

2017

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### Recommended Citation

Power, Maria and Hrynkow, Christopher (2017) "Fostering Cultures of Encounter: Framing Papal Teaching on Dialogue as Multi-Track Peacebuilding," *The Journal of Social Encounters*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, 24-36.

Available at: [http://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/social\\_encounters/vol1/iss1/4](http://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/social_encounters/vol1/iss1/4)

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**Fostering Cultures of Encounter:  
Framing Papal Teaching on Dialogue as Multi-Track Peacebuilding**

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*This article demonstrates that there is a rough parallel between (1) Diamond and McDonald's (1996) notion of multi-track diplomacy and (2) the four levels of inter-religious dialogue identified by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, along with two other levels discerned within papal teaching by the authors. Diamond and McDonald expanded the political science concept of dual-track diplomacy and, in the process, helped to buttress the legitimacy of peace studies discourse in that discipline. Comparably, this article seeks to introduce papal teaching on dialogue framed in terms of multi-track peacebuilding. As a result, it solidifies a latent resonance between Catholic Social Teaching and peace studies, a confluence that is shown to accord with Pope Francis' teachings on cultures of encounter.*

**Introduction**

A vast field lies open to dialogue, which can assume many forms and expressions: from exchanges between experts in religious traditions or official representatives of those traditions to cooperation for integral development and the safeguarding of religious values; and from a sharing of their respective spiritual experiences to the so-called “dialogue of life,” through which believers of different religions bear witness before each other in daily life to their own human and spiritual values, and help each other to live according to those values in order to build a more just and fraternal society (John Paul II, 1990, §57).

By preaching Jesus Christ, who is himself peace (cf. Eph 2:14), the new evangelization calls on every baptized person to be a peacemaker and a credible witness to a reconciled life.[187] In a culture which privileges dialogue as a form of encounter, it is time to devise a means for building consensus and agreement while seeking the goal of a just, responsive and inclusive society. (Francis, 2013e, §239)

This article aims to start a conversation pertaining to the potential of religion to support peacebuilding praxis by proposing a rough parallel between (1) Louise Diamond and John McDonald's (1996) influential articulation of multi-track diplomacy and (2) the four levels of dialogue identified by the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID, 1984, 1991). In doing so, it builds upon peace studies literature that has articulated a link between religion and peacebuilding (Smock, 2002; Coward and Smith, 2004; Dubois and Hunter-Bowman, 2015). This work provides sources of inspiration for our framing of dialogue as multi-track peacebuilding. By identifying the resonances between papal understandings of dialogue and existent models in the field of peace studies, it names new aspects concerning the role of religion in peacebuilding. This multi-track framework for peacebuilding will be developed in light of the PCID's four levels of dialogue, namely the dialogue of (everyday) life; the dialogue of deeds and joint action; the dialogue of spirituality and shared religious experience; and the dialogue of specialists (PCID, 1984, 1991). Adding to this list, in order to present a clearer

picture of recurring themes in papal teaching, the authors have identified two further levels: the dialogue of human dignity and the dialogue of leadership, which encapsulate recurring themes in papal social teaching regarding the connections between peace and dialogue. The meaning of each of these six levels will be mapped for their content as amplified by the popes. Our conclusion suggests how this conversation serves to couple cultures of encounter, the role of dialogue, and peacebuilding, with the effect of incarnating the essential recovery of the connection between religion and peacebuilding.

### **A Rough but Fruitful Parallel**

Developing system-based frameworks for peacebuilding has long been one of the most beneficial and definitive aspects of the field of peace studies. Examples include Sean Byrne and Neal Carter's social cubism (1996), which proposes a systematic approach to analysing conflict, and John Paul Lederach's (1997) pyramid, which illustrates how grassroots communities can influence elite-level processes. Expanding upon and systematising the popular distinction between track one and track two diplomacy first named by Joseph Montville, Diamond and McDonald (1996) identify seven tracks which they argue, when combined within a whole, provide all of the components necessary 'to help the world become a more peaceful place' (p. 11).

Writing from an elite US-centric perspective, they name their whole system 'multi-track diplomacy' in order to stimulate thinking and action concerning actors working on the different tracks and how they can move forward peace processes. Track one is government, defined as international and elite-level negotiation, conforming to the perception that most people have of diplomacy; track two is nongovernmental/professional conflict resolution, a process which is characterised by elite involvement and focuses upon the facilitation of dialogue and mediation between conflicted parties most often undertaken by credentialed experts. Track three is business or peacemaking through commerce, which is based upon the premise that businesses can serve a positive role when they consider their place within social systems. Track four consists of the personal involvement of private citizens in peacemaking; seen as an "alternative power source for the system", (Diamond and McDonald, 1996, 64) it supports or stimulates elite processes by building grassroots relationships. Track five focuses upon peacemaking via learning. Here, attention is centred upon education at all levels, not only does it address meta-questions but provides people with the skills necessary for the resolution of conflict. Track six is activism, which is defined as peacemaking through advocacy. This approach is viewed as a necessary counterbalance to track one, and seeks to bring injustices to light. It is seen by Diamond and McDonald as the sole track that allows a prominent role for emotion, both anger and joy, in peacemaking. Track seven centres upon religion. This placement suggests that religious organisations contribute ideals and longevity to the multi-track system by providing adherents with a worldview, which includes concepts such as reconciliation, hospitality, and service. There is a notable overlap here with the activist community. Track eight is peacemaking through philanthropic funding, which, more often than not, channels resources to established practitioners, programmes, and mediators. As a result, established funding patterns sometimes prevent fresh voices and perspectives from entering the system. Finally, track nine explores peacemaking through information. The mass media and modern processes of communication provide sources of information for both elite and grassroots peacebuilders, thus cutting across all of the previous tracks, each of which also adds information to the system.

Taking general inspiration from Diamond and McDonald's multi-track and systematic framing, a rough but fruitful parallel comes into view. This confluence is perhaps best primarily located within their seventh level and framed as 'multi-track dialogue'. We propose that such multi-track dialogue is, when properly fostered, a path to substantive peacebuilding, improving the prospects for the development of societies in which the likelihood of violence is minimal. To demonstrate the transformational peacebuilding potential active here, the authors take the aforementioned six levels of dialogue as representative of six tracks to nourish peace praxis. Through parsing and then putting back together these six tracks, we will 'critically stretch' existing treatments of the role of religion in peacebuilding (cf. Dubois and Bowman-Hunter, 2015).

### **The Dialogue of (Everyday) Life**

Each and every day in pluralist societies, people holding different religious identities interact with each other. The dialogue of life seeks to bring positive energy to such interactions, moving beyond the transactional and allowing respect for each participant as a full human being, in order to meet people in their own social, religious, and personal contexts. For the popes, ensuring that these interactions are positive is considered a religious duty. The PCID summarize this duty as follows:

Every follower of Christ ... ought to bring the spirit of the Gospel into any environment in which he [sic.] lives and works, that of family, social, educational, artistic, economic, or political life. Dialogue thus finds its place in the great dynamism of the church's mission (PCID, 1984, §30).

In terms of the focus of this article, Pope Francis succinctly situates this duty: "Peace is everyone's responsibility. To pray for peace, to work for peace!" (Francis, 2013c). Here, he is building on a sentiment expressed by John Paul II that dialogue is both a duty and a universal responsibility:

Dialogue for peace is the task of everyone. Dialogue is a central and essential element of thinking among people, whoever they may be. Under the aspect of an exchange, of communication between human beings that language makes possible, it is in fact a common quest.

To all of you and to each one of you, young and old, weak and powerful, I appeal: embrace peace as the great unifying value of your lives. Wherever you live on this planet I earnestly exhort you to pursue in solidarity and sincere dialogue (John Paul II, 1982).

While Catholic Social Teaching certainly has issues with patriarchy and gender essentialism (cf. Helman, 2012), the popes nonetheless explicitly acknowledge the importance of women's work in building peace through the everyday dialogue of life, most especially in pluralist, interreligious, and multicultural contexts (Francis, 2017). This is indicative of how this level of dialogue pertains, in a particular way, to individual members of a religious community who "must face the hard work and at the same time have the satisfaction of building peace together" (John Paul II, 1982). This requirement reaches deep into everyday life and touches upon contemporary world issues in an intimate and personal manner. To cite an example that has

remained prescient in Pope Francis's treatment of cultures of encounter, in his World Day for Peace Message for 2001, John Paul II (2000) emphasizes that "a style and culture of dialogue" is the preferred method of establishing a necessary welcoming climate for refugees. Thus emerges a dialogical praxis of everyday welcoming, which John Paul II (2000) saw as required by human nature in any multicultural context in order to move toward a multiform communion that he emphasized was essential to Christian faith. In accord with such moral understanding, Pope Francis extends this function of dialogue in everyday life: "It is neither a culture of confrontation nor a culture of conflict which builds harmony within and between peoples, but rather a culture of encounter and a culture of dialogue; this is the only way to peace" (Francis, 2013b). Such cultures of encounter can never be self-contained; during his treatment of the promises and tensions surrounding the dialogue of everyday life, John Paul II extolls and invokes the idea that "the path of daily coexistence" equates to "sharing efforts and sacrifices in order to reach the same goal" (John Paul II, 1982). Here is support for the authors' premise that the six areas of dialogue named in this article are systematically linked in a comparable manner to way Diamond and McDonald's (1996) joining together of the various components of multi-track diplomacy. It also provides an appropriate transition to the next section, addressing the dialogue of deeds and action.

### **The Dialogue of Deeds and Action**

Flowing from a culture of encounter, this track, which is highly relevant to multi-level peacebuilding, concerns joint action with purposes of fostering solidarity and transforming society, allowing for different motivations to contribute to a common goal in a transparent manner (cf. Benedict XVI, 2011). Perhaps the most simple illustration of the dialogue of deeds is joint action toward a mutually agreed upon project, be it in the community, political, cultural, or social realms (cf. John Paul II, 1996). Underlying this action or growing from it, is a state of friendship and mutual understanding characterized by strong solidarity, which is responsive in the face of various manifestations of marginalization and injustice. To cite a prime recent example: Pope Francis's call to everyone on the planet to come together to care for our common home (Francis, 2015a). However, this track's potential can be incarnated in very specific local contexts as is evident in the work to build peace between divided communities in Northern Ireland, which is highlighted in Maria Power's (2007) work on community development in the service of reconciliation. The PCID summarizes this track of multi-level dialogue in the following manner:

A ... level of dialogue is that of deeds and collaboration with others for goals of a humanitarian, social, economic or political nature which are directed towards the liberation and advancement of mankind [sic.]. This kind of dialogue often occurs today in the context of international organisations, where Christians and the followers of other religions confront together the problems of the world (PCID, 1984, §31).

Employing a theocentric framing during his consideration of the implications of the dialogue of action, John Paul II adds that "practical co-operation creates mutual esteem among all believers in God and stimulates the desire to learn from others and to work with them" (John Paul II, 1996). In his World Day for Peace Message for 2016 on the need to overcome indifference to build peace, Pope Francis explicitly extends this formulation and situates it in light of imperatives named in *Nostra Aetate* and *Gaudium et Spes*. Here, Francis reiterates that these

Vatican II documents express the Catholic Church's openness to the world, in the former case to non-Christian religions and, in the latter case, in a manner that sees any suffering or affliction as a mantle that needs to be taken on and addressed by the followers of Christ. For Francis, these are imperatives that need to be engaged in a dialogical manner concerned with the common good "as a sign of solidarity, respect and affection" whilst the human family seeks to meet the challenges posed by the problems of this world (2015b, §2). Writing during the cold war and citing the example of international volunteer work, John Paul II adds to the imperatives in play here by asserting that Christians are required to be animated by a vital hope capable of transcending ideologies and systems as they "enter into dialogue with all people of goodwill, and create new relationships and new forms of solidarity" (John Paul II, 1985, §6). Dialogical cooperation on this level is necessarily ecumenical under conditions of Christian pluralism. For example, Benedict XVI (2006a) emphasizes that the spirit of reconciliation in Northern Ireland is intimately connected to the dialogue of the deed through joint action across denominational lines in support of the common good based upon mutual respect and cooperation (cf. Power 2007). With his pastoral simplicity, Francis (2013a) shades such mutual respect and cooperation as essential, calling it a "beautiful path to peace" that incrementally builds up cultures of encounter as people meet one another in the process of "doing good". This approach to building up cultures of encounter also extends from the dialogue of joint action to the dialogue of specialists.

### **The Dialogue of Specialists**

The dialogue of deeds and action is supported and supplemented by what the PCID has termed the dialogue of specialists (PCID, 1984). When understood in its broadest sense, this level of dialogue incorporates not only discussion by theological experts representing diverse positions but also draws primary inspiration from the teaching presented in *Gaudium et Spes* that each member of the laity should employ their specialist training and learning in the service of society, which, in this case, translates into contributions to peacebuilding. As a result, in practice, clerics are not excluded from this level of dialogue in roles as central participants but their inclusion is based in principle on their expertise in areas including, but not limited to, theology. As such, this is one area where there is a clear mandate for dialogue that recognizes the expertise of lay people, inclusive of lay theologians and experts in relatively more secular learning, in a manner that transcends clericalism. The PCID summarizes this level of dialogue in the following words:

Of particular interest is dialogue at the level of specialists, whether it be to confront, deepen, and enrich their respective religious heritages or to apply something of their expertise to the problems which must be faced by mankind in the course of its history. Such a dialogue normally occurs where one's partner already has his [sic.] own vision of the world and adheres to a religion which inspires him [sic.] to action. This is more easily accomplished in pluralistic societies where diverse traditions and ideologies coexist and sometimes come into contact. (PCID, 1984, §33)

For John Paul II, this dialogue of specialists cannot be reduced to single issues, a phenomenon that is sometimes active in academic-style focus, but must view the work for peace as taking place on a multi-dimensional plain. For example writing, in his World Day for Peace Message for 1983, while decrying the arms race that was active at the time and asserting that military, scientific and technical experts had a duty to employ their specialist knowledge to promote

dialogue and understanding, he asserted that: “the object of dialogue for peace cannot be reduced to a condemnation of the arms race; it is a question of searching for a whole more just *international order*, consensus on the more equitable sharing of goods, services, knowledge, information, and a firm determination to order these latter to the common good” (John Paul II, 1982). Three years later, when addressing a group of diplomats during his pastoral to visit to New Zealand, John Paul II added a helpful dimension to papal discourses on peacebuilding that appeals to the propensity of specialist to seek out substantive knowledge: “The path of dialogue is a path of discoveries, and the more we discover one another, the more we can replace the tensions of the past with bonds of peace” (John Paul II, 1986a). In his World Day for Peace Message covering that same theme, John Paul II (1985) was unequivocal in asserting “*the path of solidarity, dialogue and universal brotherhood...is the only path possible*” to breakdown the division between North and South, East and West, that were prevalent at the time (§4). This path is further connected by John Paul II to another aspect of the spirit of solidarity, one that finds roots in the search for truth, a quest that holds additional appeal to many specialists. Indeed, he adds that brokered agreements creating space for the sharing of expert knowledge, in order to promote the common good through ameliorating people’s quality of life and increased capacity of communities to respond to disasters, that give fine expression to the spirit of solidity and dialogue (John Paul II, 1986b, §4). John Paul II similarly called upon specialists to both work together and consider the impact of their collaborations in terms of fostering solidarity, dialogue, and the promotion of a culture of human rights. In this regard and echoing Diamond and McDonald’s (1996) reflections on the importance of communication for peacebuilding, he particularly called upon the media to consider ways in which they might be exalting violence and, instead, called on them to promote “mutual understanding and peace” (John Paul II, 1998, §12).

More recently, Pope Francis has emphasized an integral role for women at “the highest levels” of dialogue amongst specialists. He adds “that the contribution of women must not be limited to “feminine” issues or encounters only among women. Dialogue is a path that men and women must pursue together. Today, more than ever, it is necessary for women to be present” (Francis, 2017, §3). Francis is also explicit that women need to be included as full partners in the dialogue of religious experience, which forms the subject matter for this article’s next section.

### **The Dialogue of Spirituality and Religious Experience**

This level of dialogue is about sharing spirituality and even, often when a pre-existing relationship is already in place, religious ritual. The dialogue of religious experience is thus not only about sharing in the mode of insight, the abstract rendering of principles and belief, but also in the mode of lived spirituality. As such, this dialogical level is well poised to activate an experiential dimension of understanding and dialogue in the service of peacebuilding. The PCID summarizes this track of dialogue as follows:

At a deeper level, persons rooted in their own religious traditions can share experiences of prayer, contemplation, faith and duty, as well as their expressions and ways of searching for the Absolute. This type of dialogue can be a mutual enrichment and fruitful cooperation for promoting and preserving the highest values and spiritual ideals of man [sic.]. It leads naturally to each partner communicating to the other the reasons for his own faith. The sometimes profound differences between the faiths do not prevent this dialogue. (1984, §35)

The popes offer support for this level of dialogue in a number of ways. Sometimes this support for a dimension of dialogue that is at once transcendent and experiential is expressed in ways that are Christocentric and thus best suited to an ecumenical dialogue of spirituality amongst people who identify as Christian. For example, in his final World Day for Peace Message, Benedict XVI offered the following formulation:

To become authentic peacemakers, it is fundamental to keep in mind our transcendent dimension and to enter into constant dialogue with God, the Father of mercy, whereby we implore the redemption achieved for us by his only-begotten Son. In this way mankind can overcome that progressive dimming and rejection of peace which is sin in all its forms: selfishness and violence, greed and the will to power and dominion, intolerance, hatred and unjust structures. (Benedict XVI, 2012, §3)

This is not to say that popes are, in the end, advocating that religious experiences only be shared amongst Christians. Rather, John Paul II emphasizes that the inter-faith dimensions of sharing spirituality in the service of peacebuilding be extended to non-Christians, without generating the need to categorize all religious traditions as crass equivalents:

Without ignoring differences or playing them down, the Church is convinced that, in promoting peace, there are certain elements or aspects which can be profitably developed and put into practice with the followers of other faiths and confessions. Inter-religious contacts and, in a unique way, ecumenical dialogue lead to this. Thanks to these forms of encounter and exchange the various religions have been able to attain a clearer awareness of their considerable responsibilities with regard to the true good of humanity as a whole. The encounter between faith and reason, between religion and morality, can provide a decisive impulse towards dialogue and cooperation between peoples, cultures and religions (John Paul II, 1991, §5).

For his part, Benedict XVI (2010) firmly asserts that the dialogue of shared religious experience should not veer toward “*the way of relativism or religious syncretism,*” but he is also emphatic that common pursuits do not detract from proclaiming that seeing the source of all truth in the holy spirit (§11). This element of avoiding relativism is comparably evident in papal teaching that connects inviolable human dignity to the requirement that everyone build up a world marked by peace and justice (see Francis, 2016). This confluence is the subject of the present article’s next section.

### **The Dialogue of Human Dignity**

Foundational to the papal articulation of the dialogical imperative is the human person. For example, both John Paul II and Benedict XVI invoked, in essentialist terms, the notion that the “grammar” of dialogue is written on the hearts of humans and placed there by the divine creator (see Benedict XVI 2005, 2006c). People are imagined in contemporary papal teaching as dialogical-orientated agents who need to be encountered as full persons with inalienable rights, regardless of religious affiliation. Francis solidifies that point with his trademark pastoral accessibility: “before all else we need to keep alive in our world the thirst for the absolute, and to counter the dominance of a one-dimensional vision of the human person, a vision which reduces



human beings to what they produce and to what they consume: this is one of the most insidious temptations of our time” (Francis, 2013d). Moreover, in terms of papal teaching on peace, the crucial importance of human dignity in any social endeavor cannot be exaggerated (e.g. John Paul II, 1982, 1986b). This concern extends even to the level of culture. For John Paul II, each culture is best measured in terms of how it provides foundations for human dignity: “The authenticity of each human culture, the soundness of its underlying ethos, and hence the validity of its moral bearings, can be measured to an extent by its commitment to *the human cause* and by *its capacity to promote human dignity* at every level and in every circumstance” (John Paul II, 2000, §8).

Francis amplifies this point by teaching that the Catholic Church’s role in society is to support “those programmes which best respond to the dignity of each person and the common good. In doing this, she proposes in a clear way the fundamental values of human life and convictions which can then find expression in political activity” (Francis, 2013e, §243). Turning his attention to the area of leadership, which will be the focus of our next section, Benedict XVI extends the imperatives regarding deep respect for the dignity of the human person to the essential duties of religious leaders: “What an enormous responsibility religious leaders have: to imbue society with a profound awe and respect for human life and freedom; to ensure that human dignity is recognized and cherished; to facilitate peace and justice; to teach children what is right, good and reasonable!” (Benedict XVI, 2008).

### **The Dialogue of Leadership**

Much of papal teaching on dialogue focuses on the duties of leaders concerning their role as peacebuilders, including consideration surrounding how they are to approach the task of dialogue and their duties to foster the conditions for dialogue across various social, class, and international divides. This teaching is not limited to, but frequently invokes, the duties of religious leaders. Indeed, according to Benedict XVI’s (2010) teaching, a commitment to dialogue is intrinsic to the demands placed upon religious leaders by God: “The leaders of the great religions, thanks to their position, their influence and their authority in their respective communities, are the first ones called to mutual respect and dialogue.” Francis solidifies this teaching, seeing being a person of peace as an essential quality of any religious leader. Here, he continues, coupling dialogue with the responsibilities of religious leaders to be peacebuilders via one cogent summary of papal teaching on dialogue of leadership:

As leaders of the different religions we can do very much ... the courage of dialogue, which gives hope. In the world also, in societies, there is little peace because dialogue is lacking, it is hard to come out of the narrow horizon of one’s interests to open to a true and sincere encounter. Peace needs a tenacious, patient, strong, intelligent dialogue where nothing is lost. Dialogue can defeat war. Dialogue makes people of different generations live together, who often ignore one another; it makes citizens of different ethnic provenance and different convictions live together. Dialogue is the way of peace. Because dialogue fosters understanding, harmony, concord, peace. Because of this, it is vital that it grow, that it spread among people of every condition and conviction as a network of peace that protects the world and the weakest.

We, religious leaders, are called to be “dialoguers,” to act in the making of peace not as intermediaries, but as genuine mediators. Intermediaries seek to make reduction to all parties, in order to obtain a gain for themselves. Instead, a mediator is one who does not take anything for himself but spends himself generously, to the point of consuming himself, knowing that the only gain is that of peace. Each one of us is called to be an artisan of peace, uniting and not dividing, extinguishing hatred and not harboring it, opening the ways of dialogue and not raising new walls! We must dialogue, meet with one another to establish in the world the culture of dialogue, the culture of encounter (Francis, 2013c).

Within papal teaching, these imperatives are comparably present in the duties that political leaders have to be peacebuilders. According to Benedict XVI (2006b), this link is present in religious and political leaders’ shared duty “to guard against all forms of intolerance and to oppose all manifestations of violence”. This realm of shared responsibility can engender specific duties to build peace. For example, in his World Day for Peace Message for 2010 Benedict XVI taught that:

Protecting the natural environment in order to build a world of peace is thus a duty incumbent upon each and all. It is an urgent challenge, one to be faced with renewed and concerted commitment; it is also a providential opportunity to hand down to coming generations the prospect of a better future for all. May this be clear to world leaders and to those at every level who are concerned for the future of humanity: the protection of creation and peacemaking are profoundly linked!

In *Laudato Si’* Francis (2015a) emphasized that insight by calling on global leaders to ensure a vital planetary future by having the courage to craft binding and effective international agreements that meet our contemporary social and ecological challenges in order to effectively care for our common home. In that point, we have come full circle in our mapping of papal teaching on dialogue, as the dialogical level of leadership returns to the ultimate purpose of multi-track dialogues contribution to peacebuilding: helping to ensure a vital future marked by substantive peace and justice.

### **Conclusion: Encounter, the Role of Dialogue, and Peacebuilding Placed within a Mutually-Enhancing Framework**

As is already event in the above mapping of papal teaching, there is overlap and creep between the six tracks of dialogue we have identified in this article. Such overlap is not problematic. Rather it points back to how the six tracks of dialogue are, in fact, intertwined parts of one system. It follows that action on any one level within the system will have systemic consequences. As a result, one can start on any of the levels and have a positive effect in terms of fostering cultures of encounter and building peace via dialogue within the system as a whole. It is these systematic effects, as this article has begun to demonstrate, which make all the tracks important to the system’s health and vitality. As such, all positive work for dialogue, whether relatively large or small, come into view as important approaches to peacebuilding. Providing support for this insight, papal teaching serves to delineate and advocate for what we named as

multi-track dialogue, allowing the challenges and rewards of peacebuilding to be shared at different levels. Further, it allows for a strategy of working on multiple tracks of dialogue simultaneously in a deliberate manner in order to increase the chances of building substantive peace in the face of contemporary challenges ranging from the imperative to end armed conflict to embracing the duty of being properly welcoming to migrants. It follows that dialogue, understood as taking place on multiple, mutually-enhancing tracks, retains an important function in a world so desperately in need of more robust cultures of encounter. Indeed, people taking up a selection the insights the authors have mapped above as second-order principles are well poised to build up more just and vital societies.

The potential contribution of multi-track dialogue as a form of peacebuilding here is exciting for those committed to fostering cultures of encounter. It holds out the promise that the balance can shift in terms of the human contribution to peace on Earth away from destruction and more firmly towards flourishing. What Francis has named as the culture of encounter is crucial to this promise, so that diverse people can meet each other face-to-face under conditions of global pluralism and cooperate in the service of a creative common good. Multi-track dialogue holds the potential to be an active part of this transformative project, providing nourishing and supportive energy every step of the way on the path towards incarnating substantive peace in this world.

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