

Point I. Is historic blame in force?

The misdeeds done in History cannot be blamed on those living today, for the simple reason that we did not exist at that time.

The human being is capable of deliberately causing harm. To reach this conclusion there is no need to resort to ideological assumptions or anthropological pessimisms; it is enough to look around, read the daily press or recall history.

Humanity's history is a compendium of good and evil events, some are typical of a limited universe; while others, physical as well as moral, are bought about to a great or lesser degree on purpose and, in fact, could have been avoided. . The premise of these arguments is fundamental for the consolidation of peace.

We Did Not Exist

Thus, the first item if the Letter of Peace addresses the events that took place in history, or in other terms, the misdeeds that occurred in the past, before our very existence and that we are not guilty of.

We are mortal beings therefore our existence is limited, for we have an end. This reality, in spite of being evident, seems difficult for us to accept and causes enormous conflicts. Another reality, not less evident but much less focused on, is that our existence bears a beginning, which is to say, there is a limit on when it starts. The Letter of Peace is supported by the following evidence: in the past those of us who are alive today...did not exist.

Self evident facts

Self evident facts are basic facts that present themselves clearly to our minds. They are not the result of reasoning, but are in fact prior to it.

Dr. Alfredo Rubio¹, co-author of the Letter of Peace states:

¹ A.Rubio: *22 historias clínicas de Realismo Existencial*. Barcelona, 1985. p. 25

“I am something that before wasn't. Something that began to be. That now is being. A day, A night? I am aware this way of life will end.

I remember this always, but I don't care.

I live”

This testimony, which simply states we didn't exist in the past, should open our eyes to reality instead of camouflaging or twisting our perceptions with sophisticated pretexts. It should allow us to be more aware of all the things that come about as a consequence.

Two of these repercussions are of special interest here:

The first one is that as contemporaneous people we are not responsible in any way for the ill events that occurred before our time. Just as the Letter of Peace states, the cause is simple yet decisive: those of us living today did not exist when these evil events were committed. How could we possibly be held responsible for events that weren't carried out by us but our ancestors? How can we arrogate glories of the past, which may affect us, yet are not a product of our actions?

The second consequence is that we, the contemporaneous people, can not find the responsible parties of these mistakes or evils of our past history in present time. Those responsible parties no longer exist. That is why we must today relinquish our attempts to locate and punish the culprits of these ancient ills, whose consequences we presently endure.

The Strength in Facts

We must try to be much more realistic regarding our existence. To do so, the Letter of Peace refuses to engage in the use of preconceived notions, ideologies or assumptions. It guides itself with the uttermost objectivity; objectivity it derives from facts. In his presentation, “Identity and Difference: Toward a Peaceful Philosophy”, philosopher Francesc Torralba explains it with these words²:

“The philosophical discourse of peace must stem from factual evidence and from memory. It is here where I believe the philosopher has a central task, maybe even a new duty, that of inter-cultural, inter-religious, inter-ethnic mediator.

² F.Torralba “ *Identidad y diferencia. Hacia una philosophia pacis*”, en J.M. Forcada *Desarrollar la paz*. Barcelona, 1999. p. 112

If it is true that we have entered into a context of plurality, (I believe we have; furthermore it is irreversible), the great risk is to succumb to the ghetto culture, the culture of ostracism, or social and cultural inbreeding which are ways of life clearly opposing peace as a union among differences. From this perspective I believe the philosopher has a historically novel task: to be able to provide platforms for mediation through the engagement of convergent language.

The philosopher's novel task would have the primary objective to uncover these hindrances to peace, which in a sense could be labeled as indecent. Ortega and Gasset ingeniously state as follows: "Philosophy is not a science but an indecency for it reveals reality." It is necessary for the philosopher, through his discourse, to strip the citizen of all preconceived cultural, ethnic, and religious notions... He must help the citizen uncover that which ties him to others above and beyond differences. We are all born and we all die therefore existence is the clearest of evidences. This search for unity, mediation and common ground that prevails in diverse cultures and religions, is a principal task."

Regarding many realities that oppose our views, the subconscious creates obstacles and barriers which distract our attention and hinder our comprehension of facts which in turn make us resist and or accept reality.

Relinquishing the Search for False Culprits

The first point of the Letter of Peace addressed to the United Nations invites us to avoid being frivolously unjust by not searching today for the authors of evils from the past, when such culprits and direct witnesses do not exist and therefore are unable to clarify the mistake or injustice. Are we more satisfied when we point out a scapegoat? Do we do this so that future generations carry the responsibility of our ills and thus exonerate us?

One could rebut that we do have responsibilities, as a nation or as an ethnic group, regarding the events committed in the past by members of our nation or our ethnic group. In fact, historical responsibilities of institutions or groups do exist (The Letter of Peace addresses this in Point VIII). However, peace can not be properly built if such responsibilities are ignored, therefore all responsible parties must respond to those which concern them.

A good example of this is the clarification given by Jordi Cussó, director of the "Universitas Albertiana", regarding the Balkan conflict³:

"The Letter of Peace cites some facts to prevent confusion.

We, as contemporary people, are not responsible for the ill events that have occurred in history, simply because we did not exist then. History, with all its good and bad, is the precise reason for our existence today.

Wherever the Letter of Peace is presented this point reveals an illuminating discovery. But, as we have seen, we haven't been able to comprehend its importance; hence we find that unfounded resentments are the cause of many wars in many parts of the world. Slobodan Milosevic stated in 1994: "we wish to return, to the Croatians and the Bosnians, all that their ancestors subjected our people to, during the last European war". But the youths that fight this war today did not exist then.

Points I through IV of the Letter of Peace state the novel reality of each human being of today: he or she did not exist back then. It is a basic fact. Each human being comes to exist new, free, and original; exists from a given point in time and is therefore not responsible for anything that happened prior to that existence.

To accept this fact is to overcome the immense temptation, of nations, ethnic groups, and families, to view themselves as gods or of issuing themselves a notion of supremacy above other men. Thus allowing them to act against others in the name of their cause. This can be perceived in the words of Bosnian General Rettko Mladic, "borders are traced with blood".

CONCLUSION

We are born in a concrete time of history, which to that point has been far from perfect; a history full of ups and downs. By refusing to engage our energies in the search for false culprits of ill events before our time, these energies become available to invest in repairing some of the consequences of such ills and to prevent them from repeating themselves in the present.

³ J. Cussó " *La carta de la Paz, un itinerario de evidencias*", en J. Rigor Roig y Otros: *Convivencia en el siglo XXI. La Carta de la Paz*. Barcelona, 1995. p. 59-60

This is why we must not waste our lives incoherently so, searching and abhorring imaginary culprits of historical events. Nor should we boast about past victories or glories that we lacked participation in. We are born individually free, new, unique and original. This is our joyful human condition.