being Augustine here describes is one that most of us would consider highly undesirable. The question, in light of the severity of his suffering, that first enters my mind, is: *What prevented him for so long from creating agreement among the various factions of his consciousness and thereby escaping the agony?* Why, in other words, was the force of habit so powerful, keeping him trapped in a war with himself, even when he should have been highly motivated (through pain) to overcome it? Why couldn't he have simply dismantled the internal struggle at the first indication that he would have been better off to do so?

I think Augustine does an excellent job of explaining this himself, so I will quote from several passages, that need to be seen next to one another, in which he alludes to habit's power to keep individuals unconscious and, as a consequence, trapped. As we go through them, we can begin to see habit as Augustine does: a mental shortcoming marked by an inability (or unwillingness) to engage the world with any creativity or sense of possibility, thus constraining its victims to the experiences and behaviors of the past.

By now it was rather not I who was in the flesh, since for the most part I was an unwilling sufferer rather than a willing doer. But it was my own doing that habit gripped me so fiercely, since I had arrived willingly at a place to which I had no wish to come...I was as afraid to be rid of all that hindered me as I should have been of being hindered. So it was that the burden of the world overwhelmed me with its sweetness, like sleep; and my thoughts, when I meditated upon you,

were like the efforts of a sleeper who wants to wake up, but is overcome by sleep, and is drowned in it once more...For the 'law of sin' is the violent force of habit, by which the mind is held fast and dragged along as punishment for slipping willingly into it. (8.5.11, 8.5.12)

My soul resisted. She refused, and did not excuse herself...There remained to her a mute trepidation; she feared like death to be released from habit, that haemorrhage which was causing her to waste away to death. (8.7.18)

It is not, therefore, such a strange situation, that one should will and not will; it is a sickness of the mind, which, even when uplifted by the truth, does not fully arise, being weighed down by habit. (8.9.21)

I was on the point of doing it yet not doing it...The time-worn [habitual] course of life, for all its faults, counted with me more than the unfamiliar, for all its merits; and the closer the moment came when I was to be something new, the more horror it instilled in me. (8.11.25)

Nevertheless, they [frivolous temptations] did delay my progress, and I was slow to tear myself away from them, shake them off, and hasten where I was summoned, as long as habit, with all its force, said to me, 'Do you think you can do without these?' (8.11.26)

From these sections in the text, it is quite easy to develop a clear account of what paralyzed Augustine for so long. For, as he illustrates through his own experience, once habit has us trapped in a repetitive behavior, it can (1) cloud our minds and blind us to other possibilities, so that (2) even though we believe we are thinking realistically about the world we are in fact not, which (3) causes us to feel that we would be incapable of behaving otherwise, and (4) renders us absolutely terrified of change. Like the citizens of *Pleasantville*, who chant, "the end of Main Street is just the beginning again," we find ourselves engaged in the same misery over and over, simply unable to get off the path to destruction. And, worse yet, we are so caught up in the cycle that we couldn't even recognize it if we tried. We are, like the rat in the cage, unconscious.

I think that some of the most insightful material in the *Confessions*, however, reveals yet another way that the mind can become clouded when an individual is addicted to a substitute for true happiness. While it may at first seem unusual to say this, it is important for us to remember that, when our experience of life is distorted by habit, not only are we alienated from our joy, but we are equally swindled out of authentic suffering and all the growth and inner transformation that accompanies it. Augustine makes this clear when he gives an account of his affinity for tragic stage plays, recalling how, in effect, they became a substitute for the real pain that he could not allow himself to feel. He writes:

I was carried away by the pageantry of the theatre, full of reflections of my own miseries and of kindling for the fire that was consuming me. Why is it that a man at the theatre wants to suffer as he watches those tales of tragedy and woe—woes which, however, he would not wish to undergo himself? He is, however, willing to undergo the suffering he derives from them as a spectator, and this suffering is itself a pleasure...The less free each spectator is of these emotions, the more he is moved to pity them in others...But what sympathy can a man have with the fictitious productions of the stage? (3.2.1)

Of course, if Augustine had owned and worked through his legitimate pain, he likely would have developed the inner strength and self-knowledge to end it. This, however, requires a level of rawness and honesty seldom available to those caught in the grip of habit. In any case, as people whose culture increasingly seems to reflect unprecedented degrees of violence and ugliness in film and other media, perhaps we would be wise to learn from Augustine and think about what real depravity and harm we are trying to block out of our awareness. [viii]

"HOBBIT"

It's not good that monsters should live among us.
-Ambrose Paré

Although I consider Hobbes the most obstinate and narrow minded of the thinkers we are examining, his contribution is essential because it exposes precisely the habit responsible for

turning humans into puppets of the demon of war: believing that the quest for power over others is an innate and inextricable human characteristic. This belief, when it pervades the cultural air, and is thus lived out, is what keeps us trapped in a state of hostility towards one another. But let's give Hobbes a chance to explain it in his own words.

In the first place, I put as a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire for power after power that ceases only in death. And the cause of this is not only that a man hopes for a more intensive delight than he has already attained to, or that he cannot be content with a moderate power, but because he cannot assure the power and means to live well which he already has without the acquisition of more. And hence it is that kings, whose power is greatest, turn their endeavors to assuring it at home by laws or abroad by wars...(32)

While I wholeheartedly agree that the desire for power conduces to fighting, and acknowledge that it is a serious problem in our times as much as it was for Hobbes, I part company with him where he claims that it is inescapable. In fact, the truth isn't just that we *can* escape it, but that we *must* do so, on a massive scale, if we are to survive the threats we now face. But how do I know Hobbes' premise is false in the first place? I know because some of us, although we may at times relapse into the quest for power, are no longer constantly ruled by that addiction. In the postmodern era, many people are disenchanted by power and have stopped attempting to acquire it; it is open to us to cultivate a new desire, a desire to see humanity freed from its devastating war-lust, and to do so at any cost. Moreover, history is peppered with individuals, some of them having great renown, who managed to grow to the point where they were unencumbered by the problem Hobbes describes: individuals, for example, like Gandhi, Mother Theresa, St. Francis, and others, who serve as conclusive, concrete examples that human beings can live with neither fear nor competitiveness ruling their hearts. It is *very* possible.

Hobbes, on the other hand, who claims that the only way to achieve harmony between fellow human beings is to terrify them into getting along with one another, lacks the foresight to recognize that a system which begins with fear can only in the end perpetuate it. And while it may be possible for a nation's leader to hammer the populous into submission for some length of time, I question whether such behavior can under any circumstances be thought to produce authentic peace. Moreover, although he does make a sluggish attempt to gloss over the issue (41-42), because his argument is based on a fundamental distrust between individuals, he is embarrassingly incapable of rendering a satisfactory explanation of how the rulers of separate nations would ever get along with one another under his system. It seems glaringly apparent that, if human beings are like he says they are, then the hard-handed dictators he endorses would simply end up attempting to crush one another.

In fact, a number of the arguments in *Leviathan* seem severely deficient in logic, creativity, or both. For one thing, his claim that "when all is reckoned together, the difference between man and man is not so considerable that one man can claim any benefit to which another may not put forward a claim as well as he," is indicative of a gross ignorance of the power differentials that existed between people in his day. (32) And his contention that a society without coercive force couldn't possibly support industry, agriculture, transportation, architecture, arts, literacy, or culture of any kind is exaggerated at best; at worst it reveals a weak mind, incapable of considering any way of life except the habitual. Worst of all, I think, is his assertion that "if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies," which, though it has the veneer of reason at first blush, is as unfounded as it is dangerous. (33) It is unfounded because it fails to recognize the human capacity for spirited synergy and innovative cooperation, the innate ability to work together and create reality-changing solutions. It is dangerous because it squelches that capacity.

Ultimately, while Hobbes demonstrates insight with regards to the causes of war, his fatalism

regarding those causes is unwarranted and oppressive. While he might not have intended his work to be used this way, however, he *has* contributed to our understanding of the habit that leads to war, and in the end, if we allow him, he can probably help us find a way to overcome that habit for good.

LIVE LONG AND PROSPER

In fairness to Hobbes, the ideal rulers he envisioned were to exemplify maximal benevolence, their actions at all times governed by a fully rational outlook. Their primary obligation was to serve the good of their people, and this meant they would, in theory, only enact laws that were both required for such a purpose and clearly understood by those who were compelled to obey. Moreover, it meant the “essential rights” held by sovereigns were for the purposes of ensuring a competent administration, and not to be used in any way that would detract from the overall good. (40) In principle, if a group of people were to agree to live under an arrangement of this sort, one couldn’t fault them for wanting to create a system whereby decisions that facilitate their society’s functioning smoothly would be made with greater ease. It is empowering to have a few basic rules for getting along handed down from a single source, knowing that such rules assist not just us, but all those around us as well, to drive on the thoroughfare of life without colliding into each other. And so it is not necessarily *this* principle in the Leviathan that is flawed, but those of distrust and competition, which underlie it.

Hence, one might conceive of a society with an effective, rational administration, but lacking the alienating mindset found in Hobbes, a society in which, for example, people could be expected to abide by the law, not out of fear, but because they have come to recognize such behavior as reasonable. For when a community has no need to keep its citizens weak or afraid, it has no motivation to keep them uneducated, and, hence, is more likely to become a place where knowledge is no longer confined to those with the responsibility of ruling, but spreads freely and unencumbered by hierarchy, increasing the powers of awareness (and hence choice) in *all* people. Indeed, in *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind*, Condorcet suggests that just such a world is inexorably unfolding. Reason, he surmises, will in fact elevate humanity to a level of widespread perfection, whereupon disease, war, hatred, and abuse virtually cease to exist. The idea behind it is simple: When, through the power of education, people release their prejudices and superstitions in favor of the truth, having increased their awareness of the world around them, they will be empowered to act in a manner which helps them to negotiate that world. The truth will set us free.

Actually, Condorcet tells a rousing and convincing story of human progress, showing how each successive age, while facing new challenges brought on by the changes associated with growth, also stretches the limits of human potential, making possible things which couldn’t have been imagined previously. In his mind, truth is the hero of the world, and for all the obstacles in its way, there is, at the end of the day, nothing that will be able to prevent it from prevailing. As he weaves events from history together to support his argument, he observes two trajectories he feels it is possible for a revolutionary shift from one age to the next to exemplify. The first of these, caused from the bottom up, occurs violently and swiftly, and is characterized by the traumas and unpleasanties associated with rapid and uncontrolled change. It happens when there is a strong enough swell amid the grassroots population to uproot the forces that are obstructing progress. A second kind of revolution, however, is more protracted and diplomatic. It is managed from the top down, and, although it constitutes a much longer transaction, involves less suffering and stress.

Nobody, of course, can deny that history has seen a host of predictions made by Condorcet

concerning the tenth age realized. Humanity, however, remains deeply infected by a number of maladies, the most severe of these being war. And, if we are honest, we will be forced to acknowledge that the world's present leaders are as filled with corruption as they were during the transition from the eighth to the ninth stages. Condorcet, if he were alive today, might have been troubled by that fact, as he felt that corruption was the primary reason for the transition into the ninth stage's having been so violent. And, one wonders, if the same corruption exists today, isn't it likely that progress from our current state will be likewise messy and unsettling?

And Condorcet's point about corruption is compelling. At present, the world's power brokers (essentially the wealthiest 10%) are far too mired in myopic, selfish thinking to even begin to bring about the kind of changes needed to facilitate Augustine-type conversion at the level of the macrocosm. In order for such transformation to occur, the hierarchy they enjoy the privilege of dominating must either be dramatically restructured or dismantled entirely. And hierarchies probably are things that don't go away without a struggle—a fact which, as you are aware, naturally, presents a serious problem to individuals who want to find a way to eliminate war, because to struggle for power is to foster war-consciousness, and to fight against power is just to struggle for it. And so, it would seem, we must either remain trapped in a bloody, vicious circle until the world comes to an end, or we must innovate some way to pull down hierarchy without struggle. I suppose, if Condorcet were alive today, he might have been looking for a way to do just that. Is it not, after all, reasonable to think that we might, by way of asking the right questions, someday progress to the point where we can accomplish it?

LOVE CONQUERS ALL

And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

-Matthew 11:12-15, King James Version

I wonder what it would do to the world's hierarchies if the cultural air were charged with a force powerful enough to transform people so that, perhaps to varying degrees, they all came to reflect true self-transcendence, emulating the character and behavior of individuals like Gandhi, Mother Theresa, Martin Luther King Jr., Jesus, Buddha, and other saints and divine incarnations throughout history. I suspect, if this were ever to happen, that the resulting change would be radical, sweeping, and, in a sense, violent, but that it would arise from a deep, relentless swell of compassion, once dormant, somehow now ignited within the soul of humanity, and that it would be as healing as it would be sudden, leaving no casualties or alienation in its wake. It would, at the end of the day, literally have the effect of tearing the hierarchy to shreds, without once initiating struggle against it. One can only imagine the intensity and energy with which humans would then be free to live.

To accomplish this kind of change, however, would be no small undertaking for the human collective. It would, in the end, like all forms of surrender, require the relinquishment of the need to be in control. In other words, all of us would need to simultaneously come to believe that the state of "being in control" lacks significance, that it is neither a desirable condition nor an undesirable one. We would have to accept, for once and for all, the idea that, in the end, everything comes down to uncertainty, and hence, stop worrying about achieving what can never be assured in the first place. If we were able to do this, we would be free to risk spirited trust in others, free to engage in synergistic cooperation with them, and free to act out of love towards

them without worrying about how they would respond. By not being concerned about whether or not the outcome of our efforts could be guaranteed, we would release ourselves to be caught up in the flow of life, the flow of the Divine. And flow we would.

The need for control, after all, is just a more comprehensive name for the habit of war. In fact, it names not just war, but the habit of sin and alienation from God in general. For they are all dimensions of the same phenomenon: the thing we commonly call evil. Christ articulated all this with brilliant clarity in his sermon on the mount, from which I'll quote at length:

Do not gather and heap up and store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust and worm consume and destroy, and where thieves break through and steal. But gather and heap up and store for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust nor worm consume and destroy, and where thieves do not break through and steal; For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is sound, your entire body will be full of light. But if your eye is unsound, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the very light in you [your conscience] is darkened, how dense is that darkness! No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will stand by and be devoted to the one and despise and be against the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (deceitful riches, money, possessions, or whatever is trusted in). Therefore I tell you, stop being perpetually uneasy (anxious and worried) about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink; or about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life greater [in quality] than food, and the body [far above and more excellent] than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father keeps feeding them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by worrying and being anxious can add one unit of measure (cubit) to his stature or to the span of his life? And why should you be anxious about clothes? Consider the lilies of the field and learn thoroughly how they grow; they neither toil nor spin. Yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his magnificence (excellence, dignity, and grace) was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and green and tomorrow is tossed into the furnace, will He not much more surely clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry and be anxious, saying, What are we going to have to eat? or, What are we going to have to drink? or, What are we going to have to wear? For the Gentiles (heathen) wish for and crave and diligently seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows well that you need them all. But seek (aim at and strive after) first of all His kingdom and His righteousness (His way of doing and being right), and then all these things taken together will be given you besides. So do not worry or be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will have worries and anxieties of its own. Sufficient for each day is its own trouble.

(Mathew 6:19-34, Amplified Bible)

And so, according to Jesus, we can be free of the hierarchy if we simply let go of the state of mind it constantly tells us that we most need to hold on to. It is our responsibility, in other words, to forget about establishing our own security, and realize that everything in life is secondary to acting in love. It is then that we, like the Mother Therasas and Buddhas of the world, can truly transform humanity.

The question, then, becomes: *What conditions are required before all the world's people can simultaneously release the need for power and hence eliminate the problem of war?* We have asked, now let us believe we shall receive. In the meantime, the only thing that is required of us is that we love.

Love,

Justin

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[i] Isn't 'new' the kind of word one would use to pitch a box of cereal with extra marshmallows, or a laundry detergent that brightens clothes even better than before? Why is it being used to sell a war? (I came across similar commentary in a letter to the editor in a recent issue of Ad Busters magazine).

[ii] Of course, the wealthier a person is, the more she or he might have an interest in such an axiom's being true: as long as things remain the same, her or his economic dominance is assured. And, as economic order is essentially the crux of all current social hierarchy, perhaps it would be of value to ask ourselves whether and how war ensures the continued privilege of the rich.

[iii] Here are a few quotes I've posted on my website that I think speak to this point:

I think there is a world market for maybe five computers.

-Thomas Watson

Who the hell wants to hear actors talk? (spoken in 1925)

-Warner Brothers' H. M. Warner

Louis Pasteur's theory of germs is ridiculous fiction.

-Pierre Pachet

Everything that can be invented has been invented.

-Commissioner of Patents, 1899

640k [memory] ought to be enough for anybody.

-Bill Gates

Inventions have long since reached their limit, and I see no hope for further development.

-Julius Sextus Frontinus

This 'telephone' has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us.

-Western Union internal memo, 1876

We don't like their sound, and guitar music is on the way out. (Response to the music of the Beatles in 1962)

-Decca Recording Company

Common sense is the collection of prejudices acquired by the age of eighteen.

-Albert Einstein

[iv] Richard Weaver makes a similar argument in *Ideas Have Consequences*, and Kenneth Burke's notion of *terministic screens* is also relevant here.

[v] Questions often contain hidden presumptions. Consequently, a good way to manufacture questions that help to create a sense of peace and unity within us is to ensure they are built on the appropriate presumptions. E.g. Rather than "Why do human beings always feel the need to engage in conflict?" we should ask "Under what conditions is it possible for human beings to have no sense of conflict at all, and to be moved by a spirit of unity and peace?" See Anthony Robbins' *Awaken the Giant Within*.

[vi] See particularly, the introduction to *A Grammar of Motives*

[vii] This metaphor is from a lecture given by Dr. John Polkinghorne in Calgary, March 2002

[viii] The millions of dollars that we spend annually on antidepressants and painkillers also speak to this fact.