## INTERCULTURE

*Interculture* intends to contribute to the discovery and emergence of viable alternative approaches to the fundamental problems of contemporary Man, in both theory and practice. Its approach is meant to be integral, which means:

◆ **Intercultural**: undertaken in light of the diverse cultural traditions of contemporary Man, and not solely in the terms of modern culture;

◆ **Inter and trans-disciplinary**: calling on many 'scientific' disciplines, but also on other traditions of knowledge and wisdom (ethno-sciences) as well as on vernacular and popular knowledge;

◆ **Dia-logical**: based on the non-duality between *mythos* and *logos*, *theoria* and *praxis*, science and wisdom, wisdom and love. "Wisdom emerges when the love of knowledge and the knowledge of love coalesce" (Raimon Panikkar.)

### INTERCULTURAL INSTITUTE OF MONTREAL

The Intercultural Institute of Montreal (formerly Monchanin Cross-Cultural Centre) is an institute for intercultural education, training, and research, dedicated to the promotion of cultural pluralism and to a new social harmony. Its fundamental research focuses on social critique and exploration of viable alternative approaches to the contemporary crisis. Its activities, which draw inspiration and sustenance from this research, aim at a cultural and social mutation – radical change – through gradual education and training. Its research and action have, from the very start, been undertaken in light of diverse contemporary cultures. It attempts to meet the challenges of our times by promoting cultural identities, their inter-action in creative tension and thus their eventual emancipation from the final and most subtle colonialism: hegemony by the mind. The Institute's cross-cultural research and action is carried out through its programs in the four following sectors: public education, training of professionals, services and research.

### FOUNDERS-DIRECTORS

Jacques Langlais (1963-70), Robert Vachon (1970-79)
Kalpana Das (currently President and Executive Director)

# INTER culture

# RAIMON PANIKKAR:

● THE FOUNDATIONS OF DEMOCRACY
(STRENGTH, WEAKNESS, LIMIT)

● THE DISCOVERY OF THE METAPOLITICAL

INTERCULTURAL INSTITUTE OF MONTREAL

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### INTERCULTURE's goals are:
❖ to inform on contemporary cultures from their own standpoints as living realities
❖ to explore the issues that are raised at the frontiers of knowledge by the plurality of cultures and their interaction, both at the world level and that of specific societies
❖ to identify and facilitate communication among institutionally-affiliated and independent scholars, from all disciplines and cultures, who explore alternatives to the contemporary social crisis.

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## Editor's Note

*R*AIMON PANIKKAR *in the following two articles, offers us an indepth intercultural reflection:*

*First on democracy; it is not a critique of the corruption, errors and weaknesses of various regimes (which call themselves democratic), on the basis of a democratic ideology and of its own parameters. It consists rather of a radical relativization of the ideological foundations and presuppositions of democracy, by demythicizing the democratic myth. It cautions against the monoculturalism which characterizes the Western world's characteristic way of thinking politics—namely by reducing it to democracy—and which is the cause of the false dilemma: "or democracy or dictatorship." One could say that the author raises questions about what one could call "democratic globalization" as a political ideal. He does not hesitate however to underline that what constitutes both the strength and the limit of democracy, is its character as myth, which gives the author the freedom to appeal also to "a democracy of cultures."*

*Second, on "the discovery of the metapolitical": where he is not presenting a thinking about political thought, but a thinking about political activity and about the roots of its growth. Metapolitical here is not synonymous with transpolitical or superpolitical or anti-political nor with religious or a-cosmic or apolitical, but it is the* humanum *which sustains the political; it is what makes of the political a fundamentally human activity (and not only an activity of man...)*

*He presents a meditation on the constitutive relationship between the political and what constitutes man in his totality. The metapolitical is the point of intersection between what is political and what constitutes the human being, namely the meaning of life. It seeks to transcend the political without denying it, so that political pluralism may be made possible. It is the yeast in the leaven*

of politics. Basically his invitation is to a fundamentally human political activity.

There can be no authentic cultural pluralism without political pluralism. The current notion of politics which limits itself to the problematic raised by the modern state and democracy closes us up, he says, in a vicious circle which reduces the field of politics to the set of means to conquer or to maintain sovereign power. In short, the political goes infinitely beyond the political. But to say that the metapolitical represents the dimension of transcendence of the political should not be interpreted as a discourse which would make of the political something tributary to what is religious. It can express itself in Christian as in Buddhist or in a more secular language. We could call it a symbolic consciousness or a consciousness of sacred secularity.

The metapolitical is the depth dimension or deep soul of the political. It seeks to mend the break between political activity and the rest of human life. It is the point of intersection of man within the whole. Man forges—his salvation—in the political field when he discovers the metapolitical meaning of his human activity.

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# A. THE FOUNDATIONS OF DEMOCRACY

## (Strength, weakness, limit)*

### BY RAIMON PANIKKAR

$\mathbf{A}$ LLOW ME TO SPEAK STANDING since I would not wish to speak *ex cathedra*, thus enjoying my privilege of not being infallible.

After a first general commentary and a brief introduction, I shall attempt to develop the three following points:

- the strength of democracy
- the weakness of democracy
- the limits of democracy

## I. THE STRENGTH OF DEMOCRACY

### 1. The myth of democracy

To start off, I would like to ask two major questions: are we not under a formal demand (we the privileged ones who belong to the richest one fifth portion of mankind: 95% richer than the 25% of the poorest population, and more so, those who cultivate the intellect), to assume our responsibility and not allow ourselves to be carried away by the inertia of the mind, nor by the weight of history? Are we fully aware that the present situation calls for a

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mutation as never before over the last six thousand years? The human experience, which has begun with what I name history, is now coming to an end and if we want to live human life and life in general fully, we must try to embrace that enormous period in order to assimilate it, diagnose it for our times and transform it.

The speakers who have preceded me, have already, in a way, specified and exemplified in a pretty clear manner the strength and weakness of democracy. With regard to its strength, we have seen how Spain has succeeded in overcoming dictatorship or how in Algeria, in spite of everything, democracy is the only strength that carries hope for the future. The weakness of democracy has always manifested itself, when, in order to survive, it has had to capitulate to non-democratic forces or to have recourse to demagogy.

The topic is an intriguing one: "The limits of democracy." We have first to deal here with a semantic problem. For example, who has the authority to assert that the old DDR (Eastern Germany) had no right to call itself *Deutsche Demokratische Republik*? Who can grant himself the authority to say that "it was not democracy," if the others did not accept it? Would we not thus ourselves be moving away from the democratic spirit?

The limits of democracy—and this shall be my main thesis—coincide with the limits of the myth which constitutes it. Here I take myth as the horizon of intelligibility, that in which one believes, in such a way that one is not truly aware that one believes in it; it is "what is obvious," "self-evident," "taken for granted," what one does not discuss. History teaches us that myths are alive while one finds them obvious, i.e. while one believes in them; but with time, we problematize them and "contest" them in the etymological sense that is still alive in France and Italy. Democracy is in the process of becoming a myth and many people are beginning to ask questions about its limits, which proves that we are in the process of going through a radical change of the human experience's horizon. I point out that the strength of democracy resides in its myth, taking into account that a myth is such, as long as Man believes in it.

### 2. Occidentocentrism

The word democracy has had three short centuries of existence in classical Greece, from 500 to 200 BC and even then very marginal, and then it practically disappeared from the Western world for centuries, in order to slowly have a resurgence much later on, until it got its consecration starting with the French Revolution (at least, on what the British call the continent). For example, in the British Isles, the word democracy had a very pejorative sense right up to the end of the last century. Kant wrote, already two hundred years ago in *Zum ewigen Frieden* (*The Eternal Peace*, 1975), that democracy is the way that leads to despotism. The monoculturalism which still characterizes the Western world is the reason for the lack of serious studies on other forms of understanding and doing politics (in the classical sense of the word) in other civilizations, which makes us in turn fall often into the false dilemma of "either democracy or dictatorship."

The positive aura that the word democracy has acquired since the French Revolution has converted it into a myth, and that explains why today almost everybody wants to be democratic. It is also from that moment on, that many writings have arisen, where bishops as well as intellectuals affirm that the best way to be human, to be Christian, is to be democratic.

Soon after the French Revolution in 1791, Claude Fauchet, who had taken up again the formulation "all for the people, all by the people, all to the people," by seeing democracy as a divine institution, does not hesitate to assert that Jesus himself died "for the democracy of the universe." The same year, Lamourette, bishop of Rhône-et-Loire uses the expression "Christian democracy." On Christmas 1797, the future Pope Pius VII, then bishop of Imola, exhorts his faithful to be good Christians—adding that "then you will also be better democrats." Later, in 1814, Görres speaks about the "*demokratisches Prinzip*." It is on the wave of that optimism that the West then exports its values to the rest of the world.

Occidentrocentrism thought it had found its justification in the belief that the Occident was the carrier of universal values. Kant set forth as the founding criterion of ethics, that the latter's principles could become universal norms—which is quite in accord with his philosophical thought. For the past 500 years at least, monoculturalism has dominated the vision of the Western world. Let us not forget that at the start of the First World War, over 80% of the earth's surface was under the tutelage, the influence, or constituted a colony of European countries. Since then, one has seen a kind of scattering which leads us to think, with the 200 Nation-Sates of the United Nations, that we are already liberated from the old Occidental myth which proclaimed "One God, one civilization, one culture"; but the fact is that it has simply transformed; the present myth "one democracy, one bank, one global market" would lead us to believe in "globalism."

Let us look at a geographical and political map: what we understand today by "the world" is fundamentally the result of a Western vision which claims to be universal. The United Nations, education and modern science, the present cosmology, are all extraordinary creations of only one culture, even if we consider them as being capable of being extrapolated to other cultures. However, on condition of not reducing them to mere folklore, we can observe how other cultures present a vision of the world, of truth, of the very notion of cultures and of human conviviality, which cannot be the same as those of the presently predominant Occidental culture (and in fact, often, they are quite different.) At the dawn of the coming millennium, it seems that the monoculturalism of the Occident is loosing its vigour. One is beginning to doubt the fact that what is good for me must necessarily be good for everybody. For example, one has a tendency to think that, if for me, it is good to have a car, everybody should have one; but at the same time, if each individual of the planet had a car, the atmosphere would be unbreathable in twenty years. If all the individuals on earth spent paper with the same "generosity" as in the USA , even keeping recycling in mind, in two years there wouldn't be a single tree on the planet. We are speaking of a civilization in which, since the end of World War II, there is an average of 1500 deaths daily due to war—and this average is growing—; a civilization which has increased the difference between rich and poor to heights higher than it was at the time of the most ferocious feudalism: the richest feudal lord could have five castles, forty coats and more, but not machines with a thousand horse power nor bank benefits without any kind of relationship to real things. A civilization which has in a century, destroyed in the most cynical way one hundred million persons—and usually in the name of democracy. I do not wish to pursue with such negative examples.

Since I have mentioned the responsibility of ideas, it is worth reflecting a bit on the crossing from the Cartesian obsession with certitude, to the political obsession with security. Our world has become so obsessed with security that it believes that it needs 30 million soldiers on the planet—without counting the police and other security corps. The facts are that since the end of the cold war, there has been—on average—one nuclear test every nine days. We must ask: who and what are we afraid of? I put forward the idea that democracy and army are incompatible.

Such is the backdrop against which I would like to say something regarding democracy. I consider that introduction important, since the so-called present democracy, without being the direct cause of the present state of things, participates indirectly in it and hence carries its own share of responsibility for it.

## 3. Historical excursus

It is not here a matter of explaining the vitality and fecundity of the visions of the Greek world, much before Plato and Aristotle, but to do a brief but enlightening historical excursus on the notion of democracy. In order to do so, I shall use Greek words, since one of the dangers of present democracy is the loss of memory, as is manifested by the claims of some that classical education is useless. First, we must take into account that the fact that Greece was a set of cities and not an empire; the Greeks were less interested in individual survival than in human conviviality. They believed in the myth of the cosmic order: reality is what it is and this "is" is what gives the criterion of reality by becoming the norm. Disorder has meaning only in contrast or in opposition to a prior order. Originally, there is the cosmic order, which is valid in some way or another, for all civilizations—the *rita* of Vedic civilization, the *moira* of Hellenic civilization. On the other hand, it seems that men have the power to shilly-shally with this cosmic order or to take detours around it; the notions of *dharma* in India and *nomos* in Greece. It is significant that the Chinese *tao* does not seem to have known that evolution, maybe from the fact that it is always accompanied by *li* (principle). The *nomos*—and this is its difference from the cosmic order—can be transgressed. One thus moves from a cosmocentric vision to an anthropocentric vision. *Nomos* does not primordially mean "law" but rather "custom," *ethos* "right," what the German Hellenists translate by *Wolhlordnung*.

The Greek people believe in the three daughters of time: *eunomia, diké* and *ereiné* (the good order, justice and peace). I wish to underline, very briefly, the qualitative intuition of time and how temporality permeates these three daughters of time.

*Eunomia* is a cultural myth throughout ancient Greece and it seems that it was the characteristic of good men: "justice is what the just man does" says Aristotle. Still today we speak about "the tranquil times of order, justice and peace." The three sisters go together.

*Eunomia* has the same prefix *eu* as evangelist, euphoria, etc.; it is the good, constructive, *nomos*, the order which transcends disorder. Its opposites are *anomia*, illegality, lack of order, of norm and *dysnomia*, the dysfunction, the evasion or the alteration (always partial) of the order.

Finally we have a third word, more specific to Sparta than to Athens: *isonomia*, which means equality of rights. The prefix *iso* is also present in isotope, isosceles, etc. *Isonomia* did not refer to how one governs, but to who governs. When the word began to take on some importance, the great revolution consisted in the fact that those who govern had to alternate, but not in virtue of some propaganda activity, but through a sort of lottery, since all considered themselves in possession of that one virtue which admits to no specialists: "the political virtue," the *ars politica*. The knowledge of medicine, of agriculture and of architecture requires special and specialised knowledge. Not so the knowledge of the *res publica*, which does not require some prerequisite special knowledge. This knowledge concerns everybody and belongs to everyone. It implicates everyone so that Pericles says that democracy is possible only where the one who governs knows the name of all and each of the governed.

But who governs? It will be one of them all, who will be chosen by drawing lots and who will have to be accountable later, when someone else will have taken his place as the one who governs. Thus, one creates a kind of homeostasis between the public and the private spheres, through designing the following ideal: namely that everyone who is governed may have the same opportunity to participate in the governance. If *eunomia* means good government (of the noble class which in fact governs), *isonomia* means the equality of all in the face of the *nomos*, i.e. the order which governs all of reality, especially society. It is not a matter of equality in the face of a written law or of a constitution, but in the face of the cosmic order.

This *isonomia* will crystallize in the *politeia*, which later will be called "constitution" (that Latins still call *politia*). It was considered that a constitution was needed, a *politeia* that crystallized the experience of the elders. *Politeia* is the art of living well in the *polis*, something which is much more complex than our modern written constitutions. The English people have not yet a written constitution and, rightly so, do not want any. Previously, one would speak about the administration or economy of the "*cité*," which was different from what was then already emerging under the name of *stasiôteia* or dominance of parties.

We can go even further. The principal occupation of these free men was to speak—talking being the actualization of their humanness and the exercise of power. One must not forget that the weapon of democracy is the word, as dictators and demagogues know very well. If we now take a jump into our present times, we observe that the crisis of democracy is parallel to the weakening of the strength of speech. In one of my books.[1] I have presented a correlation between the decline of rhetoric and the increase of wars. It is not without motive that the house of speech—the Parliament—is the essential instrument of democracy.

In ancient Greece, three other fundamental notions appear: *isegoria*, the right of every citizen to speak; *isocratia*, the equitable sharing of all powers; *nookratia*, which appears with Plato's *Republic*, he thinks—weakness of intellectuals—that only philosophers, the intellectuals of that time, have a sufficiently broad and vast thought to be able to govern. It is the government of philosophers, which, in our present language, could be translated by the government of experts, not to say of technocrats.

It is then that the word democracy begins to appear, a word which will in turn disappear totally in the 2nd century BC. *Demos* principally means territory (hence endemic, epidemic) and not people, contrary to what the current thinking says. People, in Greek, is *laos*, from which comes the word liturgy. *Demos* also means "the inhabitants of a territory" although this meaning of the word comes later. The strength of democracy is then the strength of territory. The consolidation of democracy was made possible at the moment when the Athenian people (between 20 and 30 thousand persons in a territory of two thousand six hundred square kilometers (which is equivalent to today's Luxembourg), became aware that "union is power." Each and everyone had to participate in power. In the 5th and 6th centuries BC, Greece had some 250 "states" (*polis* or *ethna*) that were independent plus a few barbarian states (such as the Thracians). One can detect an imperialist root in Athenian democracy. Since that time, one of the strengths of democracy has been the awareness that if the *demos*, our territory, remains united, it will be stronger. In order to be united one must consult all the citizens and each one must be able to express his opinion. I am saying here citizen and not inhabitants, since the women, the older people and strangers were excluded from that category. We have a recent example of that same kind of exclusion: the "great British democracy" was founded on the fact that not even 40 million people had the power to decide the destiny of more than 500 million people of "color."

This is the reason why democracy, paradoxically, has emerged from facing a common enemy. When democracy institutionalizes itself, each state declares itself sovereign. Consequently, it neither tolerates any intrusion in its tasks, nor that others participate in the rights of citizenship of that *demos*, of that territory.

Words have a certain vitality of their own and they incarnate (I would like to say "bespeak") the deepest insights of the human being. I shall briefly refer, as an example, to the trilogy we have mentioned: *eunomia*, *isonomia* and *demokratia*.

*Eunomia* presupposes a certain acceptance of the existence of an order which is just and good, a *nomos*, a *rita*, a *dharma*, a *tao*, a *torâh*; in the last

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1. R. PANIKKAR, *Cultural Disarmament. The Way to Peace.* Louisville (Westminster/John Knox) 1995.

instance a transcendence, a God or whatever, which is above us and to which we can have access if we acknowledge that order and follow it. The problem lies in its interpretation and its representation. Royalty, monarchy, heaven, theocracy or a religious institution [transcendence] represent it and guarantee it. Things hold, as long as the world accepts this *nomos* and as long as transcendence, which manifests in institutions, remains a myth according to the meaning we have indicated above.

But, when abuses multiply, the myth becomes problematic. Then, one demands that in order to attain this *eunomia*, equality for all, each and everyone must hence participate to some measure in that order. We then have *isonomia*. A transfer results, as important as it is unconscious, which often occurs in human history: *the myth is displaced from transcendence to immanence.*

If we all are equal and all have the possibility to decide which ways lead to the personal and collective realization of the order of the universe, it means that that order is no longer given by heaven, for we are the ones who have the right and obligation to manage it, to direct it and even to forge it. In other words, the people is "sovereign." Let us underline the origin of this word: *superianus* (*superanus*) from *superior*, the highest, the ultimate instance, the *super*, the *uttama* in Sanskrit.

But then, a third step imposes itself: the passing from the notion of norm to that of power. It is no longer then a matter of the power (of *nomos*) "over" the people, but of the power "of" the people (people's power). "Power has democratized itself" is a Greek phrase which does not mean that the people recognize the *nomos*, but that the people sets the norm, the law and gives it to itself.

Such is the history of the origin of democracy, briefly exposed. Democracy therefore represents a step forward, first, in the measure in which it stipulates that the whole people, no matter how small it be, must participate in public life, and then obliges the one who governs to be accountable to the governed with regard to what he intends to do and does. Hence the two essential pillars of democracy: participation and transparence.

## II. THE WEAKNESS OF DEMOCRACY

First, I underline that my reflection will not be an analysis of the de facto weaknesses of those regimes or systems that call themselves democratic. I am not doing the critique of any country, although if I had to manifest what I suspect, I would say that the present democracies are nothing but an oligarchic farce. Maybe the democratic ideal as well as the Communist ideal, are two utopias. But this is not the topic that I intend to treat here. Let me repeat: I am not doing a critique of the praxis, or of the errors that democracies may have committed, nor of the corruption that exists under these regimes. Nor am I trying to give a lesson of ethics by saying that democracy doesn't function well because of the evilness of man. I do not believe that man has always been bad, nor that all of democracy's errors are due to the fact of man's corruption and of his lust for power for power's sake, etc. My criticism of democracy is not the criticism of democratic corruption and hypocrisy. By the way, one must take into account that the critique of the errors and corruptions of democracy, is a critique done in virtue of the parameters provided by democracy itself. Of course, I can, thanks to democratic criteria, criticize democracy so that I can say for example, that the military order is not democratic or that the present democratic system—the United Nations or the Realpolitik of many governments, banks, churches— is not democratic. But this is not my task here. Let he who is without sin throw the first stone. All this is the result, not of the weakness of democracy, but of human weakness—although one could ask oneself the question: why this proclivity towards corruption in the democratic system?

One must also carefully distinguish between democracy as a government technique and democracy as the ideology that sustains it. Their relationship is a narrow one, but they are different things. As a government technique, democracy practices popular voting, government transparency, flexibility with regard to changes of government and, in general, participation of the people in the *res publica*.

All this can function more or less well in the measure with which the people accept the ideological foundations of democracy. Our task here will be to do a critique of these ideological foundations, taking into account however, that our critique will focus on the demythisation of the myth and not on the techniques mentioned.

Democracy is based on the presupposition that others are not us, which requires a more or less coherent group that is centered on itself. However, in the measure in which one sustains the idea that others are not us, the gravest problems of the democratic principle emerge. One is familiar with Winston Churchill's saying about democracy as the lesser evil among systems. Probably, at the historical moment when this sentence was pronounced (historical moment in which we still find ourselves), there was no better alternative to democracy. If I remember correctly, he wrote: *"It has*

*been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those forms that have been tried from time to time.*"[2]

I wouldn't agree with Churchill's cynicism, since the most barbarian acts have been based on the theory of the lesser evil. However, it should be very clear, that criticizing democracy does not mean accepting this false dilemma. Very often, critiques of democracy are done with a certain guilt complex, as if one were afraid to be accused of being totalitarian. Clearly, the remedy would then be worse than the sickness. But this is not the true dilemma. In fact, to accept it would betray a certain totalitarian mentality: "whoever doesn't agree with me is against me."

This may be the reason that modern democratic states tolerate antidemocratic practices, such as "the secret service" which is justified in the name of "national security." One must not forget that the security obsession has widely opened the door to most dictatorships, that are then justified as the lesser evil. This betrays the pessimism of the desacralized *theologumenon* of "original sin," but without the Christian optimism of redemption.

Before embarking on some very summarized criticisms of democracy, I shall make another general observation. The word democracy has monopolized a series of values which are in no way specific to democracy. This happens with all the words that become the symbols of a myth. Such is the case, for example, with the word science: presently, everything that is serious and true is said to be scientific. The equality of human dignity, the value of dialogue, the respect of the person, as such, tolerance, are not the exclusive monopoly of democracy. Let us recall the famous saying known by all lawyers: *quod omnibus tangit ab omnibus tractetur* (what concerns all must be decided by all) spoken in situations of empire that precisely are not democratic.

What is therefore the specificity of democracy? What are its limits, its presuppositions? Let us enumerate some of its weaknesses.

## 1. A closed circle of governed and governors

A first fundamental problem with regard to democracy pertains to the very ideology of the democratic system (I call ideology a system of ideas which gives consistence, in this case, to democracy). Some Greek thinkers have asked themselves if there is not a vicious circle in the fact that the governed and the governors be the same persons, which would lead in the long run to the intrinsic corruption of democracy. The governed and governors eat in the same house and at the same table. This explains why so often, democracies have been instituted through the exclusion of others, namely all those who are not part of the restricted political circle. If the governed and the governors agree to alternate, this generates a vicious circle: I allow you now to do what you wish, because later on you will allow me to do what I wish.

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2. *Editor's note: in English in the original Catalan version.*

Let us remember the striking fact that in consular Rome, when the *patrices*, rich landowners, were in power, they were *insubordonable*. The situation quickly changed when people without a personal fortune were elected... Let us say it in more philosophical terms: when a transcendence is lacking, something which is recognized by both the governed and the governors, the danger mentioned raises its head. Think of the present case of big industry which finances parties which in turn favor certain multinationals.

It is not a question of regretting the ancient absolute theocracies and monarchies, nor one of minimizing the abuses committed by the religious power, but without a divine element there can be neither peace nor justice between men. If my opinion is worth as much as yours and there is no superior authority, we will have recourse to the violence of force. If the latter depends on armaments or on obtaining a majority, then we shall try by all means to conquer power. If "*homo homini lupus*" and there is no elephant respected by all, the wolves will devour each other the moment any conflict arises. It is not that a wolf should jump on the elephant's back which is then imposing its law, which is theocracy in the most pejorative sense. If representative democracy is problematic, representative theocracy is monstrous... which does not mean that there cannot be a sacred order, but the latter then, is not an order based on representatives, but on symbols.

However, the recognition of a superior authority cannot be imposed, but must be discovered. This is where the strength and power of myth resides. I explain: the democracy of *fractions*, i.e. of parties, can only function where one recognizes the "whole" over the parts (the parties), whether that whole be named father or mother land, common good, God, peace or whatever. Then the parties discuss only the means in order to attain a goal. But that goal itself, whatever it may be, is the myth in which everyone believes.

The problem arises when that goal becomes, by the force of things, narrow and partial in the consciousness of some. For example, the good of my people can enter into conflict with the good of another nation. This is the danger into which nationalisms can easily fall. If presently our planet is reduced, it may be time to discover the sun anew... and this is not mere metaphor; but a sun which shines naturally for all peoples ("the just and the sinners") and also for the whole earth.

## 2. Idealistic anthropology

Another way of deceiving ourselves as we have mentioned above, is that of claiming that democracy is theoretically what is the best in the world, while it has never really been put into practice. This is a deceit similar to that which we have experienced with Communism and that which we are still experiencing with Christianity. Its likelihood has very deep roots in the West: Platonic likelihood. The "idea" of democracy, Communism, Christianity... can be perfect, but the idea is not reality. Democracy, as well as Communism and Christianity, claims to be a reality. One cannot find excuses for Christianity's misdeeds by speaking about the intrinsic dignity of Christianity and about the indignity of Christians: "By their fruits you shall know them," says the Gospel. How can one know Christianity except

through the behaviour of Christians? Similarly, how can we know how democracies function, if not by looking at how democracies function? To say that "democracy is chemically pure but that it is man which destroys it" is no excuse. One must ask oneself why democracy, when practised, is faulty—without entering into the thorny problem of the relationship between the idea and the thing.

One will retort, for example, that democracy has been less of a failure than Communism, a fact which at the world level can be contested. Moreover, comparisons are always odious, since a question is not resolved by finding worse cases (*mal de muchos, consuelo de tontos*).[3]

The critique of democracy, if it is to open up a good path, cannot limit itself to the assertion that the former is a lesser evil. One must go further, taking into account that man is neither angel, nor wolf. "*Sed quis custodes ipsos custodiet*? asks Juvenal in his *Satires* (VI, 347).

## 3. Individualism

This is a very important and ambiguous factor which constitutes the strength and weakness of democracy. As long as the myth of individualism is alive, democracy will be strong. But the moment this myth begins to break down, democracy will weaken.

The historical proof of what I have just said is found in the fact that democracy is strong where the sense of individuality is more developed. Those who know Central and South America, Asia and especially Africa are aware that democracy is experienced as something which is foreign, imported, that one tries to imitate, the word is repeated *ad nauseam* in all political discourses. But way down deep, these people don't believe in it.

It would be a grave error to oppose individualism and collectivism, as was usually done during the Cold War. Wars do not allow the serenity of the mind, not even to think. This is a false dilemma which has been responsible for the fall of Communism and for the tragic situation which the ancient soviet peoples are living in.

The alternative to individualism is not the collectivity but the person—which is itself a knot of relationships (blood, clan, caste, peoplehood, language, etc., right up to the very limits of the universe). All the abuses and exaggerations that may have been committed in the name of this type of relationship does not justify the extreme opposite of individualism. In that sense, one must take into account the fact that in India, for example, one makes a distinction between caste and "casteism," community and "communalism." From now on, our reflections are interwoven.

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3. *Editor's note: this is a Spanish expression which, translated literally, means "The evil of the many is a consolation for idiots."*

## 4. The primacy of quantity

Everything is coherent. If Man is an individual, his relationships with others as with the earth and the divine are based on external and accidental links from substance to substance. In short, taking a big jump, this means the primacy of quantity over quality. If democracy must function on the basis of numbers, of majorities and minorities, this means the "*res publica*" is seen and judged from a quantitative standpoint. It is by accident that the latter is one of the dogmas of modern science. The latter presents quantity as the most important parameter of reality, and by that very fact, algebraic algorithms that explain the functioning of things become those that also give us the laws of nature, both human as well as those of electrons. The primacy of quantity implies that to win through numbers becomes in itself the most important thing and that which will make it possible for democracy to function. In India, one says, (not without cynicism), not one person one vote, but, one rupee one vote; or even one thousand rupees one vote, otherwise you cannot even vote. I am not talking here about the possible excesses of democracy but about the theory itself, i.e. about quantification as being the fundamental criterion of human and public life. A Hebrew text says: "you must not take the side of the greater number in the cause of wrong-doing nor side with the majority." (Ex. XXXIII, 2)

The modern technological euphoria has believed that one could remedy this difficulty by having recourse to artificial means, such as so-called representative democracy, where it is not even the people who decide or govern, but its representatives. I seriously ask myself, for example, how many peoples in the world really want war and fabrication of arms; but the experts who represent them tell them that the economy and national security require sacrifices. I shall return to this in the next point.

We must avoid the modern temptation to remain confined within an individualistic analysis. In reality, everything is interdependent, which does not allow us to isolate the analysis of democracy by separating it from everything that sustains it. Democracy is a coherent system with its own myth.

This predominance of the quantitative, besides the radical change that it supposes in the quality of things as it goes beyond a certain threshold, presupposes also that a people is a mere addition of individuals and that the whole is the sum of individuals that compose it. This leads to the belief that the common good is the sum of particular goods, i.e. that the sum of the parts gives the totality (which according to Goedels does not even function in mathematics, except for purely algebraic algorithms). Reality is never the result of the sum of its parts: the sum of my fingers, of my hands and of the rest of the members of my body will never give neither life nor health to my body. One of the most pathetic modern expressions, into which both the Liberals and Marxists have fallen, is found at the end of the Communist Manifesto (1848) by Marx and Engels, where they are saying that they want to create "a (human) association where the free development of each one is the condition for the free development of all"; and the paradox is that in order to achieve this beautiful ideal, they had to go through "the dictatorship of the proletariat."

First of all, we should ask ourselves if there exists such a common good in which all of us communicate, and then if the latter is truly the sum of the particular common goods of individuals. Maybe this is not so, either!

This is where the unfortunate quantitative extrapolation that we have already mentioned comes into play. In a numerical sequence, to move from $n$ to $n + m$ presupposes an homogeneity of algorithms. The organization of a *"polis"* of 30,000 inhabitants and that of a state of 30 million, need not necessarily follow the same rules. We have already quoted Pericles' words and we also have said that the *ars politica* in a democracy cannot be a specialty of experts. The public thing belongs to the whole public and the preoccupation and occupation for the common good must also be common. This is impossible except on a human scale. In a word: the principles of classic democracy do not run on the basis of a modern democracy.

## 5. The weakening of quality

We need not make reference here to what Plato and Aristotle had already seen, namely that wisdom and knowledge are not usually found in the masses. We would rather refer here to what first, the Athenians saw and to what later came out with representative democracy: when the proliferation of numbers exceeds a certain threshold, it brings about a qualitative change, as Marx has already formulated. In other words, a democracy of sixty thousand Andorrans is not the same as a democracy of thirty-two million or eight hundred million persons. For democracy requires what I have already elaborated elsewhere in a more philosophical way: a dialogical dialogue instead of an impersonal dialectical dialogue; and in ultimate terms, a dialogical dialogue translates into a duological dialogue. If I cannot respond to him, look him in the eye, if I cannot tell him at a given moment "stop one second and explain yourself," if I cannot tell him "I do not understand this very well," if I cannot enter into a duologue, no dialogue is possible.

*Demos*, as we have already seen, means people of a territory and not a mass. Within a people, each one has his proper name, and is not a number. If voting is essential in a democracy, the former, as apparent from the etymology of the word (from the Latin *vovere*, to promise), must be spoken (to someone who must listen to it) and not be counted. The German language speaks of *abstimmen*, to discern the voices, from *Stimme* which means voice.

The cancer of quantity leads to an inferiority complex which takes hold of the mass individual by becoming an insignificant number in a whole which totally escapes him. One loses the consciousness of being unique and consequently incomparable. Paradoxically, individualism leads straight to the loss of personality. In that sense, it is no wonder that there is such political absenteeism of peoples and substitution of political pathos by the concentration on work. "Earning one's living" in cultures other than the modern Western one, means deserving it and enjoying it fully. In modern Western culture it means only to work in order to make and earn money...

## 6. Technocracy

Let us say it very clearly: democracy is incompatible with technocracy. We have already insinuated that modernity, in a totally naive manner, believed it could use the second degree machine because it was the product of human ingenuousness. In a paradoxical way, Faustian man has forgotten that his power is real in as much as this creation which participates in that reality escapes him, as a certain theology, which is also naive, will tell us that divine omnipotence remains impotent in the face of human freedom. In a similar way, modern robotisation also escapes the control of Man who has created it.

I am saying this to explain the already mentioned naive optimism which believes that technocracy allows the human communication and communion which are the requisites of democracy.

This belief is the central point of the critique and the cause of the crisis of modern democracy. Presently, in fact, democracy has been substituted by technocracy. I say technocracy, which is the application of technology and not technique, i.e. art, and the capacity to do things for our well-being, our pleasure and comfort. Let us not forget that the word technique is akin to "tissue," i.e. cloth, woven fabric and also *manual art*, the sense of touch and even the place where we put "*la tête*" the head, without mentioning the Indo-European root *tekt*, from which comes shaping and giving birth.

Technocracy is, therefore, the power of the second degree machine, which implies the domination of structure and requires, in order to function, a mechanical and mechanized vision of reality. By machine of second degree, I mean the mechanisms built from artificial sources of energy obtained by exercising violence on cosmic rhythms. One must follow its laws, otherwise there is chaos, such as if I wish to stop the plane in mid-flight, I will crash. One must obey the laws of technocracy, which means submitting to the power of technology. One of the mechanisms exposed by Ricardo Petrella,[4] is precisely this irresistible force of technological values which ends up dictating to us the way to function in order for things to run smoothly. One of the examples of a second degree machine is the modern megalopolis.

In this situation, the individual, the foundation of democracy, finds himself subordinated to specialized knowledges, i.e. partial knowledges which touch only a part of the human being, but not its whole. On the other hand, this individual, if truly sincere, must admit his deep lack of knowledge with regard to atomic energy, the economy, chemistry, coal and many other things. How can we give our responsible vote on things which require years of study and which are extraordinarily complex? How can we reach an opinion, even a summary about these matters, and vote? I repeat: technocracy has replaced democracy.

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4. PETRELLA, R., "Le pouvoir financier mondial," in AAVV. *Els límits de la democràcia* (Govern d'Andorra, Andorra la Vella, 1997).

How then can we have a solid democratic order, built on such undemocratic foundations? I think that we have repeatedly lost the experience of the in-depth human relationship, which may only be possibly learnt within an intercultural perspective.

And this will be my last point.

## 7. Monoculturality

Today one speaks much of interculturality, but oftentimes refers only to transdisciplinarity, with the purpose of enriching the dominant culture with external inputs, which is, by the way understandable and legitimate. But I suspect, that this so powerful Western culture which for centuries has exploited the rest of the world in everything, as it finds itself in a precarious situation, wants to profit from the wisdoms of other civilizations for its own benefit, even if it tells us that it is for the benefit of all mankind.

One can very well understand the noble intention of a "world democracy," and also that of a "global ethic," since one is trying to set some kind of order in that globalization; but we have not yet overcome the syndrome of universalization—always, of course, according to our own parameters. The limits of democracy cannot extend beyond the limits of the culture which has given birth to it. I repeat that cultures are not mere folklore.

This does not mean that there cannot be a fecundation between cultures, a topic that we shall now address in the following pages.

## III. THE LIMIT OF DEMOCRACY

Moving over from the plural (the limits) to the singular (the limit) allows me to say that once we have reached the limit, we discover the foundation and its own relativity. As we reach the limit, we touch bottom and discover at the same time that this bottom does not belong to us. The limit is found in the roots, but these are rooted in the human magma, which is the private property of no single individual nor culture. A North-American friend of mine, C.D. Lummis, who is a professor in Tokyo has published a book, *Radical Democracy*, which ends with a gloss on the mythology of Persephone (the Latin Proserpina) in contrast to the legend of Sisyphus. Lummis intends to rekindle our hope in the face of the fact, that in spite of the degeneration of democracy, when it becomes institutionalized, it returns from Hades for a new spring after Demeter, Goddess of corn and mother of Persephone, convinces Zeus to oblige Hades, king of the underworld, to liberate her daughter Persephone with whom he had fallen in love; but because the daughter had transgressed the interdiction of eating in the kingdom of death, she was obliged to stay three months with Hades. It is during the Winter when the grain doesn't grow... when democracy seems dead... that we need counsel from the peasants to overcome winter and reach a new spring.

### 1. *Isocratia*

"All are equal" is a feeble dogma because we are not equal. It is the main flaw of liberalism—especially of market liberalism. *Isonomia* qualifies this by saying that we are all equal before the law. But the law is abstract and cannot be concrete. If everyone has his own law, as suggested by the paradoxical saint Paul (Rom. II, 14) there is no law. I say paradoxical, because the Christians and Gentiles are equal in opposition to the Jews (Rom. II, 20; VI, 14; and *passim*). Freedom can only exist among equals, and men are different.

We must therefore find a political system of managing the *polis*, which takes these differences into consideration and which does not try to reduce everything to an abstract equality before the law. However, law is necessary. I quote a lapidary sentence from Lacordaire in 1838 "Between the strong and the weak, it is freedom which oppresses and law which liberates." Let us take into account the fact that India, the democracy that brags it is the biggest in the world, still has families under a "bound labour" régime, namely in bondage, and more than 100 million children in these conditions which means that for every Spaniard there are three Indian children which render the competitiveness of the State of Delhi in the world market possible. Out of these 100 million, in spite of the resolutions of the country's High Court and of many protests, there is between 15 and 29 million in a situation of real slavery (with 12 to 16 hours of work a day, corporal punishments, etc.) in order to pay the debts incurred by their parents which sometimes do not exceed the sum of 20 dollars but have astronomical inter-

est rates monthly. These are the ones who defend privatization and the so-called free market? One must read the 169 pages of New York's *Human Rights Watch*, and examine the statistical description of the exorbitant profits of companies that benefit from this kind of work (*Frontline*, January 24, 1997) in order to become aware that the situation grows worse every year. These facts are rarely spoken of and obviously the children do not protest publicly nor do they have unions to defend their interests. These considerations are not at all marginal to a reflection on democracy. The so-called democratic countries are the direct cause of these facts and if we alone do not constitute the *demos*, then we are all coresponsible for the two hundred and fifty million children of the world, without mentioning the thirteen million children under five years of age who die of hunger through malnutrition, according to UNICEF data (1996).

I am not quoting the Gospel regarding money (Mt. VI, 24; etc.) but limiting myself to recall Aristotle who said that the worse enemy of democracy is economic inequality between men. If there are rich and poor—says Aristotle in the 3rd century BC—there can be no democracy. The master of Alexandria considers that economic difference is a greater obstacle than the difference between social conditions, classes or ethnic groups. It would be interesting to be able to comment upon the whole passage, Pol. III, 7 (1279 a 24 – 1280 a 7), where Aristotle leans toward a harmony between oligarchy (because the rich are not numerous) and democracy (where the poor are the majority), because of the fact that neither one nor the other, taken in isolation, shows any interest in the common good.

This leads me to take up anew, the words that Herodotus says at least once: "equal sharing of power" (V, 92ª, 1). This means returning to the human and not the technocratic measure, so that it be the people who govern and not the government. Is this possible today? This is the great challenge with which we are confronted.

To cultivate *isocratia* comprises the exercise of "political virtue," which, according to the ancients, cannot be delegated. That is the great problem today: moving from the dialectical to the duologal and dialogal. We must become aware of the fact that specializations are necessary for specialized problems, i.e. secondary things in human life; but that the meaning of life is precisely to live it and to not dominate others. One hardly learns this at school—in spite of its name which means leisure, *otium* and not *negotium*.

This harmony or equal power cannot then depend on social class, specialized knowledge, money or numbers, but on the intrinsic dignity of the human person. This dignity is not bestowed due to a vote by somebody else, but in virtue of our humanness, *"Menschlichkeit."* This is the indispensable transcendent factor I have already referred to.

## 2. Pluralism

We were saying that equality is an abstract concept which already supposes the homogeneity of equal things. A pear is equal to a pear, as a concept, just as a man is equal to another man if we remain at the conceptual level. But Man is not a concept and each man is unique and, consequently,

irreducible in his own personality to equality, in whichever form. Already, Aristotle criticized democracy from the fact that it considers "that those who are similar in one aspect, are also similar in all other aspects, and that because men are equally free, it claims that they are absolutely equal" V, 1, (1301 a 29-31). Plato, in the last line of his last letter (863 e 5), which is an adieu to a friend, says: "and be thyself."

This *authenticity* (from *autos* and akin to the Sanskrit *asus*, life) would be one of the foundations of pluralism. Pluralism does not mean the mere tolerance of the other, since he is not yet too strong; pluralism means the acceptance of our contingency, the acknowledgement that neither I nor We, have the absolute criteria to judge the world and others. Pluralism means that there are systems of thinking and cultures that are incompatible with each other or, using a geometrical metaphor, they are incommensurable (as are the radius and circumference or the hypotenuse and the cathete, all the while remaining in co-existence and co-implication). Conviviality is something much deeper than mere mutual tolerance.

Because of all this, our contemporary epoch requires us to make a radical change if we truly wish to avoid the catastrophe of humankind. Cultures co-exist, but there is no understanding between them, which would require overcoming the domination of essence over existence and also going beyond the monopoly of rationality over being, without falling into irrationality. I do not wish here to recall how one has wrongly translated (and even worse) interpreted Aristotle's sentence which defines man as a "rational animal."

All this will be seen more clearly in the extent and way in which we shall invite other cultures to the roundtables of dialogue, which becomes imperative if we truly want to prevent our destruction. All this has lead me during a few years to speak about the *democracy of cultures*, without which there cannot be freedom between peoples.

## 3. The culture of peace

In the beginning, I said that the challenge of the modern epoch is the passage from a culture of war (which is euphemistically translated by: "being the best," "competitiveness," etc.), to a culture of peace. Peace does not mean absence of war, but a new culture, a new cultivation of the human spirit and of human life whose roots are neither in competitiveness nor in war. The culture of peace is the culture of diversity, that can philosophically be expressed under the name of pluralism.

A culture of peace is not based on power, but on authority. There is an essential difference between power and authority. Power is what I hold, because I have more money, more modern science (synonym of control) or because I am stronger. Authority is given to me by others, or, as it is said in a democratic regime, is conferred upon me. I recognize your authority because as the wisdom of the word itself says it, you make me grow (*ab augendo*). The culture of peace rests on authority and not on power.

Hence, the means of a culture of peace cannot be money, nor specialized knowledge, nor power, but authority. Authority, in contrast with power which can be private property and therefore individual, is relational, i.e. personal. Authority supposes a *we-all* constitutive of the human being. The radical change to which I referred at the beginning supposes an anthropological mutation.

The culture of peace supposes the culture of the spirit and in a special way the culture of speech (the word). Raimon Llull says that nature has provided all beings with the means of defence and attack. Some have a thick skin, others strong teeth, or claws to defend themselves and live, in accord with the laws of nature. When man takes up arms, he then falls to the level of beasts; weapons replace his nails and teeth, which cannot be very dangerous. What then is the means, the instrument given by nature to man to defend his rights?—asked Llull. It is the language, he says, in which man speaks. It is the rhetoric of the ancients, the art of knowing how to speak, to present things in that dialogical dialogue where the dynamics of speaking develop until a consensus is reached. We could call it *logokratia*: the cultivation of the word, that word which breaks the silence, which creates as it speaks, which does not limit itself in repeating what was said in school, on TV or what is written in dictionaries. All living languages are dialects flowing forth from words woven between parents and children and between friends. With time one creates new ways of speaking.

I wish to close by emphasizing an idea and proposing a symbol which could help the growth of the new myth of the culture of peace.

The history of the last six thousand years of human experience can be summarized in the discovery of monotheism—accepting this as a simplification which would require many qualifications. This monotheism which is the belief in the existence of an absolute center, model of every order. In it, we have the key to understand everything and, naturally, who has the key has the power. This monotheism has found concrete forms in monolithic systems (monarchy, monism, absolute truth, unique systems of universal validity, etc.) which have favoured pretensions to globalism and absolutism. The great modern challenge is to transform these monolithic systems and move from the melody to the symphony, from monotheism to the trinity, from monism to non-dualism.

In our world of Hellenic roots, the symbol which could be useful to us would be the passage from the arena to the agora. (Arena is a word of Etruscan origin which suggests fighting, competition, victory.) The arena is the sand for gladiators. The agora is the space where one speaks, where we meet, discuss, where the enemy—if we wish to use that word—is presented to us. One talks with him, accepts him and one seeks to see which of the two, three, or more, no matter the number, is right. The agora has to do with assembly, *ecclesia*. We must offer anew these spaces where man can speak without fear. Speech is not a number of transactions which can be done through the Internet: it is a gift that man possesses and which allows him to live a full life.

Let me conclude with an anecdote which, like all anecdotes, says nothing but says everything. The cousin of a student of mine, during the years when

Kennedy had created the Peace Corps to send help to the so-called Third World, went to an African village as a teacher. He did not want, however, to teach anything that he already knew, because he considered that to be an act of colonialism. He accepted instead to only give courses in gymnastics. One day he went to the children with a box of candies. All the children were waiting for this handsome, tall, young man (the Africans oftentimes have a complex of not being white). The young American said to them: "You see that tree over there, one hundred or two meters away? I will count to three and then you start running. The winner will receive a well deserved prize." Suddenly, the eight or nine children of the village became very nervous. When the young American counted to three, the children took each others' hands and ran together, hand in hand, as they wanted to share the prize. Their happiness was in the happiness of all. Perhaps these children give us motives for new foundations for democratic life.

# B. THE DISCOVERY
# OF THE METAPOLITICAL[5]

## BY RAIMON PANIKKAR

IN ORDER TO DO, as we propose, an indepth approach to the issue of the metapolitical, we are obliged to deal with the serious problems that come with it. Not only do these problems have to be approached with humility and prudence, but there is no way of avoiding them. To foresee some patch-ups being done, a reform, to demand more honesty on the part of parliamentarians, to denounce the arms race, is already a sign of an awareness that a change is required, but this still remains superficial and does not reach the heart of the issue; here we are dealing with something deeper and more disturbing. I could preach for a more honest democracy and justify myself by proving that my hands are clean, but when I delve into the center of my life, I become aware that my ideas can only spring from me if I am ready to undergo a *metanoia*, a conversion, a radical transformation which leads to a harmony between what I say and what I am, and where my words are the authentic expression of what I think—in the sense of thinking and not only in that of calculating or explaining.

### Authority and power

I have already alluded to the distinction between *auctoritas* and *potestas*, by saying that the empire and Christendom were based on the principle of authority, i.e. on some men's testimony of faith with regard to that idea of empire or Christendom. It is the myth that one accepts. But there is also the great temptation on the empire's part, to rest on force, on power. The dis-

covery of the metapolitical is linked to the conviction that power and authority are fundamentally inseparable. We shall therefore have to further explicitate that distinction. It is important because it represents overcoming the deadly dichotomy between body and soul, the material and the spiritual, the human and the divine. The life of a society cannot be maintained by force. The principle of the self-determination of peoples is based on such an overcoming. Force alone (power) cannot, in the long run, maintain the cohesion of peoples. The "social contract" must be voluntary.

I am defending anew the *via media*, the non-dualistic way between monism and dualism. We must distinguish between authority and power. Their non-distinction would make us fall in various forms of superstitious fideism, ancient as well as modern; but their separation would lead us to destruction of the weaker ones, i.e. to a new kind of monism, preceded by bitter struggle to assert a supremacy.

Authority is a principle of cohesion different from that of power. I would even go further and put forward an hypothesis for which we would have to go back to six thousand years before the Christian era, at the epoch of the birth of patriarchy. I think that one can, as a working hypothesis, date the origin of wars to that epoch. Wars are certainly not a natural phenomenon. Animals do not wage war. War is a cultural phenomenon, which is not encountered, however, in all cultures. One must seek those cultural forms which predispose to war.

I like to quote, in order to remain within the Western context, the definition that Cicero gives of philosophy: "*cultura animi*" ("the culture of the spirit"). It certainly is not that type of culture, which could incite war. Considering the present state of affairs, we should ask ourselves if there has not been, in the course of time, a deterioration within the culture which has brought us to it, or even if that civilization is not founded on an erroneous conception. The study of the crossing from culture to civilization, i.e. from agricultural life to town life, and also that of the passage from the pre-Neolithic to the patriarchal, could possibly serve as milestones to direct our research.

The city needs, to maintain itself, a "political" power which is tighter than that of a culture of man and nature based on the tribe. But when that power loses its authority, the city must then rely solely on force. I think that there is a certain relationship between the father and power on the one hand, and the mother and authority on the other hand; but the issue would require a deeper and nuanced study.

The urban agglomeration is not self-sufficient; it must, from time to time, make some raids at least to meet its needs, its food requirements; it must store up things of all kinds and even stock up on fresh air and rural landscapes... through regular weekends outside the big cities.[6] The city must be

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5. The following is a partial excerpt from Panikkar's prophetic book, published in Italian, Spanish and Catalan but not yet in English, on the Metapolitical. It is a translation from the French edition which is to be published soon. It covers the major part of its third section, entitled "La Découverte du Métapolitique." Translated by R. VACHON.

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6. A significant fact: while at the beginning of this century the urban population represented 14% of the whole population (i.e. 1,619 million in 1900), at the end of this century it will have attained 50% (on a total of around 6,200 million in the year 2000). In 1989, it already represented 45%.

protected by walls (or by money). In English, the word *town* is etymologically related to *fence*. Specialization is necessary for human life, but it causes separation which can be destructive.

A town, as we have said, is made up of a grouping of houses. The *vicus*, the city neighborhood is a set of *vicini*, neighbors, just as the city is a confederation of citizens; both words clearly mean that the individual is not self-sufficient and that man does not find fullness in a closed group. The equilibrium can be broken both ways; by that of proliferation: the town grows in an anarchical way, like a cancer, becomes a megalopolis (even if it is called a global village); or by that of an enclosure: the town/city closes up into itself, isolates itself, and claims to be synonymous with what is human—as the word "civilized" betrays. We must open our horizons!

The difference between power and authority is expressed within the very words. "Power" means capacity to do something. Power resides in me, I am more powerful than another if I can do more things that he can, if I have more strength or capacities; I am the subject of power. I possess power. Power is "us": the individual, the group, the state...with regard to the "you" over which we exercise our power.

On the contrary, the word "authority" comes from *auctus*, *augeo* (what makes grow); authority is given to me, conferred upon me, recognized. By simply being who I am, others recognize in me something which results that my person, my actions, my words, have a special value for them. Age, spiritual value, wisdom, merit, knowledge or richness, are many factors that establish an authority. But it is always conferred by others. One is vested with authority by others, it inspires respect, trust; it is what allows someone to whom it has been recognised, to counsel with the authority of a command. Prestige, for example (its etymology set apart; *prae-stringere*) comes from authority. "Prestige," in German *"Ansehensmacht,"* would be an inadequate translation of the word "authority." Authority is not a *Macht* in the sense of power—although German distinguishes between *mögen* in the sense of *vermögen* (hence *Macht*) and *Können* (can). The Greek word έξουσία [*exousia* ] often used by the Gospels, means authority and also power, faculty, freedom, right, as well as splendour, and sparkle. Its origin has a peculiar flavour: composed of the preposition έξ [*ex*] (which often means the result of an action) and of the verb to be (the one who has being, substance, property). *Exousia* would literally mean to have the wherewithall to draw upon one's own resources in the material and spiritual sense of the expression. One must make a triple distinction between the *intrinsic capacity of the subject*, the capacity which emerges from his being, an extrinsic *power*, coming from the order of having and not of being (money being the most "potent" and modern example), and *authority* that the subject merits and which has been conferred upon him by someone else. The other captures in the one in whom he recognizes authority, the existence of a strength capable of helping him to grow. Authority comes from God, say many religions, since he makes everything grow—evidently from within. One ordains a priest, consecrates a king, confers a title of doctor to a learned person. They are invested with authority. But all those who are invested with authority can lose it if they do not show themselves worthy of it. They may withhold a certain power, but no longer enjoy, in the face of others, the

same authority. Science confers authority. The man of science exercises authority in his own realm, while the technocrat possesses only power.

The great temptation, in all realms, religious, scientific, political, familial, is to abuse one's authority through accumulated power, or to concentrate on power, as does modern science since Francis Bacon.

The institutionalization of political power confers authority, but the latter is not totally dependent on institutionalization. Only a state of right possesses authority, but one cannot totally separate power and authority. Every power, just by being, is visible, and this visible appearance, brings with it, in others, a certain recognition, and hence, commands authority. And vice-versa, every authority is based on a certain power acknowledged by others. It would be interesting to study, as a chemical equation, the equilibrium between power and authority and its oscillations from one side to the other, for example, according to social classes, civil and military regimes. England still enjoys, in India, a certain authority which does not correspond to its power. The United States, on the other hand, has more power than authority.

It is appropriate to mention here the legal distinction made by Romans, especially at the time of the Republic, between *auctoritas* and *potestas*. The latter was the executive power, a real and legal coercive power. *Potestas* was a power of coercion; it resided in the magistrature: the magistrates, the consuls especially, exercised *potestas* while authority resided both in the people and in the Senate. The people were the legislator, the Senate was the organ that ratified, counselled and made lawful and thus gave authority to the resolutions of the people or of the magistrates. History tells us, not without irony, that Roman senators had authority as long as they were rich (*exousia*!). Later, the loss of their riches, made them more vulnerable...

The present democratic political system acknowledges that authority resides in the people. The people delegate it to those who in its eyes are capable of exercising it. By thus conferring authority upon the latter, the reins of power are put into the latter's hands. The difficulty today, consists in making the process reversible once one has discovered that power now escapes the people's authority, since it has been transmitted to a technocratic system which has cut all links of dependency with regard to both the masses and the politicians. The vote is an act of trust in the programs (and men) and not a judgement (on business and means). An ordinary citizen ignores everything about the complications of the "machinery" of a technocratic state. Even politicians, in general, are very little informed: it is too vast, too complicated, too difficult!

The political issue, in the concrete, resides precisely in the authority—power dialectic. Democracy is the art of managing power through authority. If the practice of this art does not reach its purpose, we face the degeneration of politics into brute force. I see a danger of this order, not only in the present atomic power, but also in modern technocracy. A simple soldier could still have a knowledgeable discussion on Napoleon's strategy; but he can no longer do so on that of Schwarzkopf: he has no means of knowing the technological issues. A Swiss citizen can still take part in the decisions regarding the governance of his canton: but if the issue is of the order of the

World Bank, he becomes deprived of all active participation; in fact, it would take him years of specialization to become initiated to its functioning. The bureaucrat is inaccessible to dialogue: technocratic bureaucracy possesses its own autonomy that even initiates do not succeed in knowing sufficiently. One cannot do without authority, but we live today under the reign of technocracy: authority resides in the machines.

An excursus into religious sciences can be useful here. Since R. H. Codrington, van der Leeuven and others, one hears that the first experience of the Divine is that of power: *Die Macht ist das religiöse Urphänomen* ("power is the primordial religious phenomenon"): *Mana, orenda, arunkulta*, God… is the all-powerful, and the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition has always re-inforced this idea (in spite of Jesus' paradoxes in the Gospel who seems to say the contrary). From there one falls into indistinction between authority and power. In God, they coincide. When the state is considered as the representative of Divinity, it conserves (for those who believe in it) authority and power. When the state desacralizes itself it must rely more on power. One knows too well that contrary to an immutable God, the people (a surrogate of Divinity) is manipulable—and all the more so as it lets itself be caught up in the the game of democracy! Now, can one envisage a politics without power?

Wouldn't there also be a fault of language which has forced the meaning of the word power, attributing to it such distinct realities as force, coercion, dynamism, domination, authority, glory, capacity, might, faculty, radiance, attraction, resistance, persuasion, dignity, drive, energy… and so many forms of exercising an *influence* upon others?

To simplify: power is the strength of *logos*, of rationality, the weight of facts that reason unveils to us as such. Authority is the strength of *mythos*, of what one accepts, of what one believes, the weight of the ideal that presents itself to us as such. Wisdom consists in knowing how to harmonize them. The political participates in that wisdom.

## 1. Searching for an alternative

The issue here is the major and difficult problem of knowing whether there is a possible alternative to the present situation. Today there is a certain consensus on one point: the current language expresses it by saying *The System doesn't work*. One can understand the System to mean the technocratic system in the capitalist, ex-socialist worlds and in the non-aligned satellites which advocate a mixed economy and regimes. This system rests on an underlying cosmology which holds up the political structure of the present world, as represented, for example, by the dominant socio-economic ideology of the chorus of states. I am not referring directly to political ideologies but to a political structure, or if one prefers, to its infra-structure: the myth of the Modern state as being the essential stake of "*le politique*."

We must, and I cannot insist too much on this, place ourselves in the right perspective when approaching the Western experience over the last five centuries. The European attempt has left its imprint on the world scene.

Let us not forget that, a century ago, Europe was politically dominating the greater part of the world.

One speaks of the Roman Empire, of Medieval Christendom, of the Pagan Renaissance or of the century of Enlightenment; our era is the economic and economicistic period par excellence, or rather the financial era of mankind. The threatening danger: total bankruptcy. There is no need to quote the many various authorities and organizations, which are assuring us that if the present civilization does not change radically, the world will not survive more than 50 years.[7]

Having said this, opinions vary as to the issue of the possible alternative. One group of opinions would like more or less rigorous and drastic *reforms*: the System doesn't work, but one could make it work: adequate technology, customs policy, human rights, ecological legislation, etc. That is the only option open to the United Nations and to official organizations. A second smaller group, thinks that it is imperative to acknowledge the non-viability of the System and to seek an *alternative* to it: the ideas of Mahâtma Gandhi could be one example of such. The strength of the first group corresponds to the weakness of the second. Those who oppose the System start from very different ideologies, from those that one calls "terrorists," who, for various reasons, act with more or less violence to topple the System and to substitute a different regime, to the "greens," pacifists and others, who in their own ways, resist and oppose the System. The strength of the "reformists" lies in the fact that one cannot do a *tabula rasa* of history, nor of the present situation. One cannot start from zero. One must start from where one is. The attraction that the second group feels for an alternative corresponds to the difficulty that the first group has in undertaking real reforms. Up until now, all major reform has proven itself to be inefficient and has done nothing but prolong the agony of a System which in the long run is non-viable. We are at a dead end.

Fifty years ago, after the shock of World War II, we believed that decolonization, democracy and the technocratic socio-economic complex (for example the Marshall Plan) would bring about a certain well-being for all of mankind. Today, we face the fact that psychologically, culturally, historically as well as from an ecological, economic and technological viewpoint, the present System offers a solution to only 30% of mankind.[8] One has extrapolated the famous joke "What is good for 'General Motors' is also good

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7. The bibliography is immense. The unanimity is almost total, and science is the first one to tell us that we can no longer play Mephistopheles. See for example the journals such as *Cultural Survival* (Cambridge, Mas.), *Papeles para la paz* (Madrid), *Sanctuary Magazine* (Bombay).

8. If as recently as in March 1992 it has been written with realism: "The voice of the poor will make itself heard throughout the world, where, soon, the well-off will be seven hundred million and the excluded more than seven billion…" RAMONET "Les rébellions à venir," in *Le Monde diplomatique*, p. 1; the alarming commentary to make is: This minority seems not to want to cede its prerogatives and privileges and is disposed to "the final solution" with regard to the rest. One advocates birth control without however wanting to control technocratic growth (5 million cars sold in Germany during 1991 alone).

for the USA." And hence "What is good for the USA is a model which other countries must follow." Now, to state only one fact: the poor countries are ever becoming poorer and the rich richer, not because of a particular will that it be so, but because the phenomenon is inherent to the System.[9]

The situation is a critical one. If one gets involved in the System, even in order to reform it, one becomes a "collaborator," and renders more and more difficult the achievement of the radical transformation that is necessary. Anyway, no system will ever tolerate to be overturned. One can, for example, try to find more human ways of helping the so-called Third World to "develop," but one will see to it that the aid fit within the structures particular to the assisting countries. Moreover, if that aid is not profitable for the first or second world, the latter will not be able to compromise itselve in the "aid" enterprise. Seen from the third world's point of view, aid necessarily leads to major dependency on the part of the country being helped. But if one doesn't collaborate with the System, one isolates oneself, becomes a "drop out," a parasite, or maybe a sterile purist. In that situation, example has no value, because the testimony is not recognized. The monk can abandon the world as long as the world does not abandon him. If the latter abandons him, his testimony disappears, his solitude becomes isolation. This does not mean, obviously, that one must act to "dazzle" others in view of results. It means that the simplicity of the dove is incompatible with the prudence of the serpent. One must be at the same time in the System without belonging to the System, "in the world, but not of the world," in polar tension with it, seeking to transform it, to persuade or convince it (in spite of the ambivalence of these words). A universal reconciliation is required—not a unilateral shrinkage.

Today one speaks a lot about alternatives. I accept to use the word, but by giving it a precise meaning. I am not speaking of course of successive alternation, nor of the substitution of a system of life or of a civilized project, by another, as is current in the English language. Of course there can be an alternation of political parties in a government. That is why they call themselves parties, because they do not pretend to be the whole. But is it realistic to conceive a radical alternative to the contemporary political structure?

The alternative must be, from the start, utopia in the literal sense: it has no τόπος [*topos*], no place, because the locus is neither the System nor outside the system. I wish to underline that the alternative that we are seeking would not consist in an alternation between Russians or Chinese and Americans or vice-versa. The search for an alternative, must be, foremost, a pathway of the spirit, because only the spirit can go beyond a factual situation; it is the organ of transcendence, so to speak. Is there an

alternative? How could we know it if de facto it doesn't exist? And here the discourse on transcendence is not an added one. What we know, is that the search for it is a categorical imperative. I would say rather that one must search for many possibilities (of alternative). There is no alternative, but many alternatives, all of them provisional, for such is the human condition.[10] I would still like to underline some important points.

### There is no alternative within the system

This tautology expresses well the real situation. Every system allows and wishes for reforms, but it is not ready to be eliminated by another. It is only through violence that an empire succeeds another.

The impossibility of an internal alternative represents more than a logical pirouette, which consists in saying that an alternative to the system would no longer belong to the latter. The impossibility comes from the fact that the present System, based on the elimination of transcendence, makes every alternative impossible. The latter would appear to it as suicide. In the modern System, the individuals can believe in God, the Gods, be religious and lead a pious life, but the System, which can or cannot respect the religious beliefs of individuals, does not need the Sacred, it does without it; the Divine, in its view, is a superfluous hypothesis. The myth of the System is scientific and technocratic; it does not negate what is "supernatural," but demands its own autonomy in "what is natural." This same distinction between natural and supernatural is useful to it, since it avoids the religious dimension being incorporated to the System: one tolerates the existence of angels, as long as they do not interfere with the functioning of the great industrial machine nor with that of the state. If they are to act in this world they must obey the second principle of thermodynamics.

In other words: the System cannot jump over its shadow, it cannot tolerate a transmutation that would be incompatible with its own structure and for which it is not prepared. It has no point of Archimedes—in transcendence—allowing it to achieve a real transformation. An absolute monarchy can accept that a mandate from heaven be taken away from it and abdicate its power to make room for a radical change, a mutation. This is not so far a rational system like scientific technocracy, which can correct its faults, even modify its methods and admit reforms, but cannot eliminate the rationality on which it is founded. Since the System has no transcendent point, it cannot accept an alternative.[11]

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9. Only one example. One hears that "Brazil of the 90s is prospering." The Brazilians, however, find themselves in a situation which is worse than ever. And I am not speaking of the atrocities going on in Amazonia, nor of those that affect the Aboriginals. I limit myself to signal the indifference of the "developed world, towards 12 million children who vegetate, struggle along, traffic, play, suffer, die and are killed by police or other security agents in the "opulent" neighborhoods of the country's cities.

10. PANIKKAR, "Endogenous development?" in *Interculture*, Issue 84, pp. 32–64.

11. This is not only the case of the Algerian government (1991), not accepting the results of a majority voting against the status quo; it is also that of the United States ignoring the vote of the The Hague Tribunal, condemning the armed aggression against the people in Nicaragua, and that of Israel rejecting the practically unanimous decision of the United Nations on the Palestinian question.

### There is no alternative outside the System

In the present situation, there is not even an alternative outside the System. This for two reasons: the first one being the *de facto* situation of the modern world. The contemporary scientific-technocratic System, of Western origin, but which dominates the political and cultural scene of a world divided in states and cut up into a few power blocks, has invaded the planet in such a way that no geographical or historical locus can offer an alternation. There has been a succession of historical empires. They were alternations, as in the 17th century for example, when the Dutch, British and French powers, succeeded the Spanish Empire. But, when the American empire eliminates the Soviet empire, there is no alternative because the structure of the System remains the same. The System transcends the political regimes of states. There is no visible successor to the modern scientific-technocratic system. After the disintegration of the Soviet empire, this is even more evident. The modern technocratic system has no competitor. Nothing can yet be seen to replace it. This is the novelty and maybe the possibility of a mutation of our epoch. There is the beginning of an awareness that is always growing, that the present System, common to all world blocks, is exhausted. And this, not only because of a dearth of material resources, but also because the spirit which animated the fundamental human attitude peculiar to this form of life, has snuffed out. The myth has collapsed.

Today, every body can know, for example, that before 500 years (without counting a war), only because of the errors of machines and men, there is no doubting the probability of a major atomic catastrophe. Most of the experts speak of less than 300 years. And, by a major catastrophe, one must understand it as the destruction of millions of people, a truly atomic winter and the disappearance of life at a continental level. Hence, even from that point of view, one can easily understand that patch-ups, superficial reforms prolong the agony and bring no solution.

With regard to energy resources, the facts are also as alarming: petroleum, forest and coal are limited, and atomic energy—without adding the incertitude and risks—requires, in order to control and to produce it, an expense of energy which the planet cannot afford. We find ourselves face to face with poignant contrasts: to cultivate one hectare of rice with ordinary modern technological means one must use 15 times more energy (or calories) than what one can obtain from the rice harvest. The acceleration of technology does not allow recycling peculiar to natural cycles.

From an economic point of view, let us consider the budgetary debt of the most powerful and rich country of the earth. Its amount is superior to what the citizens of the United States can gain in three years. Hence, either growth or death. Now in a closed system, growth on the one hand implies impoverishment on the other. The easy answer to this dilemma, namely that mankind will have found by then more secure procedures, does not hold in the face of facts. Moreover, it betrays an Ersatz of Christian belief: the transfer of hope in a personal and world salvation, into a naive and alienating pseudo-confidence in some horizontal future; and most of all, it is a product of the mentality which has brought us to the present situation—and

which we should be able to transcend. It is the mentality of progress, one which leads to not solving problems, i.e. not to dissolve them, but to postpone them. Instead of provoking their dissolution, one seeks an antidote, a neutraliser, a stronger adversary in an advancement, in progress, and never in a backtracking, in a salutary reflection, asking oneself whether one should not stop, change direction, repent. To the abuse of chivalry, one opposes artillery, to the threat of so-called "conventional" bombs, one opposes atomic ones, to terrorism the police, to microbes of other substances that will destroy them.

Already implicitly contained in that first more "objective" reason is the following more "subjective" reason. The gravest problem does not reside in the necessity of an exterior change of the world and of the exterior forms of a lifestyle. The deepest issue consists of a thought structure, of a primary attitude towards reality, of an atrophy which prevents other experiences within that same reality. A good portion of mankind, the one that is most influenced by modernity, hardly possesses a language to express what some, who still have a glimmer of lucidity, would like to be able to timidly communicate. One knows well that the essence of technology (essentially different from *technê*, as I insist on underlining) does not reside in the machines but in a fundamental attitude towards what is real. The problem peculiar to technocracy is not a technological problem (it cannot therefore be solved by a new or better technology); it is a human-anthropological and even religious problem. This is where the issue of the metapolitical is situated.

Can we then envisage an alternative if we are incapable of formulating it? I here come back to my conviction that in the present world, only the mystics will survive. Without a grasp of that third dimension of reality, with which mysticism puts us in contact and which sustains the dimensions of the sensitive and of the intelligible, reality would be nothing but a pure abstraction—sensitive or intelligible.[12]

I would only underline this: our purely mental efforts are hardly of service to us when we are searching for an alternative of that nature. Hence the fundamental importance of the artists' contribution and of that of different cultures.[13] Without the latter's active participation, no alternative is thinkable

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12. Cf. R. PANIKKAR, "Man as Ritual Being," Chicago Studies (Chicago) XVI, 1, pp. 5–28.

13. Mircea ELIADE's reflection in his *Journal* is here quite appropriate:

"Why can't the 'scholars'—anthropologists, historians of religions—look at the 'objects' of their study with the same passion and patience with which the artists look at Nature (more precisely 'the natural objects' that they wish to depict)? The scholar would then succeed in *seeing* so many things in an institution, a belief, a custom, a religious idea, if they observed them with the concentrated attention, the disciplined sympathy, the spiritual 'openness' found among artists. Which anthropologist has ever *looked* at the "objects" of his study with the fervour, concentration and intelligence of a Van Gogh or of a Cézanne, in front of the countryside, the forests, the fields of wheat? How can one *understand* a thing if one does not have the patience of looking at it attentively?" See ELIADE *Fragments d'un journal I et II*, Paris (Gallimard) 1973/1981, p. 470.

and realizable. Without elaborating further, we understand that the System is condemned to failure. There is no longer a Bolivar, *"libertador,"* nor *"liberador."*

But let us return to our topic: the solution cannot be found outside the System. Nor can it be found, we said, within the same System, however the latter is indispensable and we cannot by-pass it. One cannot act as if it did not exist, despise it, just condemn it and act as if technocracy, multinationals and the United Nations did not exist. One must take it into consideration and be aware of its power.

There is first a strategic reason that theoreticians tend to forget. An example will help us to demonstrate it. In India, socialists, Marxist activists and some "social workers" readily incite Aboriginals, Dalits (oppressed) and other peasants that have been reduced to slavery by the big landowners and exploited by usurers, to protest and even to revolt. The law, on principle, sides with the poor, but it offers no protection. It is the police that protect but the latter, in that context, protect only the interests of the powerful and rich. The activists have denounced the injustice, but if the peasants wish to survive, they must live from day to day with this injustice without being able to combat it through efficient means. They have no alternative. The activists fight for them and with them, but they are a minority haunted by the police. What we could call puritan solutions, hardly serve the purpose. *One must live with the System!*

The contemporary situation is worse than that of times past, since no alternative can be glimpsed; on the other hand, the situation is more favorable for a less violent action since there is no concrete enemy to combat; he is not localisable. We do not have to combat a tyrant, to eliminate a monster, to fight against another alternate empire. That is why the critique must be an enlightened one. It concerns us all, runs through all of us, so to speak.

One must live with the System for three motives: first, because it exists; second and more seriously because it is not totally false or evil and we should not set ourselves up as judges who are perfect possessors of truth. But there is still a deeper motive: because the System is also *us*. Most of us are part of the System: the oppressed as well as the oppressors, those who would like to be neutral or do not vote, the vegetarians and those who, in India, wear only *khâdi* (handmade clothes). We should not make a scapegoat out of the system. I am thinking of us all; I am speaking of the System, beyond the problems of a moral order in precise situations. I am speaking that way because the other, the racist, the Communist, the liberal, the technocrat and even the machines and the megamachines are neither strangers nor indifferent to us; they are not closed monads or men, machines with whom we have no relations. There exists a cosmic and universal solidarity for good as well as for evil. In short, the alternative does not lie in a counter-technology or an anti-system.

The alternatives must be able to enter into relationship with the System since most of them have come from it and it more or less tolerates them. The attitude must be that of a *mahâtma*, showing magnanimity, considering the issue according to all its aspects and interdependence and not one of dialectical opposition. One must tend towards transforming the situation, all the

while assimilating it, and conserving a critical sense and a spirit of protest. In a word, the System is not only an objective datum, a state of things; it is also a subjective fact, a state of living—and of thinking.

So, why still use the word alternative, if one does not see any possibility to overthrow the System and to substitute an other one? I would answer that this word can still be used because it possesses a savoury ambivalence. The alternative, in fact, does not say *aliud* or *alius* (something other); the word does not say *alienus* (what is foreign, belongs to another). It does not say *alteruter* or *alterutrum* (one or the other, in the exclusive sense). It says *alter* (one and the other) and we use it here in an inclusive sense. Reality itself is alternative, even relational polarity, and not only dialectical alternation. Everything is implicated, and our problem touches upon the most fundamental issues of being and life. Reality is polar, or rather trinitarian. This brings us directly to our second point.

## 2. The inter-fecundation of cultures

The alternative that we are seeking cannot be, as we have said, the adversary, the enemy of the System, but rather its complement, its polarity, its challenge; all of which presuppose its transformation, in Greek, its radical metamorphosis, or, in more Christian parlance, its conversion, its redemption (although it is with reticence that I use the latter word, Christian redemption being nothing but an awkward word for transfiguration, *theosis*). The alternative consists primarily in acknowledging the right of the other to exist—that other, which the System tends to ignore, but that others should not imitate (by ignoring the System). We need each other, not in the manner of states that are on principle sovereign, whose tolerance of others limits (with courtesy or with force) supremacy, but because we are all in solidarity. *Esse est coesse*, to be is to be together.

To express it in our language: what we need is *inter-fecundation of cultures*. For that to happen, we must know how to listen to what the non-dominant cultures in today's world have to say when they encounter the political problem and what their opinion is on the present situation. We must know what they propose and study these propositions. It is not a matter of minor reforms but of the possibility of radically different solutions. This dialogue can lead to a mutual fecundation.

Now, inter-fecundation requires more than a superficial knowledge of other cultures. A critique, even a radical one of the dominant culture, is not enough; it is not a matter of being content with seeking what have been, in the past, the faults of one or the virtues of others; it means finding something new. These cultures must be invited to express themselves, to say what they have not yet been able to say because the opportunity to do so was not there and the present problematic did not arise. For the inter-fecundation to take place, we must (if I may pursue the most elementary metaphor), love each other, know each other; we must (please excuse me again) avoid all preservatives, in order to be able to, perhaps, make it possible for a new being to be born. Preservatives are numerous: pride, fear, mutual ignorance, privileges, contempt and so many others.

What are we seeking? What is the very purpose of political life? Conviviality, a happy life, the fullness of the human being. Politics does not consist of a mere search for means (as one would often have us believe), but in the search or even the discovery of purposes that spark in us the pertinent means to realize them. To think that politics is meant to be limited to the search or practise of means is already to envisage its instrumentalisation within an accepted system. In an urban agglomeration like "Greater Los Angeles" where 70% of the constructed surface is occupied by roads, the most efficient means for free circulation is that some walk on the right, and others on the left, that there be lights at the cross-roads and five lane highways. But one does not ask if the roads are—or are not—a true means of communication, nor if one should build our cities in view of cars, wheels or pedestrians. What is a true city? One which, instead of being a community centre fostering relationships, exchange, neighborliness and human happiness, presents itself as the fortress of individualism? One must first study the relationship between culture and politics. True political problems are not in asking oneself for which party one should vote, but in discovering, through exchange, whether the political parties are proposing solutions, the individual vote leads to justice, democracy is an absolute, and other such considerations. It is a matter of first discovering the ends and of not jumping into a discussion which deals exclusively with means.

I have often used the words emancipation from technology, transformation of the System. The difficulty resides in how to achieve this. I can only say this: it is by the inter-fecundation of cultures that we shall move out of the dilemma. We must overcome cultural inertia and acknowledge that in order to solve human problems, today, no one culture, religion, ideology, tradition is self-sufficient. When the boat is sinking, one calls on other fishermen to save both the men and the boat. Dialogue, collaboration and mutual confidence are imperatives of contemporary mankind.

It is only in such an atmosphere that one can get an in depth glimpse into solutions to problems posited by the present situation. Returning to our reflection on what is political, what the *polis* was to Greece, the tribe is to Africa. If culture was decisive for the former, nature was dominant in the latter. But Greek culture was founded on *ethnos* and African nature is not divorced from the human universe. Couldn't tribal wisdom therefore contribute to the deepening of the notion of what is political? Of course, when I say "nature" in this context, I am referring to the *human* nature of the African and not to the abstract "nature" of ethnological discussions on native-culture.

I would like to give another example which is delicate and quite complex, since emotions on the topic are exacerbated and the abuses are aberrant; but the experience of more than forty years should give us a certain serenity in broaching the topic. Here, I am speaking of the caste system in India. Since Independence and after the Constitution, castes have been abolished; they are no longer acknowledged. Still, they continue to be, in the Indic Republic, probably the most potent social force. One should not confuse this system with the untouchables, who, while being properly called—with a certain paternalism—*Harijan* (people of God), prefer the name *Dalit* (textually broken, oppressed, torn, crushed); but which is finally, another

caste, numerically superior to certain "high" castes. I would go so far as to say that Indic civilization has traditionally played within a triple scheme which would be *the homeomorphic equivalent of the polis*: the village, the caste, the râjâ (the local sovereign, whatever his title). Here, I am not proposing any model with which to transform the System, nor do I defend the present rigidity or the abuses of "casteism." I am simply signalling that the substitution of the Indic political life by a capitalistic system of Westernised elites or by a class socialism, is not the inter-fecundation of cultures that I envisage as the way to a solution. Let us not forget that there are also cultural genocides.

Here, I would like to give a few landmarks regarding the relationship between culture and politics in view of finally arriving at the metapolitical.

### The political is an integral part of culture

We have already said that politics (*la politique*) is the way of maintaining the *res publica*, i.e. the art and science, the praxis and theory of the political. We have described culture as the encompassing or unifying myth of a people at a given moment of time and space.

Culture and politics are interwoven. Every culture has its own politics. *A culture without politics is folklore*. To want a pluriculturalism in a closed political unity is cultural reductionism. In more philosophical terms: the *container* transforms and conditions the *content*. To think that one can offer a neutral container which will allow different contents to bloom, is naive, to say the least. The container-content relationship is not a neutral one, there is reciprocal influence.

Speaking about this reciprocity, one can unmask the latent totalitarianism of the present political system, which claims, as we have already underlined, to be tolerant with regard to other cultures provided that they accept the rules of the game which have been established by this encompassing political culture which offers them "hospitality."

Furthermore, modern culture has a particular politics. One can mention it by quoting the big words which qualify it and with which we are surfeited: individualism, democracy, global market, development, United Nations, technosciences (computers, satellites, information networks)...

Culture is not a thing which has fallen from the sky, nor is politics a human activity which operates in the void. Politics is the art according to which a culture fashions itself: culture is the form that a society takes on the basis of a particular politics—although culture and politics are also conditioned by other elements. After these considerations we can formulate the corollary of our preceding affirmation.

### There is no politics that is culturally neutral nor any politics without a culture; they are indissociable

Not only does every politics belong to a culture and hence is inseparable from it, but every politics, by presupposing a culture, is an expression of the latter, and by that fact, fashions it. It is on the premises of a given cul-

ture that one makes political decisions, which, once taken, can change the way the culture looks.

It is by virtue of a culture based on the need for Cartesian certitude, and from which flows the need for political security, that one "freely" makes decisions on nuclear armaments, and this politics, in turn, shapes an entire particular culture. Consequently, there is no politics of pure means. Politics is not only a technique to foster community life. And even if it were nothing but a technique, it would not be neutral because it pursues a set purpose within the horizon of a given culture.

Moreover, political activity cannot reduce itself to a mere choice of means toward a common good, rather it is a matter of both research and the critical analysis of this common good for which it assumes responsibility. The consequence of this is grave: to want to institute a global political system without cultural uniformity makes no sense. And wanting to impose a unique cultural model represents the elimination of all other cultures—a truly cultural genocide. Of course, the "mass-media," at the service of a particular politics does not want, in principle, to impose anything. It limits itself to creating propaganda.

Now, propaganda is the art of convincing us that what is good for the organ of propaganda is equally good for the rest of the world. The freedom to make propaganda is a political decision which comes from a very precise and particular culture. Can one make propaganda for a certain nazism, anthropophagy, hate, violent revolt against the state, for military desertion, the rape of children, slavery...? Such is the power of culture as an encompassing myth.

The gravest danger nowadays would be—following the example of the European Illustration and of its claims—to give monopoly to "reason," ("*la*" *raison*), thus bringing about a false dilemma: either reason (pure, dialectical, instrumental, communicative, historical, scientific, technological...) or irrationalism (fanaticism, sentimentality, superstition, fundamentalism...) forgetting that this reason itself is culturally situated.

### The present impasse

This being said, one finds oneself in an impasse. We have a dominant political system which wants to be universal, and which, in a certain sense, has succeeded in penetrating the political life of a great part of the world, but which at the same time, in view of its great success and also due to the internal wisdom of human nature, would like to preserve cultural pluralism. *But there is no cultural pluralism without political pluralism.* If the various cultures are formally demanded to adopt a unique form of politics, one reduces, as we have noted, culture to folklore. Each culture generates the political forms that are connatural to it. A culture without its own politics is a truncated politics. The political directly comes from the cultural. Should we therefore overthrow the present political system in order to save the other cultures? Or should we condemn cultures to a slow extinction, and thus reduce them to artificial flowers serving to adorn the great technocratic civilization?

We are cornered into a dead end. How shall we move out of it? It is useless to delude ourselves with vain hopes: or a unique politics thus consecrating cultural monomorphism, or cultural pluralism with different political systems.

I do not think it necessary to spell out this impasse any further, it being so obvious. The attempts to implant the Western System in Africa and Asia and their resounding failures should already open our eyes. One can explain the causes of a dictatorship here and of a famine elsewhere. But much more, we must ask ourselves if a situation is endemic and if it is worsening every year. Are we going to continue to blindly rush to find solutions before having grasped the nature and gravity of the problems?

I insist on the seriousness of the question. Evolutionistic thinking—I am saying thought and not a mere evolutionism of species—leads us to a cultural monomorphism on a grand scale, even a cosmic one "à la Teilhard de Chardin." Mankind as a whole, would all be walking in the same direction. There are, of course, meanderings and spaces for "cultural" freedoms, but the omega point, like the polar star (or that of the Magi), would be visible on the horizon for everyone to see. This thought-form, predominant in the West is the fruit of a temporal interpretation of a desacralised Christian eschatology. One confuses eternity with the future, and one imagines the destiny of Man and Earth within a physical and temporal eschatology. In short, the impasse, within the dominant culture, is insurmountable. If one believes that this is the only true cosmology, then, let us forget our illusions regarding cultural inter-fecundation. The Big Bang will dominate everything! But what if this were only one cosmology, as relative as any other?[14]

### Solution through reaction

I am calling solution through reaction the one which consists in ways of reacting to the dominant culture through confrontation with the very terms of the dominant culture and with similar categories, although antagonistic. Thus one falls into the orbit of the culture that one claims to supplant. Envisaging the overthrow of that political System and replacing it with another because the former lead to massive exploitation, favored one race, or has been the cause of so much evil, is neither practically feasible nor theoretically convincing. Ecological signs can scare us, shake up our confidence in the System and thus prepare us to consider the grave nature of the problem: but, in general, ecology still belongs to a techno-scientific thought-form. It is from the point of view of this statement of caution and of this awareness that we have preferred to speak about *ecosophy*.

Let me look at two obstacles, which are of a different order, regarding solutions through reaction. The first is a matter of prudence. The overthrow of the System is not feasible in practise. Let us remember David and Goliath. David won only once: in general, it is Goliath who wins! If one

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14. For many years I have been working at editing my text on *The Conflict of Kosmologies*.

envisages a war with a more powerful neighbour, one must really think it through, because such a confrontation may not lead to victory.

A second reason, which is much more important, which is not a matter of mere political strategy in the best sense of the word, is that even if one succeeded in winning, what would one have won? To replace the white by the black, the rich by the poor, the ones by the others? In order to pursue the struggle in the same fashion? One would then remain in the same System which can subsist only through the domination of some by others. No political system, in the course of world history, has been as powerful and developed as the present one. To wish to correct its abuses stems from a very praiseworthy intention, but human nature being what it is, it is pretty certain that without a qualitative jump that projects outside the System, one would not go very far in the proposed reform. To say it in sarcastic form: if the Catholic Church is to be a monarchy, it is preferable that the Pope reside in Rome rather than in Berlin or Moscow; if the rich must dominate the earth, it is preferable to be dominated by today's liberals than by tomorrow's "nouveaux riches." The issue therefore is not one of change of guard, but of the System.

This negative solution through reaction presents a real danger: that of not moving beyond the *forma mentis* of those that we refute and combat. Anti-capitalism through reaction becomes a state Capitalism; anti-technology can convert into another super-technology; the struggle for peace can become combative; one knows well that anti-colonialism has too often converted into a new form of exploitation (colonialistic). Many revolutions have ended up as repetitions, under a different form, of the models that they were fighting, and so on.

The solution through reaction, remains, under a subtle form, dependent on the *status quo*. One becomes what one hates. To destroy the adversary, one is obliged to utilize the former's weapons. In brief, what I call the solution through reaction is the confrontation and struggle with the same weapons as those of the adversary. If one does not rise to a superior level, one does nothing else but perpetuate the law of *karma*.

### The interlude

Should one then advocate voluntary apartheid? *Fuga mundi*? Scattering into minuscule sub-cultures? Getting together somewhere, constituting here and there non-contaminated islands? If one abandons the world or if one forms small groups, disseminated communities at first, this can be positive and even one of the preliminary conditions for a true solution. But moving away, separating from others, withdrawing and forming small nuclei of the pure is not a stable alternative. The history of mankind has known these Manichean communities: Fraticelli, Cathars, Montanists, Jansenists, Puritans, secret societies of all kinds. The world could not tolerate them and would judge these "parasites" as dangerous for the regime's stability.

And yet, that world also has its own sects and heresies. The first world, because it is more stable and powerful, can allow itself the luxury of tolerating them as the best way of rendering them inefficient. As long as you are only a few "drop-outs," "flower children," a bit of a nuisance, but representing no danger to the public order, one will let you settle in the mountains of California, where you can live as you wish, and even found a green party. But as soon as you start taking a stand and becoming a little too powerful, a bit dangerous and that your behaviour, your activities and claims appear as a danger which can shake up the system somewhat; it will no longer tolerate you. Everything depends on how serious a threat you are to it. This system needs self-defence in order to subsist. Apartheid could be a pause, a moment to breathe, reflect, consolidate some positions.

I certainly would not like to give the impression that I condemn all non-conformist and minority movements: on the contrary. Heresies have a salutary and indispensable function to play for the vitality of a tradition: it can be evaluated according to the generosity with which it tolerates dissidents. These small nuclei have a much more considerable influence on the majority than one usually thinks. Without these marginal experiences, one would choke. Many indications lead me to think that without the '68 revolution and what is called today "new age," the Russian *perestroika* would possibly not have happened as rapidly and in the same way.[15]

It is sometimes necessary to isolate oneself in order to survive. Monks of the first centuries would escape to the desert as much to save the world as to save themselves—and this was done without any trace of egoism.

My cautionary remark is a recommendation to be vigilant, i.e. that the success of small industries, for example, does not spoil the designs of big industry. The latter develops thanks to the small industries, but by conceding them a limited autonomy which allows it to play its major role. I have spoken elsewhere about the opposition which exists between the micro-sociological and the macro-sociological. In the present system, what is appropriate in the micro order proves to be destructive in the macro order. We must seek a way out of this dilemma and find a means other than victory or unconditional retreat. The vanquished always return. It is not necessary to believe in spirits or in a divine justice to know this!

But isolation is not only practically difficult, but rather impossible; in the long run it also smothers those who have chosen to remain apart. Here is a political example of this. One can dream of Bhutan as a traditional paradise. No dictatorship, no Communism, no dichotomy between politics and religion, a life according to the rhythm of nature, not the accelerated and nervous one of modernity, no consumer society, no agglomeration—it has a population at approximately one million. But the people are starting to be tempted by the apple of modernity. This apple does not appear, in their eyes, to have negative traits, but rather as something positive and attractive:

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15. See R. GUILLAIN 1989. This article, published in *Le Monde*, 6-VI-1968 ended this way:

> "In all this, China is finally closer to us than it would seem, unless it is we who are more Chinese than we thought. In any case, this proletarian cultural revolution of Peking, which so often appeared to us as an enigma, ends up by seeming, in the light of events in France, much more intelligible." [Editors' note: translation ours.]

individual freedom, hygiene, a critical mind, comfort, tolerance of otherness, etc. Which way can they turn? Towards a dictatorship which will preserve order, or letting the "Western spirit" invade the country starting with tourism? The first solution wipes out the advantages of the ancient regime. The second, once the doors are open, will lead with understandable dizzying speed, to major destruction. What shall one do when one will have lost one's innocence? One cannot regain it, nor safeguard it by force. Jahweh had angels with a sword of fire at paradise's door to prevent one from being tempted to return (Gen. III, 24). The solution does not consist in returning to the past, nor even in reforming what has been discovered to be noxious, but in going ahead, in jumping into the void, in opening up to the possible transformation.[16] A phrase by Cardinal Daniélou (probably before becoming one) has been related to me, which says that Roman orders and congregations are born by the work and grace of the Holy Spirit, and continue to exist through pure historical materialism. In short, all reforms are provisional.

### The way of conciliation

I would like to propose another approach to the issue. I concede that it may appear somewhat ingenuous or idealistic: but after 6000 years of negative experiences, why not try to take the difficult path which mankind has had the presentiment many times? Doesn't *Dhammapada* (I. 5) tell us that according to eternal law, enmity is never appeased through enmity? Should we recall here the *Tao-Te-King*? The Gospel?

The word conciliation suggests association, union, an assembly reunited in council for some common endeavour. It is a Latin word although it comes in part from καλέω [*kaleô*]. It means to call; and *cum-calare* means to call together (to a meeting),—oftentimes calling by one's name, inviting personally. In old Sanskrit, one of the names of the rooster is *ushâ-kala*, the one who calls up the dawn, who invites it to rise on the horizon. That is the call I would like to talk about. *Primus sum qui Deum laudat* say the rooster on Christian Church steeples of a great part of Europe. It is also a call to a concilium, to a reconciliation.

Conciliation evokes the work of ἐκκλησία [ekklesia], congregation, assembly called to live, adore, discuss and even struggle for the heavenly Kingdom, for a cause, maybe not yet well defined, but considered of vital importance for the members. Cicero already uses it in the broader sense of *communis generis hominum conciliatio* "the bond (*religatio*, religion) common to humankind." *De Officiis* I, 149.

The common effort we are proposing would not necessarily lead to mere reform or to a compromise: not even to an alternative, which does not exist. We must take counsel from each other on the means to be taken to try to find a human solution to the *problem of Man* and not only uniquely to those

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16. The content of this paragraph written almost ten years ago, is proving to be in 1991, unfortunately quite true. As for Bhutan, its peace has recently been perturbed by ethnic and socio-economic issues.

of a group, of a culture, of a religion or of a tradition, even if by these means we thereby have to combat the System or systems.

I am not eliminating the sense of tragedy, nor the existence of evil, nor even guerrilla action (which is not warfare, but the underground) against the System, but without absolutizing any value and without losing sight of what I call here the metapolitical.

It is not a matter of compromise or of an eclectic attitude which refuses to acknowledge fundamental incompatibilities. It is rather a matter of dialogical dialogue which leaves open the doors of communication, even if one has divergent views.[17] The enterprise is not an easy one. Oftentimes one refuses dialogue, does not tolerate those who one accuses of intolerance, does not easily abandon power nor convictions: one is ready to go as far as a certain point and to make concessions, but not to the point of losing one's own identity or of betraying one's own beliefs. We are already touching on the metapolitical.

It is not a question of doing away with a critical approach and of maintaining oneself in an hypocritical attitude of "purist" outside the System. What is at stake, is a whole process (that I hesitate to call spiritual, but I can't find any other word), of emancipation from the System: to remain in it without belonging to it, as I have already suggested, quoting the Gospel.

The Christian word which corresponds to this attitude of conciliation is that of redemption, of transformation; it is the attitude of readiness to take upon oneself the weight of action and the responsibility to better the situation inwardly and outwardly. It is in that line of conciliation that I discreetly and for a long time now, make an appeal for a second Jerusalem Council and not for a Vatican III. But let us return to the conclusion of our exposition.

## 3. The stakes of the Metapolitical

We can further deepen the reflections which have brought us right up to the threshold of the metapolitical by trying to present a sketch of it. Now, this is difficult to express according to the current dualistic parameters of modern civilization. We call on the numerous studies on politics and the political, and on the ongoing discussions on the very nature of "political science" (or of political sciences). But our problem goes beyond the level of political sciences, because, without directly contesting political theories, it seeks the point of intersection between what is political and what constitutes the human being.

What is the metapolitical? It is the anthropological foundation of what is political, the transcendental relationship between what the political is and what sustains and founds it: the meaning of life. This transcendental relationship is a constitutive dimension of life; it is transcendental in the order of

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17. See R. PANIKKAR "The dialogical dialogue" *The World Religions Traditions*, Ed. F. Whaling, New York (The Crossroad Co.) pp. 202- 221.

being. The mystery of life lies, as if hidden, in any human activity. The metapolitical reestablishes the intrinsic union between political activity and the human being. As we have said, it is the point of insertion of the *animal politicum* within the whole.

Becoming aware of the metapolitical allows one to avoid, on the one hand, the narrowness of fleeing into the great beyond, into interiority, into self, or into acosmism, and, on the other hand, dissipation into individual action, or into an exclusively political action, thus abstracting from Man as a whole and from reality: specialization. The Bhagavad Gîtâ (III, 29) like the *Analects* of Confucius (II, 12) caution us against specialization. The metapolitical is the presence in politics itself of something which goes beyond it without, however, denying it. It is what allows opposed political systems not to break their mutual relations, to continue opposing each other, and even to wrestle, but without killing each other off so to speak, without absolutizing one's own political system in such a totalitarian way as to make pluralism of any kind impossible. The metapolitical is what allows Man to survive politically in a political system which he considers unjust and crushing. The metapolitical can be realized neither by separation nor by flying away; it is rather like the yeast, thanks to which the whole dough ferments and is transformed. It is like the tacit dimension of politics—its depth.

How shall one discover this dimension, and, having discovered it, how is one to adopt a realistic attitude, i.e. how in one single vision, is one to embrace all aspects of human life, including the *res publica*, and transcend the latter without rejecting it? It is not a matter of a new strategy of power or of some esoteric science; it is a matter of discovering, in the human being, a core which links one to the political, to the *polis*, but which is not exhausted by the political technique, even if the very nature of man is (also) political. Human nature is not partly political and partly individualistic, nor is it on the one hand open to transcendence and on the other intra-worldly; it is at the same time in a non-dualistic relationship with the political and the rest of all of reality. Man *is* a unity, although we must acknowledge that he has many dimensions. The metapolitical would be what intrinsically links political activity to the being of Man, or even better, to the very being of Man insofar as He realizes himself in and through political activity. This dimension is like the deep soul of Man's social activity, the element which transcends His individualistic intimacy without alienating it. A good portion of Latin America's "basic communities" could provide a good example of the metapolitical. It is in Eucharistic celebration that they find both the motivation and the means to run their community life—and quite often to liberate themselves from the yokes of history or of crushing socio-economic regimes. One is committed to the temporal sphere with a consciousness that transcends it. I think that the mysticism of a Che Guevara or of a Camillo Torres situates it in that line—although one can question their praxis and their theories.

Of course, to introduce a word and the notion which underlies it, is not equivalent to finding a solution. One must first show the reality that this word reveals, even its truth-content and hence its transformative power. To say that the metapolitical represents the dimension of transcendence of the

political should not be interpreted as a discourse which makes of politics a tributary of what is religious. The transcendence under consideration is that of the political itself towards politics and all of politics, it is the discovery that the political infinitely goes beyond politics (to speak in imitative terms according to the Pascalian dictum on Man).

The metapolitical is not synonymous with transpolitical or super-political. The metapolitical is the *humanum* which sustains the political, which makes of politics a fundamentally human activity (and not only an activity of Man, to pick up a distinction from scholasticism). The experience of the metapolitical leads to the fullness of human living, to its harmony with the cosmos and especially with human beings; it is the experience of the unity of life, not only without the dichotomies (the *dvandva* of Sanskritic culture) of one's personal life, but of the life of Man—hence in the city—and of life itself—hence, in the cosmos, without excluding Life.

The remark by Gandhi, that he was not a saint (*sâdhu, samnyâsi*, religious, spiritual man) who did politics, but a politician who aspired to be a saint, could be an expression of it. The Gospel's recommendation to seek the Kingdom of God and his justice could also be another formulation. This sentence does not say that one should close oneself up in intimist isolation but launch into the praxis of justice in a Kingdom which is ἐντός [*eutos*] *between* us, and not only *in* or *among* us (Lk. XVII, 21). The metapolitical is non-dualistic relationship between interiority and exteriority. True spirituality is not disembedded, it must be embedded, it must even humanize itself. This metaphor of course belongs to Christianity. But Christianity does not tell us that the Word became Jesus, but that the Λόγος [*Logos*] was made flesh (σάρξ[*sarx*])—and Christ himself shows the way by being the incarnated Word. Another example is that of the *bodhisattva* (the sage) spirituality of the Mahâyâna Buddhist tradition, of the one who renounces liberation from *samsâra* (the temporal world) in order to commit himself to free all suffering beings and help them achieve their salvation and who thus participates in the activity of human life. This should not be understood as an apology for the monistic indistinction which would "sanctify" every politics or defend any theocracy. It is a matter of the dimension of the metapolitical and not of a religious politics.

### Political theology

Christian theology has always been torn between the dualisms of Augustines, Luthers and Barths on the one hand, and the Medieval monisms, the post-romantic and modern restorationisms on the other; between theocracies on one hand and liberalisms on the other. Since the English (1642), American (1775), French (1789) revolutions, the Napoleonian era and its conquests (1804–1815), the Holy Alliance (1815), the events of 1870, the two world wars, and more recently, the fall of the Marxist parties in Russia and Eastern Europe (still very alive especially in Asia), a whole Christian current of thinking has sought, without much success, a middle way between the autonomy and heteronomy of the political with regard to theology. There is no need here to go into that history. More recently, the names of Eric Peterson, W. Pannenberg, K. Rahner, J.

Moltmann, J.B. Metz and many more, are so many indicators of the effort made to reintegrate the political into theology. These theological efforts are equally reflected in the philosophical work of authors such as E. Bloch, J. Habermas, W. Benjamin and many others. One must also underline that this line of thinking has been prepared by the anterior Judeo-Christian reflection on the theology of history. These are important chapters of Western thought.

With regard to our concern, we retain only the following: the theory of the metapolitical does not situate itself methodologically within a thematically Christian line, although it could inscribe itself in the third epoch (the one after Christendom and Christianity) that I have called Christianness.[18] Our approach is intercultural, and since the problem, today, does not arise only within the old countries of Christendom and Christianity, I wish to underline that an approach which would rest exclusively on the Christian tradition, as it has been interpreted till now, would not be methodologically adequate. One must take into consideration the presuppositions of other cultures and religions, and incorporate them. To explicitate all that would bring us too far away from our topic. Let me only add that a metapolitical reflection inscribes itself in a problematic which is similar to that which is treated in contemporary political theology.

If we are not explicitly doing Christian theology, our reflections do not situate themselves in a neutral field. One cannot think (nor can philosophy or theology do so) in a "No man's land"; interculturalism becomes inculturated from the very moment it expresses itself, whatever be the language utilised. Our reflection can be couched in a Christian language as well as in a Buddhist, or more secular knowledge; they seek to broaden, as they deepen, a human experience which enriches itself with multiple cultural contributions and which should be able to give the contemporary human situation a new vitality. Man is still ill-at-ease, situated as he is, in that crossroads, not to say whirlwind, of our late modern world which pursues its identity without knowing exactly where it is.

Let us continue to bring out the lines of force of the metapolitical.

### Symbolic awareness:

In order to discover the reality of the metapolitical, a consciousness is required which goes beyond a mere vision of the so-called political reality, without all the while forgetting the political and without engaging in an acosmic or apolitical order. I hesitate to refer to it as a religious awareness; the expression is too laden with meaning and might not be the most adequate. I would like to use another expression: *symbolic awareness*. It refers to an experience of the symbolic character of reality which discovers in each thing an interior dimension, different from sensitive and intellectual data, but incarnated in the latter. The symbol is not a sign, nor the mere appear-

ance of a thing; it reveals our intrinsic connection with the thing. The symbol is the thing as it reveals and opens itself up to us, and thus, includes us within itself. The symbol is not the "thing in itself," but the *thing in us*, having surmounted the epistemological scission of subject/object. What the symbol symbolizes is the symbolized in the symbol and not a different thing. A hermeneutics of the symbol is not possible. What one would use to interpret the "symbol" would be, for us, the authentic symbol. By "symbolic awareness" I understand it to mean the interpretation of human experience in the light of that symbolic awareness. As I have elsewhere analyzed, what one calls experience is a composite of four elements:

a) pure experience or immediate contact with the real;

b) the memory of that experience

c) its interpretation (which comes from the culture within which the interpretation is done);

d) the integration of this triple complex within the whole of the life and culture to which we belong.[19]

By symbolic experience I therefore understand it to mean the symbolic awareness of reality which is open to our experience. Ἀνάγκη στῆναι! [Anagkè stènai!] one must stop (somewhere). This symbolic awareness can no longer double itself into an awareness of an awareness, since this second awareness would not be different from the first, for symbolic awareness has already gone beyond the polarity subject/object, which alone allows a reflection as a second turning of the subject upon itself as a knowing subject.

Whatever be the case, the metapolitical represents becoming aware of an "element" which does not exhaust itself in politics nor in the political, but which is inseparable from them. It is a non-dualistic experience of reality; a vision which embraces *the* "thing" as a whole, without separating it from its source nor from Man, but at the same time differentiated, a vision in which the different elements of reality are not separable layers, but dimensions that are mutually interwoven. The discovery of the metapolitical in the political allows survival and a radical transformation of the political order without abolishing it. The metapolitical balances and completes our first analyses of the alternative which cannot be found within the System, as we have said. But neither does it exist outside of it. The metapolitical transcends the System in an immanent way. Just as Man is not exhausted in his body, but there is no Man without a body (body and Man are inseparable); thus Man does not exhaust himself in the political nor the political in the political or in politics.

This is the locus of symbolic awareness. Symbolic awareness unveils to us in every political order, not the existence of another city—to use Augustine's words—but in the human city, a soul which is invisible to what

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18. "The Jordan, the Tiber and the Ganges. Three Kairological Moments of Christic Self-Consciousness," *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, eds. J. Hick and P.F. Knitter, Maryknoll, N.Y. (Orbis) 1987, pp. 89–116.

19. PANIKKAR, "The Supreme Experience: the Ways of West and East." New Dimensions in Religious Experience, ed. George Divine, Staten Island, N.Y. (Alba House), 1970, pp. 69–93.

we generally call the political. The civic order may be more or less perfect, but the citizens, as citizens, are not, so to speak, totally dependent on the visible regime of the civic order. Man can find meaning in life even within an unjust system, precisely by struggling against it.

If one runs through the modern Christian bibliography on politics, one is astonished by the sharp turn taken after the first and especially the second world wars. And maybe one understands the opposite reaction of so many fundamentalisms.

This literature, has in fact, turned towards the world and accepted modernity by practically becoming atheistic. Let us recall Leo XIIIth's and Gregory VIIth's encyclicals condemning democracy, freedom of conscience, the independence of the state with regard to the Church, etc. The Popes were not speaking against the "unbelievers" of that time, but were worried about their own faithful who seemed to let themselves be perverted by "Americanism." Seen from their own perspective, this is sufficiently understandable. The God of politics does not exist. A certain moralism remains, and in a few books, Christ is referred to as being the model to follow, but the political seems to be perfectly autonomous, independent of the existence or non-existence of God. Many can "estre cives qui non erunt christiani mesmes"; "the one who is excommunicated does not cease to be a citizen" wrote, already in 1560, Michel de l'Hospital.[20]

The intuition of the metapolitical would prove that the "moderns" were right and would also explain the well-founded anguish of traditionalists. "God has left the world to men's disputes" says the Latin Bible (Eccl. III, 11) and hence, a political theory need not introduce a foreign factor in the political issue. The God of history, and hence of politics, the God of the Crusades and also of Auschwitz and Hiroshima is no longer credible. The metapolitical subscribes to another philosophy of history. Monotheism is no longer necessary for it to discover that hidden dimension of infinity and of freedom in each human act, and hence, in political activity. The metapolitical does not deny the Divine, but neither does it make of God a deus ex machina or a "Providence" that always blesses the victorious.

I do not wish to expand on the importance of symbolic awareness. Suffice it here to underline two aspects: symbolic awareness is not in contradiction, nor even incompatible with rational knowledge; it is not irrational. Secondly, a symbolic awareness is present even where a rational awareness cannot be. This allows not only a major degree of tolerance, but also an exit from ideological dead-ends and from absolutizing merely political options or opinions. It also explains the quid pro quo of the present political situation, not to mention of our world's political strategies, often due to a lack of the metapolitical roots within purely political activity. Guerrilla, maquis, and often the so-called terrorism are movements that can be understood at the level of the metapolitical. One could quote many different examples of this from various continents: the problems of Kurdistan as well as those of Khalistan, of Northern Ireland, of Honduras, of Eritrea and of Israel, among many others.

20. MICHEL DE L'HOSPITAL 1561, ed. Pierre Joseph Spiridon, 1968, vol. 1. p. 449.

One could equally speak of the various archetypes of political issues. While for an army of mercenaries, professional or not, it is a question of winning a battle, for a people which is defending its freedom or its identity, it is a matter of defending what is the most sacred in reality. For example, a Latin American "communauté de base" or Kurdish, Sikh, Afghan, Palestinian groups of resistance, can find meaning to life in their political commitment, because they are sustained by the metapolitical. In their commitment to political struggle, they are defending the whole meaning of their life while the military, police or bureaucratic forces are there to protect and maintain the political status quo. This is why the forces of repression or of conquest must be "motivated" by the story of atrocities (real, imagined or provoked) committed by the enemy. The metapolitical is at the same time in the sacred and in the secular. Let us still draw a few more traits of the general problematic.

### Sacred secularity

The progressive secularization of culture results in the separation, on two distinct levels, of the political and the religious. We must recover the indissociable role of each in what I call sacred secularity.

A distinction must be made between the historical process of secularization (as 19th century Europe has experienced it), and the ideology of secularism, which denies all transcendence, and the experience of secularity which upholds that the spatio-temporal structures of material reality (sæculum) are not illusory or non definitive.

By defending a sacred secularity, we are not envisaging a sacralization of politics in a kind of cæsaro-papism or theocracy. The sacralization of the state is one of the great sacrileges that we have committed in the political order. But for fear of falling into the extreme of the heteronomy of theocracies, tyrannies and dictatorships, one must not become victim to the scattered autonomy of sovereign states or to the individualism of atomised institutions. Sacred secularity reveals to us the ontonomy of reality within a nondualistic vision of things.

Within the political order there is something more than what we call politics; politics itself is a metapolitical matter. We must try to abolish the separation made by certain cultures without falling into indistinctness, and acknowledge that human happiness, which also belongs to the social order, has other independent variables. Some say: the political includes the social order and the human order; one must, by all means, establish on earth the Kingdom of Justice, even if one must eliminate the adversaries in the process. Others are saying: the political is secondary in the end: true human life takes place on another level. What is important is intimistic immanence (which can take more or less sarcastic forms of abstentionism) either ultra-terrestrial or supernatural transcendence (which can take the form of indifferentism with regard to the human condition).

Both positions seem to me to be false. It is here that I situate the non-dualistic vision of reality. It is the secular itself, the political, which is sacred. What is sacred is certainly opposed to the profane, but not to the secu-

lar, to things of the "*sæculum*." In short, from the moment that political activity belongs to the very nature of Man and that the human being cannot fully realize himself without realizing his political dimension, Man's salvation, hence religion, cannot be disinterested in what is political. It is secularity itself which is sacred.[21]

All that is good and well, but how is it to be realized?

### *Theoria* and praxis

There is a double trap to be avoided, which I simplify by naming it the Marxist trap and the liberal trap. The Marxist view will say:

> "Let us transform the structures, overturn the System, have the revolution, and the rest will follow. Praxis comes first; as long as one doesn't act, one remains an execrable bourgeois."

This is exact up to a certain point. Without rebellions, protests and revolutions, we would still be suffering from brutal excesses of all kinds. It is thanks to revolutions that the world is liberated from terrible injustices. But a mere change of structures cannot take place at the same pace as that of the fundamental conceptions of reality and, unless the latter happen, change remains pretty superficial.

The liberal trap consists of believing that by changing ideas, everything else is changed and that one can have the right ideas independently of the situation in which one finds oneself. The preacher will tell the layman: "Have an enlightened awareness, change your way of thinking, let us transform the ideas." This is also exact to a certain point. Without a new awareness, no change takes place; but if one does not dare do anything else, the change of ideas does nothing but change ideas and everything remains the same. One recalls Matthew (XXIII, 3): "for they say but don't do." The same idea is found in the *Dhammapada* (IV, 8): "sterile is the discourse of the one who doesn't put it into practise."

If the heart of the problem is not reach by a mere change of structures, and if the change of ideas, on the other hand, is not enough and does not bring any transformation, where do we find ourselves? Here, we have a relationship which is not strictly dialectical; ideas can be changed only as far as the practice is changed and vice-versa. One cannot separate theory and praxis. In that relationship both are implicated in each other and will change only to the extent to which I will have changed my way of being, my experience and everything that has to do with action; and vice-versa, my order of action will not change as long as my ideas have not truly changed. This is not a vicious circle but a vital circle. Every theory arises from a praxis and every praxis depends on a theory. To speak of one without the other is a mere abstraction (from the real). We are again dealing with a non-dualistic relationship.

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21. I have done another study, parallel to this one, namely *Sacred Secularity*, which dispenses me here from further elaboration.

I shall close, by drawing attention to some of the outstanding political facts of our epoch.

### *The priority of the Nation over the state*

Every true nation is more or less aware of its metapolitical dimension. It is this dimension which makes the nation something more than an association in view of a particular purpose. This is why the nation, like the person, is not a means to achieve some goal, whatever that goal may be. I have already given an example in the anthropological order: my happiness is linked to others' happiness: the order of my house depends also on the order of the house next door: my village, my people need harmonious and peaceful relations with the world, with nature, with those who live on the other side of the river or of the border. And yet, I can be happy without, on the one hand, egoistically withdrawing into myself nor, on the other hand, drowning into the ocean of humanity or of the cosmos. In the extent to which I am happy, I help others to become happy. Therefore, there is a transcendental relationship between me (my happiness) and the whole (universal salvation).

In the historical order, nations have always been distinct concretizations of the universal ideal of the *humanum*. The nation-state (if we look at the history of the West) has sprung up within an empire, a commonwealth, a Christendom, namely, a human project much wider than a nation. A universal empire would have *potestas suprema*, sovereignty. The nation is essentially relationship. It has a *sui generis* relationship with the earth, the heavens, and with other nations. It is an awareness of the metapolitical which allows us to discover that we are a nation, precisely because the nation relativizes the horizontal and vertical dimensions of our existence. As I have already said, the metapolitical is the point of intersection of the other within me, whereby I become aware that the blossoming of my nation, the achievement of its fullness, is a result of the well-being, the peace and harmony of other nations, and also, at the same time, a result of a more intimate and personal realization in (or through) a "mystery" which transcends us.

The metapolitical reveals itself in the awareness that the political is not self-sufficient, nor even sufficient to solve the political problems it puts to man. For example, ecology today (however minimal it may be) is beginning to give nations a vision that transcends them. One feels responsible for a wider and also deeper whole. The ecosophical awareness not only sensitizes us to the exhaustion of energy resources: it also makes us feel that to live in harmony with flowers, the forest and animals belongs to the beauty and fulfilment of human life, as such.

The metapolitical opens us up to a spiritual dimension. For example, we were speaking about the awareness of the nation as being part of human identity and as going beyond the needs of money and of so many artificial things. When peoples are restless or move it is certainly not always for material advantages. Think of the linguistic riots in India, or of the pilgrimages throughout the world and of guerrilla action in almost all continents! There is an ideal, something deep and sincere which justifies my losing my health

and my fortune and many other things, without knowing if this will give me prestige or anything positive from a pragmatic viewpoint. Within political activity there is something which touches upon the human as human. Englishmen followed Gandhi, Whites followed Martin Luther King!

If one has followed me till now, one will recognize, contrary to the present, a fundamental difference and a functional resemblance between what has been called the state since the 16th century, and what was the Greek *polis*.

The functional resemblance consists of a certain claim which wishes to embrace the whole man. In the *polis* as in the state, man fulfils his social function which is part of human nature. Both tend to embrace the whole not only of politics, but of everything that concerns man and which brings him to complete fulfilment. The *polis* as well as the state, are institutions in the strong sense of the word, and not only associations or groupings. The difference here between associations and institutions is that associations are voluntary while institutions are so rooted in human nature that they are supra-individual, i.e. above individual wills. They are a factor of human cohesion, leaving to their members the independence of their individual will—the *theory* of social contract being contradictory and inoperative (one requires a contract for an understanding that establishes a social contract...)

The fundamental difference is triple. The first difference consists in the fact that the *polis* is open to the transcendent, it has its Gods and oracles, its spaces of freedom—it is the social function of transcendence. One could give one formula which comes from urbanism: the temple, or rather temples are part of the Greek city; it means that its Gods are also its citizens. God here is not what is wholly transcendent. Its divinity resides in its presence.[22] The Gods are present in the city. The oracle is not mere superstition. Now, all this is unthinkable in the contemporary state, and the monotheistic theocracies that would like to impose one worship to an heterogenous population, would be an aberration. The contemporary state finds itself ill-at-ease with regard to the sacred even as it tolerates traditional cults.[23] The sacred is not easily integrated in a modern society—even a simple prayer before a "quick lunch" becomes pretty superficial and superfluous.

The second difference resides in the fact that the *polis* is an institution according to a human scale, while the state can more easily operate on a wider scale. A phrase attributed to Pericles affirms that democracy is possible only where the στρατεγόσ [*strategos*] knows by heart the name of all the citizens. The state has a different status. Personal relationships, in its case, while indirect, are not necessary. One knows the law, attributed to Marx, while inspired by Hegel, according to which an increase in the order

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22. See OTTO W.F. *Les dieux de la Grèce*, Paris (Payot) 1984.

23. I remember the state of confusion created in New Delhi (for economic and bureaucratic life) and the irritation of responsible employees (Muslims, by the way) before the end of the Ramadan feast was declared. For it is the responsibility of the people, through the intermediary of its *imam* to see the new moon (signalling the end of the fast) and not to the city's meteorological observatory. If the date of *Id ul Fitr* were announced according to the latter, it would oblige Muslims of other States, for example of Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, to follow the "laws" of the Delhi moon.

of quantity produces a qualitative change. The state is more than an agglomeration of persons in an urban center: it is rather a network of "objective" relations, controlled by some power, in order to solve possible interior conflicts, to protect the life of its members and to try to maintain a certain standard of living. One often hears that a state without power would be a contradiction in terms.

The third difference focuses on institutions. The *polis* comprises a whole set of ontonomic institutions which are not necessarily centralized. Here we are thinking of clans, families and castes. The *polis* is a human organism. Each member has its *ontonomy*. The state must necessarily be centralised, it must be able, if not to exercise a strict control, at least to be informed about all events. It is the state which redistributes the products of the tribes—it enjoys a supreme *potestas*. The *polis* is a people which organises itself, the state is an institutionalized people. The *polis* is constituted by a whole set of institutions whose cohesion is assured by a fact which is felt as natural. It subsists thanks to a *myth*. The state is an institution of institutions whose cohesion is assured through an organization. It subsists thanks to *power*.

One could say that power is the superstructure of the state, while authority is the infrastructure of the nation. Now, it seems to us that a path of action as well as of research would be to reestablish the separation between nation and state. If one were to develop national identity and the authority of the nation without the help of state power one could come to separate the nation from the state and one would be on the right path to be able to move peacefully out of the present situation. For the nation functions like a person, as we said, and as such it possesses a cultural identity which makes possible the blossoming of its inhabitants: it does not snuff out the metapolitical. The modern state, on the contrary, is an individual in concert with the so-called independent states and as such it must follow the rules of the game, by not allowing any other free space but that of the individual in the private sphere.

Let us take the example of Catalunya, a nation within the Spanish State. It enjoys a certain cultural and linguistic identity and traditions of its own; its present autonomy allows it to have a legal personality, even at the international level, without the inconveniences of a state. It is not a threat to its neighbours and it has possibilities that nation-states do not possess. Political prudence would consist of persuading the Spanish State that Catalunya has no intention of constituting another state—its desire being to possess all the measure of autonomy possible within the Spanish State—and that a mutual understanding would be very profitable to both countries.

One could also cite Quebec and so many other more tragic cases like those of Palestine, Kashmir and Kurdistan. The recent events in former Tchecoslovakia, former Yugoslavia, historical examples in Europe, and the dismemberment of the Soviet Empire, bring us anew and in an urgent way, face to face with a triple necessity: to separate the nation from the state, to rethink the composition of multinational states, and to move beyond the concept of state as the basis for the political existence of mankind. We must recognize that there are national consciences which do not belong to state. Civil wars, which nowadays are tearing apart many country-states, originate from the claim of nations to independence. These events make us witness to

the inertia of both history and human reason; for would it not be opportune for states to come to reciprocal agreements between themselves and to find a formula of political conviviality?

This could go very far. One is beginning to admit that there can be nations without armies; nations that renounce having all of the powers for their self-defence because they have discovered that today military defence is an anachronism; peoples that do not hold all the strings of the state's purse because all of its expenses do not depend on its treasury. National consciousness is a notion which depends neither on the economy nor exclusively on the military. And one should never underline too much the importance of language. Every nation needs an authority, but it does not require all the "powers." Let one diversify nations as ethnic groups and one return to tribes.

I am not proposing any concrete political plan. I can only affirm that the above paragraphs have been written, in their substance, ten years before the fall of the Soviet Union. It is evident that the situation in the Ukraine is not the same as that of Palestine or Kashmir. I wish to underline that we need fundamental transformations in the political scheme and that only a deep reflection rooted in the metapolitical can bring us to a peace which will not be the victory of the strongest nor the heart-breaking expectation of vengeance for the vanquished.

We have other striking and I would say bloody examples of this extrapolation: applying the idea of old Europe to the Nation-States of Africa and Asia. They have been given (or imposed) a model that is without local roots. A major part of the many, complex and insoluble problems of the Republic of India, for example, is its pretension to want to be a nation-state, or rather a multi-national state.

Moreover, we have the direct formation of the states of America which, previously, were not nations. Except for some exceptions, most of the states of that continent have developed different national consciousnesses: a Venezualian is not a Chilean, nor a Quebecois a Manitoban. The United-States, whose name is already revealing, cannot yet be considered as individual nations, but already California and New England, for example, are beginning to develop their own national consciousness.

One should demand that nations have the right to their identity without having to become states, and gradually convince the states that the evolution is positive. This is not impossible. Mankind's situation and ecological problems are preparing us to be able to admit the realistic possibility of radical changes in the very conception of the *res publica.* One can only notice the enormous quantity of problems faced by the present world. The metapolitical here draws our attention to the methodological error of those big reunions which are called international, which in fact are conferences between states. During these official conferences on trade, industry, customs and even education and others, the contestants cannot question the *status quo* nor the rules of the game. They are in the System. But the fundamental problem cannot even be mentioned. If anyone were to politically criticize the dominant ideology, it would appear, at the least, that the tone of the criticism had a moralizing or "philosophical" character. One will counsel you to write a book, but not to make a political discourse. The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) find themselves in similar circum-

stances since they must dialogue with government agencies. I allow myself to insist: the metapolitical is not a moral or metaphysical discourse but a political discourse rooted in the very nature of Man who is a metaphysical, moral and political animal.

### The Confederation of peoples (peoplehoods)

I would like to mention the Greek idea of συμπολίτευμα [*sympoliteuma*], that one could maybe translate by humane civilization, or simply by what the Italian language still calls *civilità* (opposed to barbarism, inhumanity, lack of civic sense (in French: "*civisme*"). It is not merely a matter of being good-mannered, of civility and courtesy. One could perhaps translate the word as "humanness." Another word, "*urbanità*," expresses the link between the "*cité*," which has become *urbs* (the city) and human values. It is not a matter of being a world citizen. That would not be natural. One is a citizen of a "*cité*," but this "*cité*' is part of the world. The Greek συμπολιτεία [*sympoliteia*] was a confederation of "*cités*," a kind of federal union since all citizens enjoyed the same civic rights. Πολίτευμα [*politeuma*] (mentioned only once in the New Testament in a text I have alluded to (Phil. III, 201), refers to the true home (*patrie*) of the Christians: the heavens. Whether one speaks of heaven or earth, the meaning is the same. An ancient text speaks of ancestors as being πολιτεύεται μετά τῶν θεῶν [*politeuetai meta tôn theôn*], co-citizens of the Gods. Or again, it is the angels who lead the just to a divine cocitizenship: πρὸς τὴν θείαν πολιτείαν [*pros ten theian politeian*].[24] This right to the "*cité*" represents the fullness of life.

The word κοσμοπολίτησ [*kosmopolites*], cosmopolitan, is typical. Philo speaks of Adam as the unique cosmopolite since for him, only κοσμοσ was οἰκος καὶ πόλις [*oikos kai polis*] "home and city." Let us recall that the Greek distinction between private and public was represented by the home and the "*cité*," as we have already seen. Philo speaks of κόσμοσ νοητόσ [*kosmos noetos*], the intelligible world, as being the true μετρόπολισ [*metropolis*], the metropolis of the sage.

My suggestion here is an invitation to study ancient wisdom in order to envisage a new form of human conviviality. The *sympoliteuma* would not consist of united states where all must have unanimous agreement because of their mutual dependence, but in a confederation of nations in which the national identity of each would not have to conform to a unique model, but rather could blossom according to its own genius.

This confederation of peoplehoods or of nations includes the bio-region in the sense which has already been explained. It is a confederation. i.e. a *fœdus*, a pact, an oath. The word is akin to *fides*, faith, confidence. The confederation rests on mutual confidence. It is an alliance in the sense of testament and not according to the original sense of syncretism, or Cretans' pact, in view of self-defence against strangers.

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24. Cf. BAUER, *sub hac voce,* 1952.

One speaks, with emphasis, about the human family, and often, one interprets it as political monomorphism. Human civilisation is a matter of the metapolitical and not of universal political order. The consequences of such a realization leads us to a whole new life-style, which should bring us, among other things, to question the present functioning of the United Nations.

One can certainly draw much benefit from the United Nations. They represent a real gain for mankind today. There are many latent possibilities yet to be developed. But let us not forget! The United Nations is the heir of the Society of Nations. Both organizations were born after respective victories. Victory never leads to peace, but to victory. There is therefore, at its origin, a tendency towards unilateralism. Those absent are not only the vanquished. The absentees are rather those who have not participated in the project, namely the nations and peoples who do not speak the European language. The U.N. project is monocultural since it has only one conception of politics.

Furthermore, the U.N.'s point of departure is sovereignty, independence; there are no transnational criteria to judge the actions of a nation within its territory. There is no possibility of recognizing what would be trans-national and even less, super-national. One must only accept the democratic myth expressed in the U.N. Charter—so beautifully, by the way. Each state is an individual and hence each individual is equal to others. It is a quantitative vision of existence. But, each nation, as I have already said, is different in quality from each one of the others.

I wish still to underline that the notion of nation, different from that of state is fundamentally a qualitative one. It is this quality which makes a nation. Each nation is unique and hence non quantifiable. To underline this major aspect is equivalent to bringing out the "modern" character of the U.N.'s very conception—which does not mean that it is a false conception or much less a noxious one, but simply that it rests on a unilateral and mono-cultural vision.

At the base of the U.N. there is, certainly, a desire for unity, for mutual understanding. United Nations: but united by which link? Which is the unity factor? Only a common interest? But common interest cannot be the link that unites because the interests of these Nations are not common. There can be a mutual interest in not destroying each other, but the interest of France, for example, would be that the island of Corsica stop "dreaming" of its own interests. There is certainly a potency in the U.N.; a link which still keeps them united, and which is, in a certain way, supra-national. The U.N. is part of the monocultural situation I have referred to. It could, if one would try to interpret its "*raison d'être*," contribute to a new and timidly emerging consciousness in the present world: going beyond both the state and absolute sovereignty.

I would like to make a few suggestions with regard to the United Nations, starting with the transfer of its seat. I am proposing a place and I think that there could be a certain theoretical consensus with regard to such a choice: Malta. On the island of Malta, four languages are spoken: Maltese, Arabic, Italian, English. It is a small island, whose tradition is more than five thousand years old, whose situation is sufficiently central. It is not New Caledonia. The island is at the center of the old world; all Arab countries recognize it as their own, and all European countries would be satisfied with this choice, it is not far from Russia, and offers other advantages. This is an example of a possible collaboration with the present order, all the while transforming it. One should not be Puritan.

Secondly, I would like that the United Nations do justice to their name and that it may transform itself from being an organization of states to an organization of nations-peoplehoods. But we should further deepen the intercultural notion of nation-peoplehood. We have seen that the state is a totalitarian organization—and hence wants to be sovereign, while the nation is an organism which emerges from the people, while not reducible to the latter.

The proposals I am putting forward should be pursued and deepened, but could not one start by thinking of the blossoming of nations that enjoy full national authority and by foregoing the power of states? The great obstacle in the way, and I cannot insist too much on this, is the hold that technocracy has over men of the present generations; technocracy is neither neutral nor universal, but essentially linked to one culture only—hence my critique of technocentrism.[25]

### The integration of the person

Having cited as examples the states and Nations, we should not forget to mention, at least, the final subject of the metapolitical: the human person. I am talking, of course, of that knot of constitutive relations which forms the person, and not of the individual.

The metapolitical gives meaning to a person's life. But human life cannot be satisfied uniquely with social or political activity; nor with the expectation of another life in order to reach its fullness. Man, as we said, is a political animal. The political is a necessity for his realization, but the political is only one aspect of the human being.

The major difficulty here is not of a theological nature, not even of an issue of the great beyond, but of an anthropological and notably historical nature. Man is an historical animal and history is not very benevolent towards its victims. How can the human person realize itself in history? I would like, finally, to take the side of the vanquished and be the voice of the disinherited.

Man is an historical animal, but not only historical: he is more than that. One cannot have a mere historical, hence political, consciousness of existence without falling into despair or evading oneself through the path of cynicism or of superficiality. It is here that I see one of the reasons for the crisis of the first world. In order to escape despair, due to the feeling of im-

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25. Cf. PANIKKAR "El tecnocentrisme." *Algunes tesis sobre tecnologia. Questions de vida cristiana* (Montserrat) 139, 1987, 139, pp. 84–99.

potency in having a world that is more just, one falls, due to lack of a deeper faith in political indifference or banality. But for most people, the usual temptation is despair. For more than half of mankind, exclusively temporal life has no meaning, or rather, it is an absurdity or a scandal. Suffice it to have lived, not only in Asia, Africa and later America, but also in the ghettos of the rich West, to notice it. The one who sees no exit from his personal situation has been sustained for a while by hope of some future, if not for him, then at least for his children or grand children. Today this expectation has proven vain and alienating. Godot will not come!

In such situations, the expectation of a better future, not even in an eschatology for later on, hence an historical one, does not save Man who lives his uniqueness as a failure; failure being his only dignity. One must pierce the crust of history and of temporality. Man cannot live without hope, but hope is not about the future but about the invisible, about what within time, transcends it without negating it. It is the experience of *tempiternity*, the experience that a year of life, a meeting, a child, a love, a flower or a kiss is worth more than the rest of existence. One discovers, one senses within daily reality an interior dimension, something which transforms it. This is where the metapolitical inserts itself: at the cross-roads between the historical and the trans-historical; between the individual and the personal; between the order of the city and the dimension of intimacy; between what the ancients called the *polis* and the *oikos*, the public and the private.

Whether it be a mother of a child who has died of famine, the disabled from crazy wars, the refugees from everywhere (tens of millions of them), the oppressed and exploited (hundreds of millions), humankind which seeks, through tenacity or inertia, simply to survive a few more years or months, the issue of the metapolitical will not pretend to make them believe in a better world (that their children will not see), nor in another world (where the same injustices could be perpetrated). In their sorrow and despair, these people discover the fleeting moments of a pleasure, of a love or of the thirst quenched by the glass of water of a compassionate hand. This is where a ray of light slips through and makes them glow with unspeakable joy and gives them a sovereign freedom. The light of those brilliant eyes is invisible and incomprehensible to those who always expect something more because they have not touched the depths of their life. And this makes us think still that the ancient beatitude which dared say blessed are the poor, still has a deep meaning, hidden to those who are rich—even in linear time. For that multitude of the poor and disinherited, everything collapses, and yet, there is still a smile, a mysterious hope, the joy of having lived some fleeting moments, even if afterwards everything dies out.

The metapolitical opens one up to this deeply human dimension. It is the human locus where the political project gets its soul, a soul which is immanent to the political while being also transcendent to it. True immanence is always where transcendence is experienced. The metapolitical does not run away towards pure transcendence. It must not be interpreted as one has too often interpreted religion: as the means to attain another world. The metapolitical does not deny transcendence but awakens our consciousness by making us see that to be fully human we must not drown in political activity nor escape to some beyond. It is by protesting, rebelling, transform-

ing, failing, and even dying to better our situation and that of our fellow men, the oppressed of the earth, that we shall reach this fullness.

How can we continue to express it? The metapolitical is the space of freedom in the present determinism of politics governed by the laws of necessity, although these may come from probabilism, like those of physics. The metapolitical pierces through appearances and finds the rare "pearl" hidden in the concrete political situation where one finds oneself. Almost half of the Latin American people live in the most abject poverty and the future promises to be even worse... what can one tell them? What can one hope, what can one do for them? What is the situation of the "damned of the earth"? We may have a solution to offer their grand-children. But to them, whose lives are unique, what do we have to offer them? To them, of which we say so easily that human dignity is inviolable in itself and not a means to end up in another life or as a transit for other lives. What is therefore their fate? What do we have to propose to them on the political level, that of their concrete, historical and fleeting life; what is our response to their suffering, more than to their questions, since they do not even have the capacity to formulate them? What can we, what must we say to them?

This is hell! What must, or better even, *can* these people hope for? With our utopias, systems, propositions, we shall not arrive on time to save all aspects of their human life. Are we to propose revolution to them when we know that they will be its first victims, or that they will not have the strength to be able to make it? The opium of a (religious) resignation which will paralyze them even more? Are we only going to show interest in survivors? Do we want to take only the victors into consideration? Will we not end up thus in human engineering, which would make Hitler's dreams look like child's play? To those that the System annihilates—and they are millions each year—would it not be preferable to say that they are condemned to being consoled by words, plans, ideas, programs for... nothing? For the future? To speak here of the future is an obscenity. What can the future be for them? For them, and not for us! Maybe they can hope, but not expect.

They no longer have faith in those who preached resignation and patience. They have discovered that these preachers "do not practise what they preach" as it is said in the Gospel (Matth. XXIII, 3). They have lost faith in political movements and hope nothing from them. Their disappointment is great... In brief, neither the other world nor the future offer them a ray of hope. Their only treasure is the present, the "miserable" life which is their own. Destitute as they are, they can realize the meaning of their lives, no matter how painful, deprived and shattered their lives are. If the Kurinji flower in the mountains of Tamil Nadu, which blooms only once every twelve years has meaning for the totality of the cosmos, even if the cosmos seems to be indifferent to it, the uniqueness of a human consciousness also has meaning, even under the weight of tragedy. And it is into this life that the metapolitical dimension inserts itself in order to help to discover the fleeting, poor, but joyous, mysterious and replete with hope, meaning of naked existence.

This discovery liberates one in order to engate in political action without the fear of being fooled by either failure or success as the *Gîtâ* says [cf. III,

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4; 19; IV; etc.] Man's salvation is done within history, but it is not histori-cal.

The experience of the metapolitical allows us to touch the depths of the human being without however being alienated from reality. If we did not fear the weight of words we would say that the metapolitical is the territory of mysticism, since often, mysticism flourishes in times of crisis. Nevertheless, it is true that the deepest mystical contemplation does not ig- nore the metapolitical (except maybe in exceptional cases where it is reached by way of eminence). Mystical life does not mean flight from the world but an integration of what is created, with the risk of transforming it.

## Epilogue...

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