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RECLAIMING THE TRANSCENDENCE OF POSITIVE PEACE AGAINST THE VIOLENCE OF POST-LIBERAL PEACE

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In a recent article published in the International Studies Quarterly, Paul Diehl explains that the scholarly study of peace has been primarily focusing on negative peace as the absence of war. The focus of much research is rarely peace in itself but rather the decrease in battle-related deaths, the absence of conflicts between democracies or the lower risk of violence between capitalist economies. Diehl argues that this one-sided approach leads to blind spots and absurd categorizations. But more importantly, since peace is not simply the absence of war, the study of the concept remains incomplete. Many scholars lament this reductive focus on negative peace and call for new research on positive peace. Some like Diehl

Peace research has abandoned the pursuit of positive peace because of a profound commitment to an ontology of violence. By assuming that the world is shaped by arbitrary power relations, scholars working on the liberal and post-liberal peace end up focusing their research on negative peace. The article develops a critique of this ontology of violence assumed by the Realist, Liberal and Critical traditions which conceals the possibility of positive peace. Following the lead of Charles Taylor, it locates the philosophical shackles that stifle peace research in the immanent frame that underpins the political work of Hobbes and his contemporaries. The article outlines the contours of an ontology of peace and revisits the concept of eirenism to conceptualise positive peace.

In a recent article published in the International Studies Quarterly, Paul Diehl explains that the scholarly study of peace has been primarily focusing on negative peace as the absence of war. The focus of much research is rarely peace in itself but rather the decrease in battle-related deaths, the absence of conflicts between democracies or the lower risk of violence between capitalist economies. Diehl argues that this one-sided approach leads to blind spots and absurd categorizations. But more importantly, since peace is not simply the absence of war, the study of the concept remains incomplete. Many scholars lament this reductive focus on negative peace and call for new research on positive peace. Some like Diehl
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point to the need for a normative agenda to move beyond negative peace. Others like John-Paul Lederach point to the need for an alternative moral imagination to capture the “soul” of peace.²

In his attempt to re-energize Johan Galtung’s concept of positive peace, Diehl provides useful guidelines and principles to guide peace research. In particular, Diehl argues that it is necessary to move beyond Political Science to draw important conceptual and normative insights from the humanities and social sciences. He argues that this would facilitate the development of a normative agenda to define values and priorities beyond negative peace. This insight seems to echo the call of John-Paul Lederach in The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace, in which he declares that:

We must face the fact that much of our current system for responding to deadly local and international conflict is incapable of overcoming cycles of violent patterns precisely because our imagination has been corralled and shackled by the very parameters and sources that create and perpetrate violence… if we are to survive as a global community, we must understand the imperative nature of giving birth and space to the moral imagination in human affairs.³

Lederach identifies the solution at the level of “moral imagination,” that is, the human capacity to creatively imagine and establish constructive processes that transcend violent patterns not so much through the standard application of agreed techniques as by exploring “the art and soul of social change.”⁴ The two authors concur, from different perspectives, that the limits we face are conceptual and normative and that standard approaches are insufficient. The study of peace and conflict is broadly constrained by philosophical shackles that reduce its ability to think about peace beyond the absence of violence. But normative insights taken from the humanities can be harnessed to save the “soul” of peace. Recent developments in the social sciences and humanities provide solid support for this initiative.

In this article, I demonstrate that peace research remains focused on the study of violence because the approaches and theories that are widely used assume an ontology of violence that depicts the world as intrinsically shaped by violent power relations. If reality is the work of arbitrary power relations vying for dominance, peace can only be conceived as the temporary management of power. This ontology of violence pervades Realist, Liberal
and Critical approaches alike. Despite their wish to work towards peace, many scholars in fact perpetuate partial assumptions that make positive peace unthinkable. However, by reconsidering the grounds upon which this ontology of violence is founded we may begin to develop an alternative ontology of peace, and with it, revive research on positive peace.

The current debate over the liberal/post-liberal peace is our starting point to illustrate how the alternatives they present are essentially established on an ontology of violence that prevents the emergence of positive peace. Mainstream approaches to peace have come under critique for enforcing a securitized limbo where neither peace nor war prevails. Yet, efforts to outline a post-liberal form of peace seem to have reached a dead-end with high profile scholars seemingly giving up on the possibility of a better future altogether. But the deadlock in the search for positive peace has been the subject of ground-breaking work in the humanities. Philosophers and theologians have developed radical critiques of the Liberal straightjacket but contrary to the post-liberal peace agenda, they do not embrace an ontology of violence and thus provide a space to think about positive peace. Following Charles Taylor and John Milbank, this article outlines the contours of the ontology of violence and makes a case to recover transcendence as a necessary dimension of an ontology of peace. Drawing on the work of Adam Curle, the paper concludes with a profound revision of Oliver Richmond’s concept of eirenism to outline the contours of a positive peace inspired by a “transcendent vision” that restores the spiritual nature of peacemaking.

THE LIBERAL PEACE AND ITS ALTERNATIVES

The “liberal peace” has been the subject of much debate in recent years and efforts have been made to move towards a post-liberal peace. The concept of liberal peace is a loose framework of liberal and neo-liberal strategies and techniques emanating from successful Western experiences of development and statebuilding and used in conflict and post-conflict societies to restore
order and peace. It is based on a hodgepodge of activities such as market liberalization, democratization, gender-mainstreaming and legal reforms that are designed and implemented under the leadership of international actors. These activities draw on the invocation of core liberal values including “the primacy of the individual, the belief in the reformability of individuals and institutions, pluralism and toleration, the rule of law, and the protection of property.”

The liberal peace consensus has become the primary framework to assist post-conflict societies in building sustainable peace. However, besides its limited success record, the liberal peace has come under criticism for its purported violence. The scholarly critique of the liberal peace is essentially two-fold with on the one hand “problem solvers” who aim to improve the efficiency of peace efforts through the timing and sequencing of activities or increases in resources and capacities. In the most recent review of UN peace operations conducted by the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO), it is clearly stated that the organization faces major challenges to maintain and achieve peace: “The Panel has received clear messages of the imperative for change from governments and grass-roots organizations from East to West, from the global South to the global North.” The challenges are considered to be so important that the very “credibility, legitimacy and relevance of the United Nations in the coming years” is believed to be at stake.

On the other hand, many “Critical scholars” question the philosophical and ideological assumptions of the liberal peace and strive for emancipation from a system that inevitably reproduces the very conditions for conflict. In this article, the expression “Critical scholars” is used in line with the categorization suggested by Tadjbakhsh and Richmond to describe the proponents of a post-liberal critique of peace coming from a wide range of perspectives including post-structuralist, post-modernist, critical theorists,
etc. According to Critical scholars, the “failures in the liberal peace project are not because of the efficiency problems related to the technicalities of its workings, but in the problematique [sic] assumptions and contradictions within the model itself and its claims of the pacifying effects of democratization and marketization.” They claim that the liberal peace with its imperialist, neo-colonial and hegemonic tendencies has done more harm than good. While these claims are exaggerated they nonetheless point to an important problem with the liberal peace.

Critical contributions to the debate have enabled the development of more sophisticated conceptualizations of peace. Richmond identifies post-structuralism as the single approach that can truly move away from the liberal frame and its focus on negative peace. The anti-foundationalist commitment of post-structuralism leads to a thorough questioning and reinterpretation of the Enlightenment meta-narratives of scientific progress and liberal rationalism that underpin the liberal peace. Through genealogy and deconstruction, the illiberal core of the liberal peace is debunked and the exclusionary implications of hidden power structures brought to light. It is in this context that peacebuilding and intervention are criticized for being hegemonic practices and new forms of colonization and oppression. However, few critical scholars have managed to leave the circularity of their critique to make substantive contributions to a post-liberal peace. Most of them end up in the grey zone of hybridity, content to describe the hybrid entanglement of liberal/non-liberal, top-down/bottom-up and international/local processes. Others like Chandler or Žižek have more or less explicitly given up on the possibility of peace altogether. Overall, the most advanced alternative to the liberal framework is the post-liberal peace of Oliver Richmond.

Richmond developed a post-liberal alternative “relating to a discursive, empathetic, and emancipatory project, reflecting the everyday life of all, men, women, children, in the varied contexts around the world.” He
explains that a truly post-liberal peace must move away from the usual institutional, diplomatic and market-oriented discourses to enable people “to relate to each other on an everyday, human level, rather than merely through problem-solving institutional frameworks that dictate or negate lived experience.”\textsuperscript{17} Post-liberalism represents a challenge to universalist, institutionalist and internationally-led top-down efforts to establish liberal hierarchies of power out of which emancipatory forms of peace may emerge. Richmond provides some sort of definition of his post-liberal alternative, stating that:

Embracing difference in agonistic relationships within hybrid forms while producing political tensions over what it means to be liberal, neoliberal or local, holds potential for peace and emancipation in a far more deeply democratic manner than the continued privileging of the Enlightenment rights systems, which themselves have been co-opted and need to be decolonised before they can be said to be progressive in the modern world.\textsuperscript{18}

According to Richmond, the potential for positive peace seems to emerge in some way from agonistic relationships and tensions that would somehow resist structural inequalities and abuses of power. Richmond appears convinced that the emancipatory potential of peace is secured through “the establishment of agonistic mediations of difference, built into a local-to-global order, in which inequalities are teased out and responded to by policy.”\textsuperscript{19} But Richmond is yet to explain how emancipatory peace actually emerges from tensions and agonistic relationships and this hopefulness seems to be an ultimate effort to resist the logical conclusion that post-structuralism ends all hopes of positive peace.\textsuperscript{20} Richmond’s work is a very important contribution and unique in its effort to move beyond the liberal framework. However, it is not in any way a recognizable form of positive peace and instead the post-liberal peace seems to suggest the impossibility of peace itself. As we will now see, the post-liberal tradition holds tight onto an ontology of violence which stops it from conceiving peace-as-more-than-not-war.

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ONTOGRAPHY OF VIOLENCE IN THE LIBERAL PEACE AND ITS CRITICS

Most scholarly traditions in the field of peace and conflict studies rely on a vision of the world that makes peace ontologically inconceivable except as the absence of war. They depict the world as primarily shaped by power relations whereby the use of force by one may be resisted by a counter-force or governed by a greater force. Power, force and ultimately violence are given an ontological priority that automatically turns peace into a by-product of the governance of force and the management of power. While this may explain the hegemonic character of the liberal peace as well as its limited success, it also explains the failure of post-liberal alternatives. Historically, the Realist tradition has openly admitted and cherished its ontology of violence which depicts the world as a “relatively homogenous state of war” based on an incessant power struggle between states under conditions of anarchy.21 The sources of war are found in all three images used by Kenneth Waltz, that is, within human nature, within states and within the structure of the international order.22 It thus comes as no surprise that Realist scholars have not really engaged with a concept of positive peace. Central figures in Liberalism share with Realism a similar understanding of the state of nature and believe that the international order corresponds to a “heterogeneous state of peace and war.”23 The major difference is that Liberals believe that human nature makes it possible to achieve peace within liberal political communities. Because humans are motivated by self-interest and endowed of reason, norms, rules and laws can be agreed upon to prevent violence. In this context, peace becomes contiguous with the borders of liberal states while their relations with authoritarian states are characterized by “contingency… barbarism…violence and war.”24 While it clearly offers a large range of activities to manage violence, Liberalism holds to a conception of peace that only slightly goes beyond that of Realism. While first, second and third image Liberalisms assume the possibility of peace today.
or in the future, this is only a negative peace whereby an original state of war is transformed through institutions and laws. By assuming the existence of a state of nature that is not peaceful but inhabited by uniformly self-interested rational individuals endowed of will, competitiveness and instinct of self-preservation, liberalism offers to establish a state that would become the locus of coercion, control and power-management. The liberal state becomes an institution responsible to more or less violently enforce peace in a context assumed to be essentially conflictual and violent.

In “Reclaiming Peace in International Relations,” Richmond claims that post-structuralism posits multiple ontologies of peace. Contrary to the Liberal-Realist hybrid, these ontologies are claimed to be independent from “disciplinary biopolitics, assumptions about the inherency of violence due to nature or structure, and certainly not to the Enlightenment meta-narrative of rational progress, which it rejects as engendering and disguising genealogies of violence and oppression.”

This bold claim enables him to turn post-structuralism into the only source of an ontology of peace. However, contrary to what Richmond claims, the broad tradition upholds a commitment to an ontology of violence. Compared to Realism and Liberalism, Critical currents are inseparable from a radical form of historicism which deconstructs truth as being constituted by hegemonic strategies of power. Through genealogy, they question notions of universality and truth and point to the existence of other “truths” that are excluded, suppressed or marginalized by a dominant and totalizing perspective. These approaches have their merits but as John Milbank demonstrates, they also have an unavoidable implication: if all we have are “many incommensurable truths,” then every truth becomes arbitrary or a reflection of the will-to-power.

The subjection of truth to the will-to-power leads to notions of evil and goodness being the results of equally contingent and arbitrary impulses. This postmodern affirmation of difference describes reality as the product of power relations and of an arbitrary will-to-power. Reality is imagined as being inherently conflictual and violence is given ontological priority. Friederich Nietzsche was the clearest about this and for him violence was
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primordial and to be celebrated by pagan virtues. For the German philosopher, this anarchy was to be dealt with by subjecting it, in one way or another, to the will-to-power. Nietzsche’s work subsequently served as a foundation and inspiration to much Critical scholarship and facilitated the acceptance of an implicit ontology of violence:

By revealing the injustice, the arbitrariness, of every power-constellation, history leads us gradually to the realization that this state of affairs proper to “life” is not to be condemned, but rather celebrated. Hence, genealogy is not an interpretation, but a new ‘joyfully’ nihilistic form of positivism which explains every cultural meaning-complex as a particular strategy or ruse of power. No universals are ascribed to human society save one: that it is always a field of warfare.²⁸

Critical theorists uphold that peace is not a historical fact or project but is the result of strategies of power within which subjects are unequally and differently entangled. The project of peace thus collapses into patterns of power, domination, inequalities and exclusion.²⁹ In a reality shaped by power, fate and chance, all virtues and values are necessarily deconstructed as the transient outcome of ever-shifting strategies of power. Freedom and emancipation collapse into inequalities of power out of which we cannot escape.³⁰ As such, Richmond’s attempt to claim some sort of emancipatory or empathetic element to peace is only possible through the unacknowledged belief in an ahistorical Kantian subject who can be emancipated. David Chandler raised a similar critique against the efforts of his colleagues to sketch a post-liberal peace.³¹ He criticized their inability to transcend their own hegemonic framework of power and for assuming power rather than critically theorizing it. Instead, he argued that post-liberalism should logically be placed as a form of critique of current practices rather than as an alternative to the liberal peace.³² Tacitus had warned against those who make a desert and call it peace. We should be equally dubious of those who call agonistic power constellations peace.

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If post-structuralism assumes an ontology of violence and is unable to develop an alternative to the Liberal-Realist view of peace-as-not-war, this would seemingly leave us in a dead-end where the sterile circle of critique is plunging us into the nihilist abyss. The belief in the existence of primordial violence upheld by Realist, Liberal and Critical currents alike goes a long way towards explaining the general focus on peace-as-not-war. However, alternatives exist to replace this presupposition with an ontology of peace. But for this, we must first explore the nature of the philosophical and moral shackles that both enforce an ontology of violence and conceal alternatives.

THE SHACKLES

To study positive peace, Paul Diehl and John-Paul Lederach suggest to look for a normative agenda and a moral imagination beyond Political Science. Knowing that the liberal and post-liberal peace do not live up to their promises and that the ontological foundation on which they are established limits peace to the management of violence, we would do well to reconsider the philosophical and normative framework that made them convincing in the first place. In the process, we will be able to question the value and necessity of certain assumptions that stifle the theorizing of positive peace and conceal its very possibility in the first place. In this article, we begin our exploration with what Charles Taylor calls the immanent frame. This refers to the “framework of the taken-for-granted” that is tacitly accepted and unacknowledged and that sustains the modern worldview and hence much of peace research. Taylor explains that “all beliefs are held within a context or framework of the taken-for-granted, which usually remains tacit, and may even be as yet unacknowledged by the agent, because never formulated.” In turn, these contexts assume underlying ontological commitments, or “ontic components” defined as “identifying features of the world which make the norm realizable…what it is in God’s will, or the universe, or ourselves which makes these norms appropriate and possible of realization.” I argue that the current ontic components of Liberalism and Post-liberalism, which assume the transcendental priority of violence, are integral to the immanent frame. What is important is that this frame is only one option among others and that once we interrogate it we open the door to new resources for positive peace.
Taylor explains in *A Secular Age* that up until the Middle Ages, the presence of God in the world was factual and all-pervading. Not only did the natural world testify to the existence of God but God himself was at the heart of the existence and running of society through the Church, politics, agricultural cycles, etc. People lived in an enchanted world where life and its rhythms mirrored and participated in the divine.\textsuperscript{36} Taylor identifies the emergence of an exclusive and self-sufficient humanism as the main factor in the slow decrease in interest and then discarding of the transcendent from the conditions of belief of modern societies. Humans came to exist, function and behave *etsi Deus non daretur*—“as if God would not exist” to use Grotius’s expression.

Through profound socio-cultural processes of change, humans came to accept that meaning and the best form of life could be reached largely independently from God by appealing to immanent sources such as nature or reason. The sources of fulness came to be “found in Nature, or in our own inner depths, or in both.”\textsuperscript{37} Processes of individualization and interiorization facilitated the rise of the human individual as self-preserving, self-reliant, self-sufficient with a marked instrumental individualism in the exploitation of the world for his personal benefit. Individuals were assumed to be “buffered” and self-contained entities acting of their own free will “in a constructed social space, where instrumental rationality is the key value, and time is pervasively secular.”\textsuperscript{38} This anthropocentric shift saw the emergence of a new moral agenda based on an ethic of freedom, civility, prosperity and mutual benefit.\textsuperscript{39}

While the origins of the ontic components can be traced back to the Middle Ages, their carving is established most evidently in Hobbes and Machiavelli’s “new science of politics” which appropriates itself theological semantics and substitutes a new form of natural and autonomous will in for

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the Christian *dominium* and *imago Dei*. Through the work of Grotius, Hobbes and Spinoza, a new “political” space of “pure power” was created whereby concepts formerly founded on theological arguments were redefined “naturally” without reference to God. This new space is defined by relations of power, agonism and hence violence as illustrated previously with the work of Hobbes, Kant and Nietzsche. Violence is in fact introduced as the ontological foundation of politics in place of the Christian *caritas*. This new realm is marked by the will-to-power and competition between sovereigns. In turn, peace within the immanent frame comes to be established or enforced through the enactment of a political system that permits the non-conflictual interaction of rational individuals endowed of rights guaranteed by a liberal state. In a world where competition and struggle for power are assumed to be natural, civility, laws and self-discipline become central to the management of societies and the liberal state becomes the enforcer of peace, through violence if necessary.

Over time, the immanent frame has become dominant through its reliance on ‘closed world structures’ that restrict the grasp of reality to certain selected realms while excluding others. This provides the worldview with an aura of self-sufficiency, neutrality and naturalness that is essentially misguided. Indeed, the immanent frame is not so much the discovery of a universal worldview as the historical emergence of one worldview among others. But what is more, this worldview assumes a set of unproven ontic components, such as its ontology of violence, which it passes as natural when they are in fact the by-products of a questionable theology. Indeed, “the institution of the ‘secular’ is paradoxically related to a shift within theology and not an emancipation from theology.” Taylor concurs that this worldview is theologically-informed and actually sustained by its “own original spiritual vision.” He convincingly explains that:
we moderns behave as we do because we have “come to see” that certain claims were false—or on the negative reading, because we have lost from view certain perennial truths. What this view reads out of the picture is the possibility that Western modernity might be powered by its own positive visions of the good, that is, by one constellation of such visions among available others, rather than by the only viable set left after the old myths and legends have been exploded.\textsuperscript{44}

The shackles that prevent us from thinking about positive peace are located in the taken-for-granted worldview that naturally defines peace as a temporary absence of violence upheld through discipline, civility and the proper functioning of state institutions. They enforce a certain ontological poverty and restrict peace to the management of power. However, the establishment of the immanent frame is not so much the discovery of a universal and objective worldview as the historical emergence of one option among others. Therefore, we are free to question those unproven ontic components. Taylor explains that they impose restrictions and blind spots in our search for peace all the while lacking the resources required to sustain and nourish the humanitarian projects they proclaim:

our age makes higher demands for solidarity and benevolence on people today than ever before. Never before have people been asked to stretch out so far, so consistently, so systematically, so as a matter of course, to the stranger outside the gates. A similar point can be made, if we look at the other dimension of the affirmation of ordinary life, that concerned with universal justice. Here, too, we are asked to maintain standards of equality that cover wider and wider classes of people, bridge more and more kinds of difference, impinge more.\textsuperscript{45}

Our modern moral imagination is insufficient to build solidarity, to protect the dignity of human life and to sustainably build peace for all. All it seems to manage is to uphold a modicum of negative peace in some countries and to avoid spill-over effects in certain regions of the world. Therefore, in the remainder of this article, I suggest to broaden our perspective on peace by drawing on a richer ontology.
ESTABLISHING POSITIVE PEACE ON AN ONTOLOGY OF PEACE

The broad direction suggested to think about positive peace is to re-open peace research to philosophical and theological discussions of transcendence. This would mark a return to the inspiration of the founders of peace research such as Adam Curle and Elise Boulding. This is motivated by the fact that the immanent frame in which the liberal peace is embedded is not as natural and objective as it claims to be and that it conceals rich resources to think about peace. We will consider these two points one after the other.

The liberal strategies and techniques for peace draw on a set of profound values including individualism, tolerance, property and territorial self-determination among others. While these liberal peace activities are nowadays assumed to be universal, they draw in fact sustenance from a religious tradition. Reflecting on the origins of much political theorizing, Jürgen Habermas argues that:

Universalistic egalitarianism, from which sprang the ideal of freedom and a collective life in solidarity, the autonomous conduct of life and emancipation, the individual morality of conscience, human rights and democracy, is the direct legacy of the Judaic ethic of justice and the Christian ethic of love. This legacy, substantially unchanged, has been the object of a continual critical re-appropriation and reinterpretation. Up to this very day there is no alternative to it. And in light of the current challenges of a post-national constellation, we must draw sustenance now, as in the past, from this substance.  

Habermas’ statement is very important because it acknowledges the theological origins of the liberal peace and declares that we necessarily draw on the Judeo-Christian tradition for inspiration and energy. And this comes from a staunch supporter of the heritage of Les Lumières! Closer to peace research, many scholars have intuitively recognized this, at least in part. For example, Francis Fukuyama explains that the rule of law is stemming from organized religion and Michael Freeman states that “human rights emerged in the West, to an important extent, as a religious response to a set of problems that was both religious and political at a time when religion and politics were inseparable.”

Calhoun et al. argue that the
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The concept of humanitarian work emerged following theological changes in the late medieval era.\textsuperscript{48} Even the welfare state promoted by liberals and post-liberals alike “can be understood as the long-term heir to the early Christian Church.”\textsuperscript{49} And it is not simply that theology provided a context propitious for the emergence of new political concepts. Rather, it enters into their very construction.\textsuperscript{50} Richmond’s post-liberal focus on empathy, emancipation, an ethics of care and the welfare state also draws sustenance from the same religious tradition.

We are thus in a situation where the liberal and the post-liberal peace are not fulfilling their promises and remain attached to the Judeo-Christian tradition. This state of affairs seems to support the recent movement in the humanities towards the re-evaluation and reinstatement of metaphysics and transcendence as unavoidable elements of social or political theory.\textsuperscript{51} This invites us to recognize that political theories, whether secular or religious, are ultimately “acts of the imagination” that assume \textit{a priori} ontic components that necessarily remain unproven.\textsuperscript{52} What is more, the continued role of the Judeo-Christian tradition in political theory illustrates the necessity and unavoidability of transcendence. Indeed, political theories continue to respond to a transcendent reality that they misrecognize and unfortunately disfigure through an undue reliance on an exclusive form of humanism.\textsuperscript{53} Breaking beyond the narrow frame of immanence, the way forward would thus seem to be the development of an alternative imagination more amenable to peace, “which makes sense of things in a different way, [and] corresponds to reality.”\textsuperscript{54} In other words, we can legitimately bring back transcendence.

Transcendence does not primarily refer to God or the supernatural but to a unique mode of “fullness.” It is closely associated with an ideal of the best or highest form of life that involves “our seeking or acknowledging or serving a good which is beyond, in the sense of independent of human flourishing.”\textsuperscript{55} What is important is that through the affirmation of transcendence, that is, through the affirmation of “the sense that there is some

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good higher than, beyond human flourishing, …a possibility of transformation is offered, which takes us beyond merely human perfection…beyond the bounds of [life’s] ‘natural’ scope between birth and death; our lives extend beyond ‘this life.’” Transcendence tends to be associated with an ultimate Good or a higher power that is called God in many theistic traditions. Transcendence is not something that is only reserved to the faithful but instead corresponds to a vast repertoire about the “beyond” that enjoys a much broader relevance. The recovery of transcendence opens up a multitude of approaches to peace including Milbank’s radical Catholic project or more conciliatory solutions such as those suggested by Charles Taylor. The affirmation of transcendence opens a new space for peace. First of all, it puts an end to the “selective-blindness” and the “mutilation” of the spiritual dimension of man imposed by the liberal peace and perpetuated in the post-liberal alternative. In its place, it enables “an appreciation for the polymorphic quality of human experience” in a world characterized by a resurgence of religion. Secondly, the affirmation of transcendence is “the only way to escape fully the draw toward violence” and the negation of life associated with its denial. Because “it acknowledges no supra-human power beyond itself by which it might be measured and limited” pure immanence expresses totalitarian and fascist tendencies which keep us from positive peace. The ontology of violence described in this article is indeed closely embedded in the immanent frame and transcendence is able to question it and take us away from it. Thirdly, transcendence takes seriously the intuition that goodness and justice are possibilities in the world and that they are more than the arbitrary play of power or fate. Positive peace can only emerge in a world where the Good possesses an ultimate reality that precedes and primes over violence. Coming from an explicitly Christian perspective, Milbank explains that “without a Realist belief in a transcendent God and heaven, the ontological ground for hope for a transformed human future is removed.” Milbank’s quote brings us back to the need for an ontology of peace.
The Judeo-Christian tradition is an obvious entry point to the extent that it already underpins core elements of the liberal and post-liberal peace and that it provides a well-developed ontological framework to make sense of transcendence. With a third of humanity identifying as Christians, the spiritual tradition is the largest religion in the world and is thus used in this article to make headway towards positive peace. More specifically, the Catholic tradition is used for inspiration as it represents the largest Christian denomination. At the heart of Christianity stands the ontological priority of peace as well as a project to guide humans to act peacefully. In the Apostolic Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* promulgated in 1965 as a result of the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Church defined peace as follows:

> Peace is not merely the absence of war... Peace results from that order structured into human society by its divine Founder, and *actualized* by men as they thirst after ever greater justice. The common good of humanity finds its ultimate meaning in the eternal law. But since the concrete demands of this common good are constantly changing as time goes on, peace is never attained once and for all, but must be built up ceaselessly [emphasis added].

This definition offers an ontology of peace. Recognizing that violence is a fact and that peace is yet to be built, it declares that peace has already been given but that it is not yet actualized. As Milbank explains, Christianity recognizes no original violence. It construes the infinite not as chaos, but as a harmonic peace which is yet beyond the circumscribing power of any totalizing reason. Peace no longer depends upon the reduction of the self-identical, but is the *sociality* of harmonious difference. Violence, by contrast, is always a secondary willed intrusion.

Because peace is believed to be prior and more basic than violence, Christianity can deploy resources not only to hold violence in check but also to encourage the actualization of a positive peace. The war/peace dichotomy is no longer upheld and peace comes to be conceived as more than the enforcement of law and order. In turn, the transformative dimension of transcendence can thus be understood as a result of the actualization of a peace that is ontologically given but that is yet to be realized. Based
on this ontology, a new programme for positive peace opens up. So far, the most developed ontology of peace is outlined by Milbank and founded on a Catholic Trinitarian ontology. The political project it entails has an Augustinian character and combines non-Marxian Christian socialism with “a conservative anti-capitalist” thematic. It takes the form of a “democratized theocracy” or a mixed government grounded in Christianity where mediating institutions between the state and the individual (e.g., the family, the church, and local business, etc.) play a key role. Closer to peace research, an *eirenist* approach to peace has been discussed.

**REVIVING EIRENISM?**

In his writing, Oliver Richmond calls for an Eirenist (or Irenist) approach to peace. By this he refers to the attempt of the Christian humanist Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) to resolve religious disputes by stressing the importance of unity and of the common bonds between all Christians under Christ and in the Catholic Church. Richmond believes that this Eirenist “lens” enables an ethical re-evaluation of the liberal peace. However, if Eirenism is to possibly provide a path towards positive peace, much of its substance that was overlooked by Richmond must be reinstated, including its transcendental core. Indeed, Erasmus’ work on peace and war essentially grew out of his chief concern: What is it to be a Christian? It is thus profoundly related to theological and spiritual concerns that are entirely absent from the post-liberal peace. First, Richmond has completely dropped the Christian foundation of the concept that inherently assumed the necessity of transcendence and of the spiritual nature of peace.

Secondly, Richmond also dropped fundamental elements of Erasmus’ outlook including the medieval cosmology, the associated account of the human telos and the ethics that enabled all humans to reach what Alasdair MacIntyre calls the ‘human-nature-as-it-could-be-if-it-realized-its-*telos*.” For Erasmus, peace is the highest virtue that binds all Christians into Christ. Thirdly, Erasmus’s approach to peace is exclusively Christian and does not include Muslims or Jews unless they convert to Christianity. Erasmus is committed to the peace of Christendom. Richmond’s *eirenism* has thus been emptied of its essence but by going back to the etymology of the concept, we may outline a more complete form of Eirenist peace.
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In Antic Greece, *eirene* implied well-being, prosperity, security and harmony but those very qualities were seen as blessings given by the Greek gods. For example, Hesiod associated *eirene* with land fertility, harmony and prosperity provided to those who lived in accordance with the will of the gods and who faithfully prayed and followed the rituals. In the New Testament, *eirene* becomes much richer to denote “not only the opposite of war, security, order, harmony, a greeting or farewell, health, healing; but also the restoration and healing inherent in the forgiveness of the sins and in fulfilment. In this last sense it also takes on the connotations of messianic salvation, both fulfilment of the world and of individuals and preparation for that salvation that exerts an active influence on the whole world.”

Throughout the 20th century, Erasmus’ *eirenism* has influenced debates about peace, including within the Church like in the encyclicals of Pope Pius XI or John XXIII. The latter’s *Pacem in Terris* published in 1963 marked a revolution in Catholic thinking about peace. It followed an argument that was traditional since Erasmus but expanded it to include all individuals of good will beyond the Catholic Church. It noted that the universe is divinely peaceful and that God “has imprinted in man’s heart an order which his conscience reveals to him and enjoins him to obey.”

Based on this order, governments and Christians are required to build a peace “founded on truth, built according to justice, vivified and integrated by charity, and put into practice in freedom.”

Truth would reveal the fact that all humans are members of the same family against racism and extreme nationalism. Justice would address inequalities and discriminations and protect the dignity of all. And solidarity would enshrine Christian love and mutual cooperation. Pope John XXIII exhorts all Christians to reintegrate their faith both externally but also internally within their psyche so that inner spirituality may be mirrored in the temporal sphere. Only through the practice of a profound Christian ‘change of heart’ can peace be “built up day after day, in the pursuit of an order intended by God.”
An Eirenist form of positive peace corresponds to a social and individual alignment with the transcendent “beyond” in all relations. It is founded on a search for fullness based on the Christian *telos* as well as the ethics of love and the practice of virtues it enjoins. At the level of political communities, it calls for radical reforms towards cooperation, solidarity, justice, charity and social harmony to bring all closer to the kingdom of God. It promotes the development of solidaristic communities built on freedom and justice. However, institutions are not primary but result from the accomplishment of a *telos* seeking to align people with the transcendental reality. The realization of positive peace transcends the ‘heartless social change processes’ of the liberal and post-liberal peace to put virtue and ethics as central concerns. The political workings of an Eirenist peace are complex and should be considered as part of a broader agenda of transformation. Indeed, an Eirenist peace is an inner disposition which requires a profound change of heart and the reconciliation of humanity with the ‘beyond.’ Besides social justice and non-violence, peace must be first-and-foremost a spiritual practice geared towards the healing of soul, mind and body of individuals and of communities.

This intuition was present in the writing of the founders of Peace Studies such as Adam Curle. Curle argued that peace is essentially a spiritual concern related to the outer and inner worlds, to this world and “the other world, the true one.” The peacemaker is to travel between the two worlds to achieve fullness, and in this he must be both a militant and a mystic. Against an immanent philosophy that justifies violence, Curle proposes a path to peace based on “the stimulation of growth and the unfolding of all our God-given capacities.” To address large-scale conflicts, it is essential to adopt a ‘transcendent vision’ and to cultivate virtues such as compassion and generosity and to acquire wisdom through meditation, prayer and contemplation. Only then can the roots of violence be eradicated and the original peace realized.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this article was to engage in a reconsideration of some of the core assumptions taken for granted in much of peace research in order to re-energise the concept of positive peace under an Eirenist guise. The
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limits of the current liberal peace architecture and its lack of effectiveness call for the consideration of alternatives based on a new moral imagination. I explained that the overwhelming focus of contemporary research on negative peace results from an underlying ontology of violence. In a world characterized by unceasing tensions in power relations, peace necessarily ends up to be the temporary management of power. This ontology of violence is shared by Realist, Liberal and ‘Critical’ traditions and makes positive peace unthinkable. I thus set to reconsider the grounds upon which this ontology of violence is founded in order to open the door to an alternative ontology of peace.

I demonstrated that the immanent frame in which both the liberal and the post-liberal peace are embedded imposes undue restrictions and blind spots in our search for peace all the while lacking the resources required to sustain and nourish the positive peace projects. Therefore, I suggested to (re-)open peace research to transcendence in order to go beyond the ‘shackles’ that stop us from conceiving peace as more than not war. I described the added-value of transcendence and briefly sketched an ontology of peace. In this article, the Christian approach to peace and transcendence was explored in the form of eirenism. Peace research was pioneered by individuals who were inspired by their faith. In love with the beyond, they researched ways to make life in the here and now more peaceful. It is not a coincidence that the field of Peace Studies was founded by men and women who turned towards God for inspiration and it may well be time to return to the calling of transcendence to build positive peace.

Notes

3. Ibid. p. 72.
4. Ibid. p. 30.


11. Ibid. p. 8.


19. Ibid. p. 11.

20. Ibid. pp.6-7.


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27. Ibid. p. 328.


29. It should be noted that post-structuralism upholds an ontology of power that has inadvertantly turned into an ontology of violence. Instead of simply describing power relations and their role in the construction of truths, knowledge and societies, many Critical scholars have accidentally crossed the line to explain how violence is being done. In their analysis of power relations, they have come to assume that “difference, non-totalization and indeterminacy of meaning necessarily imply arbitrariness and violence,” ibid.


35. Ibid. p. 164, 256.

36. Ibid. p. 25.

37. Ibid. p. 9.

38. Ibid. p. 542.

39. Ibid. p. 259.

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44. Ibid. p. 571.
54. Ibid. p. 768.
55. Ibid. p. 16.
56. Ibid. p. 20.
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65. Ibid.


69. Ibid. p. 19.

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71. Ibid. §167.
72. Ibid. §152.