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**Part I. An Introduction to Native Philosophy of Peace**

**Part II. Speaking Towards Peace: A Native American Way**

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**Abstract:**

From the time of the invasion by the European Civilization in the 15th century, the history of Native Americans has been a history of violence. The Natives have had to endure and subsist under the genocidal policy of colonial powers that overwhelmed them. And the struggle still continues. Yet, the Natives had a profound Philosophy of Peace and have lived and survived with it. We have a great deal to learn from the Philosophy of the Natives. It also gives us an opportunity to examine "violent" elements in our "Civilization" itself, as well as a way out of it. Since the Native Philosophy of Peace is not the academic kind that can be summarized in a set of propositions, but rather is a way of life, we shall not attempt to "describe" it. Here, we shall endeavour to introduce the Philosophy in two ways. In Part I we make a descriptive introduction. In Part II, we narrate the Philosophy in the Native Oral Tradition, aiming at communication at a spiritual level.

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## An Introduction To The Native Philosophy of Peace

1. Since the invasion by Europeans in the 15th century, the history of Native America is a history of violence. Therefore, it may appear almost a contradiction to seek the message of Peace from the Natives. But, because of experiences of violence and facing their own extinction, Natives created urgent messages for Peace and have lived with them and survived by them in desperate situations. We have much to learn from their wisdom that is embedded in their way of life.

The violence which the Natives experienced was not the kind which we consider in the context of the "push botton" Warfares that our science-technology has made possible nor the Nuclear Arms Race between two Super Powers that the huge bureaucratization of violence has lead us to. And if our concern for Peace is limited to the question of how to prevent Nuclear War from impending upon us, the Spiritual form of the Native message for Peace might appear only remotely relevant to us. However, the very difficulties which we have in reducing the scale of the Arms Race indicates that we have a need to examine if our way of life for itself is a part of the problem. And, in that we may find and gain great wisdom for Peace from the Natives who have faced and survived the destructive forces of modern civilization.

To understand and to learn from the Natives, however, it is absolutely necessary that we look back to the history of violence. This is an exercise in dialectics. We shall learn Peace by learning about our own violence.

### References:

[Vine Deloria, God Is Red, Laurel Book, 1973.

Francis Jennings, The Invasion of America, Univ. of N. Carolina Press, 1975.

Gary B. Nash, Red, White and Black, Prentice-Hall, 1974.

Merrill D. Beal, I will Fight No More Forever, Univ. of Washington Press, 1963.

Dee Brown, Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee, Holt-Rinehart, 1970.]

2. The way Indians were treated in the North American continent was worse than the Apartheid of South Africa today. Outright massacres were carried on even after the Civil War which supposedly liberated Black slaves for humanitarian reasons. One might

imagine that for economic growth, the liberated Blacks were useful, whereas "the only good Indians were dead Indians." And since Natives resisted "Christianity", the Christian compassion was not applicable to them. They were considered a part of the Wild Nature to be conquered by the Civilization.

The colonialization started with violence. The Spanish came with greed and atrocity in the name of Christian mission to the New World. That part of history is well known, so I shall not talk about that here.

[See Bartolome de las Casa: Brevisima Relacion De La Destruccion De Las Indias, 1552, for the earliest account. In Motaigue's Essay (1580), the third book, chapter 6, there is a brief remark about the Spanish atrocity.]

The British flowed soon after, with no less violence. According to the few records that are left, British settlers came to the Virginia coast area and found the natives there to be friendly. One report said:

"We were entertained with all love and kindness, and with much bounties, after their manner, as they could possibly devise. We found the people most gentle, loving, and faithful, void of all guile, and treason."

[David Quinn, The Voyagers, 1584-1590; quoted by Gary B. Nash Red, White, and Black.]

But the Britons did not come there simply to live with friendly natives. The competition among empires in Europe to establish and expand colonies had already started. Naturally, soon the initial friendly relation deteriorated and "incidents" were created for "Show of Force", which became a universal pattern in most colonialization processes elsewhere. I cite only two examples here.

"No conflict occurred until the English discovered a silver cup missing and dispatched a punitive expedition to the nearby Indian village. When Indians denied taking the cup, the English decided to make a show of force, burned the village to the ground and destroyed the Indian's supply of corn."

[Edmond S. Morgan, "Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox", Journal of American History. Vol. 59, 1972, p. 16.]

"Many were burnt in the fort, both men, women and children. Others forced out...which our soliders received and entertained with the sword. Down fell men, women, and children...Sometimes the Scripture declareth women and children must perish with their parents. Sometimes the case alters; but we will not dispute it now. We had sufficient light from the word of God for our proceedings."

[John Underhill, News From America, (1638), London. Quoted by Richard Slotkin, Regeneration Through Violence. Wesleyan Univ.

Press, 1973.]

One notes here that burning villages and destroying crops were already practiced tactics when the British invaded Ireland centuries before that time. Both the Red Army and White Army in the Russian Revolution practiced the same. Hitler used it in W.W. II. Americans did that in Vietnam.

[As to the "metaphor" of Indian War repeated in Vietnam, see Richard Slotkin: The Fatal Environment -- The Myth of Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800 - 1890. Atheneum, 1985.]

The idea of "show of force", or equivalent phrases such as "show who is the boss" appears quite often in the records that were left from the period of colonial time. The British were there with the intent of conquering and domination from the beginning. They needed only slight provocations, if they did not create the excuses. Many stories of Native attacks may well have been fibs constructed, like "the Bay of Tonkin incident" in the Vietnam War.

To be sure, there was romanticizing of Natives as "Noble Savages." We can read it in poetries of Walt Whitman, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, et al.

(see White On Red, ed. N.B. Black. Kennikat Press, 1976.)]

Or see it in paintings by Benjamin West and others. But the romanticizing was in effect a beautifying cover for the colonial conquest. It did not stop physical and cultural genocide. Quite aware of such a sentiment, John Quincy Adams wrote in 1802:

"The Indian right of possession itself stands, with regard to the greatest part of the country, upon a questionable foundation. Their cultivated fields; their constructed habitations; a space of ample sufficiency for their subsistence, and whatever they had annexed to themselves by personal labour, was undoubtedly by the law of nature theirs. But what is the right of a huntsman to the forest of a thousand miles over which he accidentally ranges in quest of prey? Shall the liberal bounties of Providence to the race of man be monopolized by one of ten thousand for whom they were created? Shall the exuberant bosom of the common mother, amply adequate for the nourishment of millions, be claimed exclusively by a few hundreds of her offspring."

[Quoted in I Will Fight No More Forever, p. 24.]

The answer to Adam's rhetorical question was obvious, as we can see in history. The Natives were driven off the land, if not exterminated. They were confined in concentration camps, called "Indian Reserves." And as the "Progress of Civilization" wanted more and more land, the Natives were forcefully moved again and again to smaller and smaller confinements each time. The metaphor of the "Mother Earth" was Native, not White, nor was it Christian, as we see in the environmental destructions that went on under what was called the "Manifest Destiny." The rhetoric asked for sharing the gifts of Mother Nature,

but the invader came to dominate and rape the Mother. Environmental concern did not emerge until the late 1960's, and collectively speaking, our actions with regard to Acid Rain, Nuclear Wastes, Deforestation, etc., regreably suggest that we have not yet stopped rationalizing our rapist practices.

[see "Metaphysics of Indian Hater" in Herman Melville's, Confidence of Man. 1857. As to his Moby-Dick, critics pointed out that Melville was writing, in the metaphor of Whale Hunt, on the whole American assault on Nature in the name of Progress.]

We note here that as late as October of the last year, The United Church of Canada has come to Apologize to the Natives for its "policy of cultural genocide". In an article "Of course we forgive you," [The Observer, Oct. 1986], Rev. Wilf Dieter narrates:

"I grew up in residential schools...The second year, I remember going back to school. I was crying. My mother was wiping away the tears. Why were my parents sending me away. I guess one of the things I didn't realize was the law. If she didn't take me back, the police would come for me."

This was taking place only a few decades ago in Canada which we think the most peaceful country in the world. What if some agents of a foreign country come in and pass a law to separate Canadian children from parents? Does the white majority consider it less than atrocity? Of course, we as the majority "did not know" that we have been practicing the cultural genocide policy, just as the majority of Germans did not know of the infamous concentration camp during W.W. II. The point is that we did not care to know about them. While reading philosophy of Kant or Russell in books, we did not "read" our real philosophy that we practiced and lived in.

3. Today, we may be sufficiently "liberal minded" to say that the colonial practices of the historical past were "mistakes." But read the rhetorical question of Adams again and see if we have changed our way of thinking. The Capitalists, the bourgeoisie, and the liberal thinkers would say that, "in the inevitable power struggles which bring the progress of the production power", the "backward" way of the Native life had to be eradicated, although we might try to employ as "humane" means as possible. And socialists and Marxists would agree. The modern intellectuals, left, middle or right, are believers of "progress" in which some unfortunate "backward" portions of humanity will become extinct like Dodo birds.

[see also Ward Churchill, ed. Marxism and Native Americans. South End Press, 1983.]

Christians today would say that the atrocities condoned by the missionaries in the colonial conquest did not represent "True Christianity", which is presumably based on Love. But, one wonders if the Christians clearly distinguish the religion of Love and the religion of Power, and honestly live by the principle of Love, as the Natives have lived by their Spirituality. It appears that the Christians believe more in the Might of Nuclear

Weapons and Laser Guns than Love. It is ironical that the presumed anti-christians in the Soviet Union do the same. They both are believers of the same Power.

[However, we pay attention to Liberation Theology.

Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation. Orbis Books, 1973.

Bishop Remi De Roo, Cries Of Victims - Voice of God. Novals, 1986, etc.

As to the links between Christianity and European Civilization, see:

Max Weber, Protestant Ethics and The Spirit of Capitalism.

Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis", American Scientists. March 1967.

Lawrence R. Brown, The Might Of The West. Joseph J. Binns Pub., 1963.]

Here I am not talking of the hypocritic morality, but doing purely pragmatic thinking about the consequences and the cost of the European World View. The "Intelligence" of the European tradition is centred around "Power" to dominate people. Our "science" stemmed from the desire to conquer and exploit Nature. Academic and theological knowledge claims are claims of authority and control of thinking. Our official languages are basically the languages of commanding others.

Of course, we know that our competition for power, authority in terms of knowledge claims, etc., is illusionary and for the most part of little significance. Nonetheless, we do use the stylism as a "proper ritual" in academic settings, if we wish to be taken seriously. And, perhaps, the effects/consequences of such a ritual may only be indirect in encouraging the notion of the Conquest of the Wild Nature with Barbaric primitives in it. Our higher Education, which produces elite classes of our society, may or may not be directly responsible for Pollution and Environmental Destruction. If someone argues that the Pollution and Destruction are necessary requirements for the existence of the Elitist System, there would be many objections from the Intellectual elites. They would demand "scientific" proof demonstrating causal mechanisms for the connection. But, in a non-causalistic sense, we are all implicated in the violent history. And if the Nuclear extinction falls upon us, it is we who made it possible, not by default, but by a determined will, a great organized drive and mobilization of intellectual efforts.

4. After all, we do believe in the hierarchical system of Power. In our ordinary language, "Powerless" does mean degradation. We have not reconciled with Love that is powerless. For the North American psyche, it is winning that tells them that they are on "God's side." Not fighting tantamounts surrender to the Devil. We say "all men are created equal", but we are as "equal" as the degree by which we win the competitions. As long as it is legal, and does not offend one's own "moral feelings", Might is Right. The only thing that protects one's safety is, therefore, military superiority. The modern nation-states followed that logic. If one follows the causal-mechanistic thinking which we consider "rational", there is no other way.

We know SDI would not work, but we do have to keep the illusion of the Superior

Power going even at the cost of Trillions of Dollars. Recently, some among us apparently started to worry that the "peace propaganda", such as The Day After, made us "too soft" and so they produced a counter-propaganda series on T.V. called Amerika to remind people that the Power Principle has to be defended. That is because Power is our religion. If the Power Principle is undermined, the whole social structure of the Western society might collapse.

The only trouble is that the logic of Power has now reached its ultimate in that it can destroy the human race as a whole. That is why some of us are interested in searching for alternatives.

[see also Fritjof Capra, The Turning Point, Bantam Books, 1982.  
Morris Bermann, The Reenchantment of the World, Cornell Univ.  
Press, 1982.]

But there is a problem. If we are to turn around on the way to ultimate power, what would be the alternative? Certainly, going back to the arbitrary dictatorship of the feudal system or the old slave-caste system would not likely secure Peace in any sense. At least, we think, we do have a "civic" sense of peace in the advanced industrial countries. "Democracy", although perhaps imperfect, seems to correlate with the progress of civilization in the European style. We would say that we cannot go back to the Stone Age, in a metaphor of Indians as wild beasts who lived in inhuman indignity. The Noble Savage metaphor does not work here any more than the romantic metaphor of womanhood works for women's dignity. But rather, it enforces our fear of going back to Feudalism or Barbarism which we think dictatorial authoritarian. Hence, we would normally not think of the Native Culture as possible instructive material for learning the way to Peace.

5. Surprisingly, however, the Native Americans were not authoritarian. Their communities were organized on the principle of sharing. The Indians were capable of becoming fierce warriors, but they lived in their communities of Love. They had a strong sense of personal dignity, and honored their liberty, though they were not egocentric Individualists. Nash narrates:

"One aspect of child-rearing on which European and Iroquoian cultures differed was in the attitude toward authority. In Iroquois society the autonomous individual, loyal to the group but independent and aloof rather than submissive, was ideal..

They were trained early in life to think for themselves but act for others...

They were being prepared for an adult society which was not hierarchical, as in the European case, but where individuals lived on a more equalitarian basis, with power more evenly distributed among men and women..."

[Red, White and Black.

See also: Walter B. Miller "Two Concepts of Authority". American Anthropologist. Vol. 57. 1955, p. 271-289.

What Max Weber described in his study of "Authority" may be peculiar to Europe. We also note that, phrases such as "Show who is the boss" appeared frequently in the expressions of British colonialists to justify atrocities committed against the Natives.

In the context of Peace Research, Wm. Eckhardt's study showed that the "aggressive" and "authoritarian" personality are correlated.]

It is also known that the principle ideas of Democracy in the American Constitution were influenced by Iroquoian ideals.

[Carol L. Bagley and Jo Ann Ruckman, "Iroquois Contribution to Modern Democracy and Communism." American Indian Culture and Research Journal, Vol. 7 #2, 1983. p. 53-72.]

6. Iroquois, before their contact with Europeans, had established a "United Nations". The name "Iroquois" stands for a group of five nations established in the 14th century or earlier: the Mohawks, the Onondaga, the Oneidas, the Cayugas, and the Senecas. The philosophy that united these nations was known as "Dekanawideh", and we can decipher that the basic principle of the Native "United Nation" was a philosophy of Peace, not the European tradition of "domination by the strongest."

[Anthony F.C. Wallace, "The Dekanawideh Myth analyzed as the record of a revitalization movement". Ethnohistory, Vol. 5, 1958.

Wm. N. Fenton, Parker On The Iroquois. Book III. Syracuse U. Press, 1968.]

It appears that to the Natives "to know" a philosophy can be nothing short of honestly living by it. Therefore, they left no written "expose" on their philosophy. Nonetheless, we can infer a few glimpses of their philosophy; for example, the Philosophy of "Tree of Peace" has been translated and documented. It is remarkable that the Natives, despite their experiences of violence, had a vision of Peace in which they embraced whitemen within the "Four Roots of the Tree of Peace" that holds the World in love.

The Natives narrated the philosophy of Peace in a form of "prophecy" using a metaphor of a huge tree that protects and provides for all people. Its four roots are said to interconnect and hold the entire World. They did not see any other possible way to have Peace on the Earth, but by love that embraces the whole.

Since Dr. Colorado is to communicate the Peace message in the proper Native way in the following presentation, I shall not elaborate on the Peace Philosophy.

[See also Pamela Colorado, "Inowendiwin. Peace and Honor Going Back and Forth Between Us." Toward Social and Economic Justice, Gil & Gil, Schenkman Publishing Co., 1985.]

I would like to discuss one thing however. In studying the Native Philosophy of Peace, I have come to think that this Philosophy was embedded in a distinct Epistemology from that of the traditional Western culture. I shall try explaining, the best I can, the distinct Epistemology that the Natives had.

7. The Natives had an oral tradition and to them "to know" was "to live in" the philosophy, as I mentioned above. They did not have "philosophy" existing only in texts, as in the European case. As a consequence, there existed no written text for their philosophy. Therefore, from our European custom of scholarship being a "book knowledge", there exists considerable difficulty in researching the Native philosophy. I cannot assert that what I say here is correct. The only thing I can do is to report what I have "guessed" so far in my groping of an hypothesis in hopes of stimulating interest.

We cannot understand "philosophy" here in the sense of technically analyzing written expressions --- as lawyers do in technical arguments about the "letter of the law" ---, but we have to address "the spirit of the law", so to speak. And the philosophy has to be deciphered from practice, and inferred from the way of life in the contexts of concrete situations at hand. The western sense of "objective knowledge" alienated from the knower's own life is absurdity, if not dishonesty to the Natives. That is, Native philosophy was "spiritual" in the sense that it was the inner most thinking of the sovereign soul. And at the same time, the philosophy was "pragmatic" and "existential" in that it did not allow alienation from actual living. It was also akin to the Marxian position, in that "knowing" was "changing the World". They did not learn "philosophy" as a text, but learned it as "awakening to the wisdom", which is an experience of change in the way of life. "Truth" that does not change one's way of life is not a Truth, in their philosophy.

Even the Greek work "Truth" (a-letheia) meant "uncover" or "revelation", referring to the existential experience in learning processes. The authoritarian dogmatism of European religion and academia perverted the active sense to a static sense of "knowledge" that someone could have a "patent" on, stake a claim on, and even could sell on the market. This "objectification" is a peculiar fetishistic characteristic of the Western Scholarship and Science. It is the Epistemology of Capitalism, although the Communists also believe the same; whereas the Natives had a dynamic epistemology.

We talk, in particular in an academic context, in the posture of claiming knowledge, with an implicit assumption that the audiences are hostile and demanding proofs and demonstrations. We are competing in an intellectual market, on an assumption that the adversary system brings the best. This is the assumption of the Free Market and Social Darwinism. Although we have disproved them a long time ago, our stylism has not been changed.

The Natives would much rather think of their statements to be gifts from love. Their discourses are not "power struggles". Their propositions are "proposals" offered with unilateral commitment by the speakers. They know "giving" is the way of making a community. If the negotiators of Western nations talked in the Native way, we would not have the Arms Race.

We have an intellectual pride in being able to articulate technically on "letters." But we might look back to see why we have come to do that. Perhaps, we are thinking of our communication as if a battle with a hostile audience and the art of articulation is a

defensive shield against expected attack. We also think by articulation that we assert our intellectual superiority, if not attack the other. Do we play such games so often that we come to value the skill? If so, we may be mentally sick in admiring the art of manipulating our letters. To the Natives, it is a puzzle that there can be differences between "letter of law" and "spirit of law." And they would say it is incomprehensible absurdity, if they were told that the Western Philosophy thrives on technical analyses of "letters" and has little to do with "spirit" or practices in living. They would not understand why we have to be so aggressive even in intellectual games. We analyse violence in Alcoholism as someone else's problem from an "objective" stance. But, perhaps, we might look at our own tendency to intoxicate in a Power sensation.

We do know that Nuclear War in its scale is not the same as aggression at a personal level. We do have concerns about social structures of violence, but it may be that Nuclear Aggression is a collective consequence of our aggressive drive which manifests even in academic contexts.

And in talking of aggressiveness, we might also pay attention to our attitude of contemptuously looking down at "subjective" experiences in the name of "objectivity" or "value neutrality" of "science". It might very well have come from our alienated neurotic psyche. I might concede to some theory to an effect that the scientific sense of "knowledge" can only be generated from alienation, enigma or fear, and although the "knowledge" does sometimes "sublimate" the aggression, it leaves residues of fear or hostility which leads us to violence. If so, we have a serious task to change "science" as such for the sake of Peace. And on this point, Native Philosophy appears to be very instructive.

[As to "Science as a destructive element", see Birgit Brock-Utne. Education For Peace. Pergamon, 1986. This is a feminist critique of science.]