



War and Peace

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What has just been said about the 'peace' that dwells at the central point, brings us to another symbolism, namely that of war, to which some allusions have already been made elsewhere. A well-known example of this symbolism is found in the *Bhagavad-Gîta*; the battle described in that book represents action in a quite general sense, and in a form suited to the nature and function of the Kshatriyas for whom it is more particularly intended. The battlefield (*kshetra*) is the domain of action in which the individual develops his possibilities; it is depicted by the horizontal plane in the geometrical symbolism. Here, the human state is in question, but the same representation could be applied to any other state of manifestation equally subject, either to action properly so called, or at least to change and multiplicity. This conception is not peculiar to the Hindu doctrine, but is also found in the Islamic, for this is the real meaning of 'holy war' (*jihad*). The social and outward application is only secondary, as clearly appears from the fact that it is referred to only as the 'lesser holy war' (*al-jihad al-asghar*), whereas the 'greater holy war' (*al-jihad al-akbar*) is of a purely inward and spiritual order.

From whatever aspect and in whatever domain war is envisaged, one may say that the essential reason for its existence is to put a stop to disorder and to restore order. In other terms, it is concerned with the unification of multiplicity by means which belong to the world of multiplicity itself; in this light, and in this light alone, can war be regarded as legitimate. Disorder is in a sense inherent in all manifestation, for manifestation, considered apart from its principle, that is to say as non-unified multiplicity, is nothing but an indefinite series of ruptures of equilibrium. Accordingly, if war is understood in this sense, and is not given an exclusively human meaning, it represents a cosmic process whereby what is manifested is reintegrated into the principal unity; that is why, from the viewpoint of manifestation itself, this reintegration appears as a destruction, and this emerges very clearly from certain aspects of the symbolism of *Shiva* in the Hindu doctrine.

If it be argued that war itself is also a disorder, this is true in a certain respect, and even necessarily true by the very fact that war is waged in the world of manifestation and multiplicity. But it is a disorder intended to balance another disorder, and according to the teaching of the Far-Eastern tradition, previously mentioned, it is the sum of all disorders or disequilibriums that constitutes the total order. Furthermore, order only appears when a standpoint is taken that is above multiplicity and from which things are no longer seen in isolation and 'distinctively', but in their essential unity. This is the standpoint of reality, for apart from its principle multiplicity has only an illusory existence; but that illusion, with the disorder inherent in it, endures for every being so long as it has not arrived in a fully effective manner (and not merely theoretically) at this standpoint of the 'unity of Existence' (*Wahdat al-wujud*) in all the modes and degrees of universal manifestation.

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Accordingly, the end of war is the establishment of peace, for peace, even taken in its most ordinary sense, is ultimately nothing else but order, equilibrium, or harmony, these three terms being practically synonymous, and all denoting under somewhat different aspects the reflection of unity in multiplicity. In point of fact, multiplicity is not really destroyed but 'transformed'; and when all things are brought back to unity, this unity appears in all things, which, far from ceasing to exist, thereby acquire on the contrary the plenitude of reality. In this way, the two complementary viewpoints of 'unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity' are indivisibly united at the central point of all manifestation, which is the 'Divine Abode' or 'Divine Station' (*al-maqam al-ilahl*), already mentioned above. For whoever has reached that point, there are no longer any contraries, and therefore no longer any disorder; it is the seat of order, of equilibrium, and of harmony or peace; outside of it, for one who is merely striving toward it without having yet reached it, there prevails a state of war such as we have described, since the oppositions in which disorder resides have not yet been permanently transcended.

Even in its outward and social sense, legitimate war, which is waged against the disturbers of order and is aimed at reimposing order upon them, is essentially a function of 'justice', or in other words a 'balancing' function, whatever the secondary and transient appearances may suggest; but this is only the 'lesser holy war', which is a mere image of the other, the 'greater holy war'. Here we would refer to what we have said regarding the symbolical value of historical facts, which can be regarded as representing in their own sphere realities of a higher order.

The 'greater holy war' is man's struggle against the enemies he carries within himself, that is, against the elements in him that are opposed to order and unity. There is however no question of annihilating these elements, which, like everything that exists, have their reason for existence and their place in the whole; what is aimed at is to 'transform' them, by bringing them back and as it were reabsorbing them into unity. Above all else, man must constantly strive to realize unity in himself, in all that constitutes him, through all the modalities of his human manifestation: unity of thought, unity of action, and also, which is perhaps hardest, unity between thought and action. As regards action, it is important to observe that it is the intention (*niyyah*) which counts for most, for this alone depends wholly on man himself, without being affected or modified by outward contingencies as the results of action always are. Unity in intention and the constant tendency toward the invariable and immutable center are symbolically represented by ritual orientation (*qiblah*), the earthly spiritual centers being as it were visible images of the true and only center of all manifestation. This center, as already explained, has its direct reflection in all the worlds, at the central point of each of them, and also in all beings, in whom this central point is symbolically denoted as the heart, because of its correspondence to the heart in the bodily organism.

For whoever has achieved the perfect realization of unity in himself, all opposition has ceased and with it the state of war, for from the standpoint of totality, which lies beyond all particular standpoints, nothing remains but absolute order. Nothing can thereafter harm such a one, since for him there are no longer any enemies, either within him or without; the unity achieved within is also reflected outwardly, or rather, there is no longer in this case either 'within' or 'without', since this is simply one of the oppositions which 'vanish at his glance'. Permanently established at the center of all things, he 'is unto himself his own law', because his will is one with the universal Will (the 'Will of Heaven' of the Far-Eastern tradition, which effectively manifests itself at the very point where that being resides); he has obtained the

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'Great Peace', which is none other than the 'Divine Presence' (*as-Sakinah*), the immanence of the Divinity at that point which is the 'Center of the World'; being identified, by his own unification, with the principal unity itself, he sees unity in all things and all things in unity, in the absolute simultaneity of the Eternal Present.