

Peace education

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Abstract

Current peace education does its utmost to be considered a unique educational practice, a field of research and a discourse that has its own philosophical, social, rhetorical and political aspects. As an eclectic and ambiguous construction peace education is currently enjoying the support and appreciation of most theoretical orientations and international political establishments. Peace education, however, has no theoretical framework whatsoever and it lacks elaboration on its central concepts such as "peace", "power", "violence", "justice" and "education". postmodernists, feminists, modernists and religious fundamentalists are united here in refusing the problematization of the central concepts, aims and agendas. Enlightened modernists and "soft" postmodernists, feminists, critical thinkers, conservatives, and liberals all ardently participate in celebrating the peace education. The challenge of legitimizing peace education as an academic discipline, field of research and as an educational much needed practice is quite demanding.

The uniqueness and aims of peace education

Current peace education does its utmost to be considered a unique educational practice, a field of research and a discourse that has its own philosophical, social, rhetorical and political aspects. As an eclectic and ambiguous construction, peace education is currently enjoying the support and appreciation of most theoretical orientations and international political establishments. Enlightened modernists and "soft" postmodernists, feminists, critical thinkers, conservatives, and liberals all ardently participate in celebrating peace education. The challenge of legitimizing peace education as an academic discipline or field of research and as a much needed educational practice is quite demanding. Salomon and Nevo present here a serious

question: "what is peace education? What is the core of peace education, its defining attributes? What, if anything, distinguishes its most prototypical instantiations from other, similar fields?" (Salomon & Nevo 1999, pp. 5-6). According to Ben-Porath "the field entitled 'peace education' is in fact so broad that authors disagree on the description of the problem they wish to address and correspondingly on the proper solution, as well as on the site in which peace education is to take place (Ben-Porath 2003: 525-534).

The theoretical stance of the field actually *calls for questioning the very justification of "peace education" as a distinctive, well-defined, self-reflective field of research and as a specific, theoretically justifiable educational practice*. It is worthwhile mentioning that, analytically, the reciprocity of its two fundamental concepts – the concept of "peace" and the concept of "education" – is hardly ever philosophically analyzed while each is highly problematic in itself and the two in their reciprocity (Gur-Ze'ev 2001). Some attempts to conceptualize peace education have been made in recent years, even if only as very modest preliminary efforts that left the main theoretical work for future scholars to attempt afresh (Salomon 2004: 257, Cooper 2005: 2, Page 2004:4, Ben-Porath 2003: 525, Ben-Porath 2006). According to Maxine Cooper (date, page) "there is no one clear agreed upon definition of peace education". Authors such as Harris (2004), Vriens (1997), Staub (2003) and Thompson (2003) have defined peace education in a variety of ways. This multiplicity of definitions has led to theorists such as Ben-Porath (2003) and Gur-Ze'ev (2001) stating that current definitions of 'peace' are too wide and nebulous" (Cooper 2005, 2). "What is peace education?": Salomon and Nevo (date, page) courageously ask the right question. "What is the core of peace education, its defining attributes? What, if anything, distinguishes its most prototypical instantiations from other, similar fields?"

They reply: "numerous programs are called 'peace education', ranging from violence reduction in schools to learning about war and peace, and from democratic education to the cultivation of self-esteem. Subsuming all of these under the category of peace education tends to blur important distinctions, such as between the kind of peace education that is carried out in areas of conflict, such as northern Ireland, and programs designed for more peaceful regions. Similarly, too wide a category tends to lump together programs designed to cultivate a universal peaceful outlook with programs aimed at promoting a peaceful disposition toward a particular group, race or nation to replace collective sentiments of hatred, discrimination, and hostility" (Salomon & Nevo 1999: 5-6).

In their 2002 paper "The nature of peace education" Salomon and Nevo conclude that "neither scholarly nor practical progress can take place in the absence of clear conceptions of what peace education is and what it is to serve" (Salomon and Nevo 2002: 3). It is of vital importance for peace education as a field of research and as praxis to go into this unknown land. A good beginning could have been *the elaboration of central categories* such as violence, structural violence, metaphysical violence, counter-violence, power, resistance, revolt, rebellion, disobedience. Such an elaboration should be realized synchronically and diachronically to be worthy of its name.

Central trends in current peace education

The central trends in current peace education are: (1) a modern, positivistic trend; (2) a modern critical trend; (3) postmodern, multicultural and postcolonialist trends; (4)

religious (mainly Christian) trends. Some of the modern and some of the postmodern sub-trends are more socially and critically oriented than others. In current peace education the social sensibility and the focus of the social context of different violences are articulated in different and even within conflicting philosophical, ideological and educational agendas. While most NGOs and UNESCO discussions and agencies are sensitive to the social and conflictual dimensions of the threats to peace, some modern trends that emphasize conflict resolution skills and some postmodern and pre-modern trends do not share such hopes and sensibilities. The critical sensitivity to the social context of peace education is clearly manifested in a typical UNESCO statement that declares that "there can be no genuine peace when the most elementary human rights are violated, or while situations of injustice continue to exist; conversely, human rights for all cannot take root and achieve full growth while latent or open conflicts are rife... Peace is incomplete with malnutrition, extreme poverty and the refusal of the rights of people to self-determination... The only lasting peace is a just peace based on respect for human rights. Furthermore, a just peace calls for the establishment of an equitable international order, which will preserve future generations from the scourge of war" (Brock-Utre 1983:2).

Some of the modernistic-oriented trends in peace education are more Marxist-oriented than others and some are more positivist-oriented among Marxists and liberals alike. **The positivistic-oriented trend** manifests a strong belief in teaching conflict resolution strategies. Very little room is reserved here for peace education as an explicit set of ideals and values. *Conflict resolution skills* are here conceived as a matter of objective professional knowledge, good didactics and fully developed rational participants. In its more mature versions this kind of peace education enhances sensitivity for the need to cultivate the conditions for the realization of the

rational potential for the development and realization of conflict resolution skills and procedures. Skills are to be taught with the quest for justice, responsibility, common good, or, at least rational utilitarianism. Some, like Chetkow-Yanoov, believe that people might be educated and taught for conflict resolution skills in the most specific manner (Chetkow-Yanoov 1996, 12-28). The success of such an education, some claim, is not only possible, it is even measurable in a relatively unproblematic manner (Harris 1996). This trend is, in the practical sense even if not in principle, in conflict with another non-critical trend – the widely celebrated UNESCO peace education ideology that emphasizes the need for *education for "culture of peace"* (UNESCO 2008).

The critical trend is the one inspired by or realized within the framework of *critical pedagogy*. It offers peace education a special role in light of its immanent emancipatory commitment and the centrality of the "voice" and the interests of the victims within this educational agenda. Freire, bell hooks, Riva-Gee and many other critical educational theorists such as McLaren and Giroux worked hard to give "voice" and visibility to the perspectives and interests of the marginalized. Riva-Gee tries to develop a critical peace education based not on Western universally-humanistic-oriented hegemonic perspectives and their interests, but on the contrary – *on the locality and self-evidence of the silenced*, based on Freire's concept of moral imagination, which will hopefully transcend "the bounds of technical thought" (Riva-Gee 1987: 160). The more modern-humanistic oriented trends within critical peace education are attacked by postmodern-oriented critical peace educationalists that claim that the traditional (modern-oriented) Freirean framework (Freire 1972) is universalistic and essentialist, and at bottom conceives hierarchical-oppressive relations between teacher and students as a precondition for educational progress

(Gur-Ze'ev 1998a: 463). These critical educational thinkers denote the educational implications of the centrality of anti-universalistic-oriented diversity, epistemology, culture and politics. Within a deep *belief* in the centrality of contingency, locality and non-linear-never-objective epistemology and philosophy of history they articulate their alternative peace education.

This is also an opening for a philosophical and political contradiction that challenges postmodern critical peace education. It is a contradiction between (1) the commitment to the agenda of *human rights* and the defense of democracy as a universally-valid set of values and ideals and (2) a strong anti-universalist and anti-essentialist conviction that results in automatic identification with the values, interest and narrative of "the victim" as against Western/white/American cultural and political violence that allegedly imposes a kind of universalism that destroys the uniqueness and potentials of all other "voices" and imposes on them self-misconception, distorted identities and even resistance solely within the framework of the colonialist-inflicted conceptual apparatus. Philosophically, educationally and politically this version of peace education does not end in resistance to dogmatism and violence as such; it concludes in resistance only to one kind of dogmatism while "understanding" and even supporting other violences – the "counter-violence" of the oppressed that realizes their self-evidence, closure and refusal for critical dialogue. This commitment of postmodern critical peace educationalists stands in conflict with other trends in current postmodern emancipatory/critical/radical education which emphasize the contingent, temporary, narrativistic and anti-universalistic/anti-objectivistic nature of human existence, representation, self-constitution and communication. This *contradiction between modern and postmodern critical peace education* and within postmodern critical peace education itself is more dramatic in some of its branches

then in others. Strong manifestations of it can be found in current multicultural and postcolonialist peace education.

The multicultural trend in peace education emphasizes diversity as a precondition for peace, in contrast to the *liberal agenda* of enhancing shared values and a homogeneous kind of reflection towards universal solidarity and responsibility as praised by liberal (Aduan & Bar-On 2004, Bar-Tal 2005) and existentialist-oriented peace educators (Gordon 2005) and most of the theorists of civil education (Rennebohm-Franz 1996: 266).

The postcolonialist trend in peace education directly confronts **liberal trends** that work for the promotion of a humanistic version of pluralism and tolerance that will be nourished by (Western-oriented "universal" liberal) shared values and ideals as a gateway to universal openness, dialogism, pluralism, responsibility and, eventually – peace. In recent years there has been more and more sensibility in the liberal agenda to the presence and relevance of cultural diversity and its multicultural educational implications, especially in arenas of dense conflict (Taylor 1992). Critical education theorists in the postmodernist multicultural and postcolonialist framework, such as Peter McLaren, Ward Churchill and Ilan Pappé, not only "understand" but actually support the explicit violence of the oppressed and present it as legitimate counter-violence that echoes only the original colonialist violence and that is free of moral responsibility to its actions that ultimately will build the bridge from colonialism and resistance to postcolonialism and peace. Within this framework effective *violence of the oppressed is actually nothing but peace education-in-action*.

Multicultural peace education bears a strong family resemblance to postcolonialist and postmodern peace education. The differentiation between these trends is not always unproblematic. Multicultural peace education (as all other members of this

family) is explicitly founded "on postmodernist theory" as against "modern national education" (Pappe 1999: 233). It is conceived as a pre-condition for a worthy peace education (Pappe 1997: 221). The new, postmodern methodology, in the service of peace education, is founded here on two assumptions: (1) negating the natural sciences as a model for human sciences, and (2) doubting the objectivity of the researcher. For Pappe "reality is a representative and interpretative issue. The historian, therefore, is allowed to represent it as he or she wishes...the historian should give freedom to the sole quality which gives him the power to write about the past – imagination. Not the kind of imagination which supports a reliable representation of the past as modernists understood this conception but rather imagination of the kind that will enable the historian to produce aesthetically the history, according to the known styles in comedy, tragedy and farce" (Pappe 1999: 235).

This is to occur in the service of the silenced and oppressed voices in a multicultural society (ibid: 236). Peace education is made possible here by means of this new methodology for giving voice to silenced ones on the road to "peace", which is conditioned by the deconstruction of the hegemony and its structural violence (Pappe 1997: 236).

The liberal trend in peace education, in its most theoretically developed version, is represented by Johan Galtung, the prominent founder of peace education as an academic field of research. Actually, Galtung offers the most theoretically developed concept of peace education per se. Already in the 1960s Galtung challenged the then excessive weight given to peace as the presence of the absence of direct violence. In his peace theory he included the concept of structural violence and offered the conceptions of "*positive peace*" and "*negative*

peace", notions that are richer and philosophically more challenging than most conceptualizations in current peace education. According to Galtung "two concepts of peace should be distinguished: negative peace, defined as the absence of organized violence between such major human groups as nations, but also between racial and ethnic groups of the magnitude that can be reached by internal wars; and positive peace, defined as a pattern of cooperation and integration between major human groups" (Galtung 1975: 29).

In light of his understanding of "positive peace", preceding the traditional positive Utopia projects, Galtung understood that he had to develop a vision of this harmonic future of humanity but also a well defined theory of violence: to address the role of violence in furthering progress in history. An attempt to understand the nature of violence is a precondition to making possible "positive peace" as a realization of human potentials. Accordingly, Galtung tells us that violence is "present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realization" (Galtung 1969: 168).

While developing an historical perspective and claiming that "*the needs perspective* has been used as an instrument of the human right tradition" (Galtung 1994: 107), Galtung includes in peace education the commitment to rights such as "the right to sleep", "the right to co-existence with nature" and "the right to be free to experiment with alternative ways of life" (ibid.: 104). He concludes that peace education should relate also to ecological challenges and cultural colonialism while challenging the invisibility of cultural violence and structural violence.

The concept of peace

The concept of peace that is so central to each of the various versions of peace education needs to be analyzed diachronically and synchronically, within pre-modern, modern and post-modern arenas. Its philosophical, cultural and political functions may fruitfully be distinctively elaborated in light of (1) a culture that is occupied with the presence of God, (2) in an arena occupied with the awareness of the bursting of the alternative to this rich presence, (3) in arenas that are free of both God and the killing of God. Gnosis and postmodernism manifest this trend in distinct ways.

"Peace" is a theological concept, even in its secular transformations. Within the framework of monotheism "peace" obtains its meaning in light of the tension between human exile from the Garden of Eden and the open possibility of redemption within a Godly teleological history. Within the framework of a sacred history the telos of a monotheistic-oriented progress toward redemption is different from that of (1) secular modern conceptions of progress toward peace and (2) postmodern conceptions of progress toward peace and the relations between conflicting violences and the possibility of harmonious human existence. Simultaneously, we should distinguish between monotheistic, pantheistic, Gnostic and postmodern concepts of peace. Within the pantheistic tradition of special relevance is the Buddhist conception of peace. Nirvana, one could claim, should not be conceived as the annihilation of life but as a possible realization of peace. Classic Greek conceptions of the relations between violence and peace are also of much value for such an analysis. Within the monotheistic tradition the Jewish vision of peace has a pivotal role as it is offered by Yeshayahu. Nirvana one could claim should not be conceived as annihilation of life but as a possible realization of peace. Isaiah 11:6 offers us a pre-modern monotheistic utopian vision of peace within which "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and

the leopard shall lie with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together...They shall not hurt nor destroy my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters covers the sea".

The monotheistic theological concept of history enables a collective, even cosmic Utopia, which is very different from the Homeric conception of individual *arête* (worthy life). It is important to note that pantheistic-oriented antiquity, in opposition to monotheistic-oriented antiquity, offered many different conceptions of peace, ranging from disregard to heroic refusal of the Jewish conception of peace. The Homeric hero and Greek civilization in general "was dominated by a conception of life which was essentially warlike. Whatever the event, whatever the change, conflict in one form or another was always close at hand. Religion often assumed violent overtones" (Zampaglione 1973: 18). The Gnostic tradition was a significant challenge to both pantheistic and monotheistic pre-modern traditions and their concept of peace. Accordingly, it offered a very different view of peace education. These traditions transformed themselves in modernity and even in the post-modern condition they offer rival conceptions of peace and peace education.

Modern peace education and its concept of peace are settled on the act or on the process of the killing of God. Modern philosophies have secularized theology and have much in common with the pre-modern concept of God as it is revealed in central concepts such as "progress" and "peace". The presumption of the human telos as "home-returning" is replaced by a vision of the killing of God as an act of giving birth known also as the act/process of critique that is part and parcel of a road leading to positive Utopia. This is a vision of a future harmonious state of affairs, which as in Marxian theory will secularize the eschatological religious vision and will offer a tiger-like leap from "prehistory" into "history" (Marx 1997: 1) or "peace" as an

earthly Garden of Eden. Positive Utopianism (Gur-Ze'ev 1996) made possible by human heroism as a feast of eating the flesh of the "Leviathan"/"father"/ God and edifying the deification of humanity is a magical spectacle: it transforms natural and historical realities.

The concept of progress as the historical realization of central ideals of humanism such as freedom manifests the fundamentality of the "home-returning" project to the Western tradition, a tradition whose impetus is fear of nature, of bestiality, of thingness, of scarcity and of meaninglessness. It is dramatically manifested in the philosophies of Condorcet, Hegel and Marx. According to Condorcet, humanity is under eternal self-rebirth and paves the way for itself to truth and happiness, by constantly relying on human reason and "the facts". This Utopia is possible, since nature has placed no limits on human self-edification (Condorcet 1955: 4). According to these philosophies, in its total fulfillment, within the framework of the ideal of freedom, humanity realizes peace in the form of effective total violence against external and "internal" nature and all forms of stagnation, borders, unchallenged power and the various manifestations of peace/consensus/truth. The idea of freedom as an eternal journey, burning, birth-giving overcoming, demands total control of human existence and unrestrained effective manipulation of nature. Total rational control and effectively silencing any opposition is taken as "peace".

Philosophers and poets, and more so workers, women, colored people and immigrants, have during the last three centuries been brutally faced with different forms, and on different occasions with the naivety, futility and hopelessness, of the humanistic-oriented "home-returning" project. They have met the fruits of the various and conflicting modern attempts to re-establishing, on earth, the Garden of Eden in the form of replacing total naivety, intimacy and integration with total control of

nature in all its dimensions. In the case of Nietzsche, Spengler, Camus, Adorno, Levinas and Derrida, this encounter offered an alternative to the quest for "peace" and to the presumptions, frameworks and telos of the various "home-returning" projects in the form of Diasporic philosophy, eternal tragic heroism and enduring nomadism (Gur-Ze'ev 2004).

In the poststructuralist tradition two main manifestations of conceptualizing "peace" are to be reconstructed. According to one, "peace" as a quest, as Utopia, as value, is produced, reproduced, represented, distributed and consumed as a symbol and as a cultural good that is nothing but an echo of the contingent power-relations; a productive illusion governing the stability of a specific context. Peace, in its essence, is nothing but violence that successfully defeated its enemies and was victorious enough to silence even the voices and traces of the oppression and suffering that go along with its triumph (Gur-Ze'ev 2007). According to the other, peace is an ideal worth struggling for. Poststructuralist theory should be a medium and a path for empowering a political, cultural and educational effort for bettering our world in the face of racism, gender discrimination, colonialism and ecological threats, Stuart Hall, Cornel West, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, bell hooks and Peter McLaren tell us. Such efforts, however, should overcome the Eurocentric, phallogocentric and racist presumptions that made possible Whiteness, patriarchy and colonialism, which until now have directed traditional (humanist-oriented and Christian-motivated) peace education. Some poststructuralist thinkers such as Rosi Braidotti, Homi Bhabha and Bracha Ettinger offer a less "political" yet no less practical practice and vision of peace within an endless heterogeneity and eternal diversity. In this light, Ettinger articulates peace within the framework of co-poiesis and asserts that "the originary event of peace is compassion" (Ettinger 2008). Braidotti integrates the struggle for

sustainability of the earth, peace education and the possibilities for eternal nomadism in cyberspace in an original manner which is an especially fruitful challenge to current peace education (Braidotti 2006).

Contradictions between explicit and implicit aims of peace education

Peace education faces a challenging contradiction. While in its various versions it is explicitly pro-Life it represents implicitly a fear of Life; an escape attempt into stability and consensus, regardless of the nature, telos or meaning of the system that it is committed to stabilize. As long as peace education is focused on "peace" as the elimination or prevention of destabilizing the hegemonic order of things regardless of the concrete and specific values, ideals, practices and telos of the system – in its essence it is a conservative, anti-Life power. Peace education in its central manifestation has neither ambitions nor yardsticks to evaluate peace in essentially different contexts and it fails to judge and resist victories as long as they practise effective violence and have the upper hand no matter the cost, the fruits or the telos of these victories. As Augustine claimed – earthly peace, actually, represents the "Earthly City" or the more effective secular violence and it is the opposite of genuine "peace" (Augustine 1957: 415).

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Peace education actually challenges the essence of dualism, dialectics, heterogeneity and Life itself (Gur-Ze'ev 2007: 305-6). It is understood by some scholars as a rescue attempt from the spatial-time factuality of suffering and it manifests a belief in a possible human progress toward Utopia. Montaigne, Haman, Yaacoby, Schelling, Schopenhauer and Adorno offer a powerful alternative to great modern believers in the possibility of progress toward enlightened education and the

realization of peace. The very idea of realizing and sustaining positive universal law, Utopia, or homogeneity was impossible or misleading, according to these critics of universal reason and rational emancipatory powers.

The very notion of "peace", one might claim, represents a quest for homogeneity, stability or victory of Thanatos, a return to nothingness. Ontologically peace education pre-supposes the preference and the possibility of the end of dialectics, the end of contradictions and difference that makes a difference. This is a legitimate philosophical position and Schopenhauer (1969) and Mainländer (1876) were the most dramatic amongst the defenders of this philosophical stand.

Counter-education for peace?

Eternal Diasporic existence, border-crossing and improvisation reflect their relation to Eros as an impetus to its enduring responsibility and creativity within co-poiesis that re-affirms Life. It is a specific, alternative togetherness with the Other, with the self and with the cosmos. Improvisation here is a Life philosophy in a postmodern era that is teachable to a certain degree and surely a worthy educational endeavor (Peretz 2003). The realities of present globalizing capitalism and the new techno-scientific horizon enable the concrete realization of improvisation in individual and public spheres. It is a way-of-life eternally open, always dangerous, and for all time individual. It offers neither a quest for a "perfect" collective or individual life nor a future of redeemed humanity. It cannot promise us a harmonious future that will realize nirvana, peace, final solutions, ultimate justice or consensual meaning that appeases everyone and everywhere. It is precisely these philosophical, existential and historical presumptions and visions that Diasporic counter-education must overcome when relating to "peace".

Counter-education is not a mere praxis, neither is it a given theory to be faithfully realized in order to establish the genuine heavenly Jerusalem. *Peace according to counter-education is the fruit of normalizing education*, as are "victories", "fulfillment of the nations' historical mission" and other manifestations of self-forgetfulness. At the same time it does not conceive, with Augustine, "peace" as an outstanding efficient realization of violence in a pre-redeemed world nor as a future possibility awaiting the chosen ones when they realize the true faith in its authorized interpretation. Peace as *openness* that streams out of Love and hospitalizes responsibility to ones-self, to the Other and to the world is of outmost importance for Diasporic counter-education. This is because Diasporic counter-education is not simply and abstractly "negative" neither is it an active "critique". It cannot be content with critically reconstructing the manners by which the various kinds of normalizing education work: fabricating, reproducing, policing and edifying the conceptual apparatus, values and yardsticks that enable and glorify the victory of explicit violence.

Counter-education, in contrast to normalizing education, does not strive for any sentimental "peace". Yet it is at peace with the Diasporic truth, so that in the absence of a non-manipulative consensus around the final ends, and in light of creative Love as the only end/home worthy of nomadism itself, *improvisation, becomes home*. Nomadism in eternal Diaspora religiously improvises itself in love of Life. Response-ability and respond-ability toward non-collective, toward pre-subjective and existential kinds of homelessness, toward erotic Diasporic existence might offer *here and now* pre-rational and post-dialogical forms of knowledge and togetherness; it might improvise toward new beginnings and a kind of human dance that we have not yet experienced historically yet we all share in our blessed moments: a kind of

awakening toward becoming-toward-the-world (Gur-Ze'ev 2005) as against becoming-swallowed-by-the-triumph-of-normalizing-education that is most effective in stable systems and days of tranquility, prosperity and "peace".

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