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The *Other* in Peace Education

A background paper

SUMMARY:

1. Introduction.
2. Violence as point of departure for peace education.
3. Difference and alterability.
4. Identity and the *other*.
5. Contingency and plural views of reality.

ABSTRACTS

Since acts of violence are always directed towards other people, the *other* plays a central role in Peace Education. On the basis of a complex concept of violence the author argues that violence could be restricted by a better understanding of the other, dealing with difference and alterity, identity and the *other*, contingency on plural views of reality.

The change in our understanding of reality has led to a new way of viewing the foreign and the *other*. This experience represents our initial approach to the *other* and without it constructive relations to foreign cultures are impossible.

Only by such an encounter with the other and the development of heterological thought can there be peace education.

Within the area of intercultural learning, the epistemological conditions governing knowledge are especially important. Through the plurality of views on reality and science, the experience of *difference* becomes a crucial moment in both the production and treatment of individual and societal knowledge.

1. Introduction

Violence is the main challenge for peace education. Education for peace aims at reducing violence in international, societal, community, group and interpersonal relations. Besides this basic intention peace education focuses on various other values. Based on this intention and

its central values education for peace tries to contribute to the development of less violent societies and "better" living conditions for more people. What is considered as "better" living conditions depends on value judgements and can be controversial. In spite of differences between concepts of peace there is no disagreement about the necessity of a non violent treatment of the other to provide peaceful social conditions. Therefore the following contribution will provide an anthropological analysis of the *nondeception of violence* and of the otherness of the *other* and of perspectives to deal with him or her in a non violent way.

The awareness of the interrelation between violence and many human activities and actions shows how difficult it is to understand the complex anthropological character of violence. To understand violence adequately it needs a consideration of its historical character and its contextualisation. The same applies to an adequate concept of the other. A non violent relation to the other is a central prerequisite for relatively peaceful societal relations. Therefore it needs a new consideration of the role of the other in peace education. Consequently this contribution deals with the anthropological character of violence and of the other as prerequisites and issues of peace education.

2. Violence as point of departure for peace education

In terms of language "violence" is a collective term, with whose help different phenomena can be characterized. The evaluation of social phenomena in regard to their violent character is not certain; they can change. Actions which as individual activities appear free of violence can reveal their violent character as collective activities. Thus, driving a car is not very violent as an individual act, however, it becomes destructive as collective action. The destructive character of many social phenomena is often not obvious at first, but appears massive later on. In turn, social actions at first considered destructive can later be evaluated as innovations. In such cases violence creates positively evaluated social change; it appears as a "violence *fondatrice*", as creative violence. In the confrontation between the younger and older generation it is mainly this destructive side of violence which manifests itself.

The socialization of man is violent. Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Freud have already pointed this out. Culture is connected with renunciation of drives and desires, with asceticism and discipline, with violence against another and oneself. The capability for violence probably makes possible above all the preservation of the species "man". Biologists speak of "genetic self-interest", of human action, whose moral judgement they consider to be a question of cultural value. In the extreme case the morally negative evaluated acts of violence in the middle- or long-term can ensure the preservation of the species or particular societies and cultures. Individual altruistic acts themselves can serve a genetic, or rather species-specific

egoism. From this perspective violence as a destructive force can hardly be distinguished from violence as a constructive force. An evaluation of its different forms is possible only in terms of context.

Also from a systematic perspective, it is difficult to avoid forces which endanger the preservation of the system. They appear as "surprising behaviour", as surprises for the system. In order that the negative forces not lead to the destruction of the system, the system reacts with an intensification of its controls. This strengthening of efforts to exclude "bad surprises" leads again to an increase in forces endangering the system. The stronger the controls are that are directed to the preservation of the system, the greater are the forces aimed at its change and reshaping. Herein lies a paradoxical situation, whose consequences require further attention for the understanding of power and systemic organization.

Neither living beings nor systems are "selfless"; rather, with their wish for self-preservation, they produce related "egoistic" violence and anti-violence. From one perspective, which refers the concept of violence not only to manifest forms of violence, but also in the violent aspect of life, systematic organization, gender- and generation relationships, the human relationship to nature and to oneself, the concept of violence gains a new anthropological complexity. If one sets up the foundation of this type of a broadened understanding of violence, then the concept indeed loses its simple clarity which it had in its sole application to manifest forms of violence. Nevertheless, the broadening of its meaning is inevitable, since otherwise many forms of its appearance which are designated with concepts like "structural violence" (GALTUNG, 1969), "foundation violence" (GIRARD, 1988), "symbolic violence" (BOURDIEU, 1993) cannot be understood as forms of violence.

Violence is articulated as "will to power" (NIETZSCHE), as a "force of destruction", as "the death drive" (FREUD). It becomes evident in the denial of minimal living conditions. It appears in socially tolerated forms as ambition, competition, and rivalry. Violence becomes manifest conspicuously in damage to the human body, in its mutilation and its annihilation. It occurs arbitrarily, unforeseen, accidentally and without calculation. In war, in crowds, mingles with a desire for risk, for the uncertain, for the sudden. It attracts and repulses; it is fascinating like horror and fright. Violence is a condition of human life and human socialization and is as such undeceivable.

The broadening of the concept of violence leads to scepticism in regard to any hope for overcoming violence. This scepticism does not include denial of political and social action. It is inadequate to understand violence only as "undesired social behaviour" and to create a reductionist concept of violence as the starting point of an opposition strategy. In order to be able to work out the given potential for violence with biological equipment and the socialization of man, a comprehensive understanding of violence is required. Due to the threat of

proceeding from the current racist acts of violence and acts directed against foreigners, the demand for rash political and social action is understandable and politically sensible: as an expression of resolute action, they create for politics an urgently needed legitimisation and develop models of engaged social relations. Thus, at the time it is difficult to foresee which effects this social and pedagogical intervention in the struggle against racism, hostility to foreigners and violence have. In any case its success also is dependent on how far a concept of power lies at its basis, which is fair to the complexity of the phenomenon of violence.

If people, because of their different outlook, their belonging to another ethnic group or religion, through no fault of their own become victims of violence, then the understanding of such events pushes one to a limit with which one cannot come to terms, but which also cannot be overstepped. The attempts to understand the acts of violence from individual life histories of the culprits explain some things, but still shed little light on the puzzling nature of the deed. What is striking in many acts of violence of young people is the lack of insight into the consequences of the deed. Breakdown of inhibitions and brutalization rarely is followed by sympathy with the victim. Instead one observes an upsetting inability for the perception of the victim's pain and suffering, an anaesthesia for which there is insufficient explanation.

Many acts of violence are carried out as group action. In order to be able to make the object of violence the scapegoat, a social crisis is required, which can arise through unemployment, social and cultural identity crises, lack of perspective, and which are seen as the cause and blame, which is different and which, therefore, presents itself as the object of projections of blame and exoneration. As an object of exclusion and ascribing of guilt, someone becomes a victim and makes possible a lack of feeling and violence. The scapegoat is perceived not in his similarity, but in his differentness and supposed culpability and is made a victim. Since the blame for social crises are ascribed to him, the group suffering in the crisis is "authorized" to mistreat the respected person as guilty. Since the group situation reduces the individual competence and responsibility for the act of violence, it is no longer the single individual who commits the act of violence, but the "mob". In mimetic processes the differences between the single members of the group are annulled, so that an anonymous "mass subject" arises, which commits the act of violence. Since the deed is not the action of a single but a "mass subject," the individuals usually manifest no consciousness of wrongdoing. The projection of unsolved problems of life and violence onto a scapegoat and the delegation of the act of violence to a "mass subject" are mechanisms which allow such acts of violence to arise, which, however, in order to be effective may not be thoroughly understood by the persons involved.

Many people feel pleasure when harm and mutilation of victims occur. With gladiator fights in the Roman stadiums during the times of the emperors, the ritual sacrificing of prisoners among the Aztecs, the feeling of omnipotence of an Indian despot who allows people to be executed in order to please his survivors, there is likewise a pleasure in the suffering and dying of other persons. War films and catastrophe films promise similar experiences, so that films like *Apocalypse Now* and *Jurassic Park* become great hits. Below the feeling of horror at wilful and cruel acts of violence lies a layer on which such outbreaks of violence attract people against their will. The fascination with violence, war and catastrophe is the expression of attraction and repulsion simultaneously.

In view of this situation the development of Christian morals can be understood as an attempt, through a reevaluation of archaic and pre-Christian values, to control the side of man which feels the desire for destruction. To what difficulties the attempts to contain power lead has been proven all too clearly by European history. Indeed the inadequacy of this attempt is not an objection to it. One can, like Girard, see a hope in the Christian religion to breaking the cycle of violence, which has arisen through the idea that every act of violence, in order to avenge the victim, must be followed by another one. When it is possible to forgive the enemy's act of violence, then this cycle of violence can perhaps be broken.

If violence fascinates, because it is connected with great fantasies, with situational self-enhancement, with the hope of freeing oneself from suffering due to violence through acts of violence, then it becomes clear how difficult only explanations, argumentation and insight can stand up against it or can even be accepted. If violence is the formless power of destruction, which calls into question the contextually different connections and can be expressed in many phenomena, it is difficult and often hopeless to protect oneself against its amalgamation. In spite of many attempts by theology, philosophy and science to understand the processes of the origin of violence, recognition is pushed continually to the limit. All attempts at clarification are somewhat provisional, so that the puzzling nature of the amalgamation of violence is not capable of being resolved. Since violence as an energetic force cannot be differentiated basically from other types of human energy, but results in a transformation of formless energy into specific situations and constellations, the explanation of its origin is particularly difficult. Violence is a possibility of human action and a virtual component of the human world, which can be actualized time and again.

Whoever suffers violence or becomes a witness of violence acts experiences the vulnerability and frailty of human life. The democratic societies of the West have been invested to control and channel the economic, political and socially determined potentials for violence. The decisive role belongs to the state, with whom the monopoly of violence lies. If its monopoly on violence is called in- to question, an irritation arises in the political order. If rituals of social interaction occur without force, it comes to an outbreak of violence, in the course of

which particular persons or groups are made responsible. If in such situations the mechanism of the regulation of violence is no longer understood, the relative lack of violence of everyday life is destroyed.

Situations of open violence constantly leave doubt as to the success of human development. Uncontained wars with horrible cruelty and tremendous violence against nature strengthen the perception of the great vulnerability and endangering of human life. A sensibility to the destructive side of human development arising out of such observations can lead to confronting the social and individual potential for violence, if the hope for controlling it once and for all has disappeared. Possibly this insight into the limits of controlling violence is a prerequisite for individually and socially productive relations with it. This insight provides also an adequate prerequisite for a non violent relationship to the other.

3. Difference and alterability

The preconditions for peace education lie in the acceptance of the *other* and in the mutual acceptance of differences. The road to understanding, co-operation and empathy is based on a recognition and acceptance of the other's differences. The *other* needs to be discovered; without the other there can be no education in today's world. Social development, too, needs the *other* as an external point in relation to which young people's inner world can unfold. The *other* thus represents the external, the societal environment towards which the young move and from which they need to distance themselves in order to find themselves as individuals. The situation is similar with regard to the *other* from a neighbouring cultural background. In this case, the *other* represents something which young people have not previously known, something which bewilders them and is a challenge to them but which simultaneously offers the chance to expand their cultural horizon. Such experiences of the foreign as an experience of the *other* are of central importance. We need to be open for such experiences and life-long learning processes. But we must also clarify the limited nature of such experiences for ourselves: knowledge of the *other* is not final, and can only be obstructed by stereotypes.

The problem of alterity has three dimensions:

- The first dimension is concerned with how we judge the value of the *other* and entails questions like: what do I think of someone belonging to another culture? Do I feel myself attracted or repelled by the other culture?
- The second dimension is the core issue of the approach to the *other* and is concerned with the ability to communicate: am I aware of the other, looking for proximity, identifying myself

with her/him, and assimilating the *other* into myself, or am I subsuming myself in my euphoria for the unknown?

- The third dimension deals with whether and how much I can know the *other* and how substantial such knowledge can be, though this does not need to involve a direct relationship to the *other*:

These three dimensions of learning are interrelated. Taken together, they aim at the positive acceptance of the exteriority of the *other*, whereby such acceptance presumes a degree of determination which first makes the experience of the external *other* possible. To experience the *other* in her/his otherness and to cope with it assumes the intention of getting to know the *other*: A person is not a single unity but consists of many contradictory parts, which are fragmented each with its own plans for action. Rimbaud's formulation of this is easy to remember: 'I is an other'. Here we have the recognition that as Freud pointed out, the ego (*das Ich*) is not master in its own house. By repressing the most obvious contradictions, the ego is continually attempting to create its own freedom, a freedom however which is being limited ever and again by heterogenous drives and normative prohibitions. Integrating the excluded parts of one's own person into one's self-perception is essential prior to the acceptance of the external *other*. Thus, within the framework of intercultural education the issue of the excluded, the ostracized, and societal norms continually reoccur together with the individual's contradictory *other* linked to the body and the natural environment, offering resistance through language and thought.

4. Identity and the *other*

Rimbaud's 'I is an other' suggests the further aspect of *the independence of the 'I' from the other as a consequence of the constitution of the 'I' by the other*. I and the *other* meet not as two discrete entities, closed off from the another. The complexity of the relationship stems from the genesis of the 'I' being grasped in all its multiplicity in the *other* and being held fast. Such a notion of the 'I' should not be thought of as a closed centre, but rather considered as *fragments* separated by cracks and crevices, shaped by the influence of the various forms and patterns of the *other*: Thus, the *other* is not only to be found outside of the individual but also inside. The *other* internalised in the 'I' makes dealing with the external other more difficult. As a consequence of this constellation, there is no definite standpoint before or beyond the *other*. The *other* is already included in all expressions of the 'I'. Who is seen as *other* and how they are seen depends solely on the 'I'. The meanings which the other attributes to her/himself is of equal importance; they need not be homogeneous but in any case go to make up the picture which the individual makes of the *other*.

The social character of human beings is indicated by the constellation between the 'I' and the *other*. Every individual needs other people for her/his own genesis. According to Plato and Aristotle human development, especially in childhood and early youth, takes place largely through *mimesis*, through the emulation of role-models and the increasingly independent and creative moulding of such models. This development is made possible by the anthropologically determined dependence of the child on the other. This dependence includes the three time dimensions of past, present and future. Any adult who takes care of a child is her/himself a result of a manifold cultural process which s/he passes on in a 'compressed form' to the next generation. S/he embodies cultural history in its most recent form for the child's present. Dealing with the *embodied culture* present in the adult enables the child to create the basis for shaping her/his future. In a similar way to how the individual's need for others shapes society so that the other through past and present effects not only the individual but also the future.

In as far as identity cannot be imagined without alterity, intercultural education incorporates a relational link between an irreducible 'I', fractionated into various specific forms, and the multiplicity of the other. Two aspects of this are worthy of particular note:

- the dual historicity of intercultural educational processes, i.e. firstly, in relation to the point at which the process is taking place and the specific conditions at the time and, secondly, in relation to the historical nature of contents and topics which are the objects of intercultural learning.
- the integrity of the individual, i.e. due to differences in life environment, life constellations and life history each individual has a unique bond of alterity and identity, which becomes the specific point of departure in intercultural education.

If, however, the question about the *other* includes the question about the own, or vice versa, then the processes of peace education are also systems of *self-thematisation* and *self-education*. If successful, they not only lead to an insight into the non-comprehensibility of the other, they also lead to *an unfamiliarity of self (Selbstfremdheit)*. In view of present-day social developments aimed at a universality which demystifies the world and makes the exotic disappear, there is a danger that in the future human beings will only encounter themselves: there will be a lack of the unknown, and a corresponding lack of those confrontations with the unknown through which a person can develop. If the loss of the unknown entails a danger for human development and education then the protective roles played by the *unfamiliarity of self* or the *alienation of the known* become increasingly important. The effort to maintain the unknown in the inner world as well as the external world would then be a necessary opposition to an universalism constantly removing differences.

Educational systems are inevitably involved in these tensions since they also constitute the processes.

The insight into the integrity of the individual is a consequence of the insight into the endangering of the unknown. The disappearance of the unknown could all too easily lead to a loss of that individuality which is constituted through dealing with the specific experience of the unknown. The integrity of the individual makes apparent the needs present in each individual for self-certainty. Self-certainty may be understood as the consciousness of what the individual has become, what s/he is, and s/he wants to become. A major tale in the genesis of such knowledge is played by self-thematisation, self-construction and self-reflection; this knowledge, however, is only temporary and alters in the course of life. André Gide expressed this experience in his *Journal des faux monnayeurs (The Counterfeiters)* when he wrote: 'I am only what I believe myself to be and that changes so constantly that, if I wasn't there to oversee things, my evening self wouldn't be able to recognise my self from the morning at all. Nothing can be more different from me than I myself'.

Individuality contains no unchanging core; it is full of contradictions and paradoxes. It is the result of a dynamic interaction with society. No individual is sufficient unto her/himself and can shape themselves alone. Every individual needs a community or society from which s/he can, with the help of mimesis, absorb and adopt many things in the course of her/his life and can pass them on to others. In learning and education, in work and in politics as well as happiness and unhappiness every individual needs other people. Self-understanding stems from and changes through a life with others and their acknowledgement of oneself. It is not possible for an individual to be produced by generalities or the general. In every individual there is a primeval element of *non-identity*. This non-identity is the basis of the integrity of the individual. Non-identity leads to the experience of unfamiliarity of self (*Selbstfremdheit*) which is one of the most important requirements for successfully dealing with the other.

In learning, a decisive role is played by the integrity of the individual, the non-identity, that empty space in each of us. It draws attention to the necessary openness for the encounter with the other, which is why intercultural learning ought not to be limited to the acquisition of skills for interacting with minorities. A constitutive part of education is the exposure to and conflict with foreign cultures, with the *other* in one's own culture and with one's own self. In view of the effort put into the European Union's development and in view of the tendency towards globalisation with a world wide political, economic and cultural web, learning and education can no longer remain exclusively organised on a national basis. The exposure to and challenge of the *other* in one's own and the foreign culture embodies a new importance and has to be perceived as a new quality. This would consist of the education of other people having to be planned by others, with the *development of heterological thought* at the centre of the framework of any such plan.

In heterological thought the relationships of central importance are those between known and unknown, knowing and not knowing, certainty and uncertainty. In view of increasing individualisation and differentiation in the web of every day life, the area is growing in which the single individual has to make decisions in order to live according to her/his own ideas and notions. In such conditions of life, marked by *de-traditionalisation* and *globalisation*, the amount of *reflection* needed is growing. Many things taken for granted in everyday life have come to be questioned and require consideration and decisions. The criteria to be used for an individual's decision-making have themselves become fluid and they too require thought and consideration. Never *before* have individuals been required to *actively* shape their own lives and accept the *responsibility* for doing so. It is a process which inevitably entails individuals frequently feeling that excessive demands are being placed on them. The increased space for the individual to shape their own lives often does not go hand in hand with an increase in real freedom. Frequently, an individual finds themselves trying to make decisions in a situation where the framework matrix of decision-making is itself unchangeable, something which, for example, commonly occurs in environmental questions. In green issues, the individual is encouraged to feel a responsibility for their own decisions even though these can hardly have an impact on the ecological macrostructure. Under life-conditions of what Beck *refers* to as the 'reflexive modern', the way of dealing with the other has become of increasing importance. Many individual decisions have to do with the shaping of the relationship between known and unknown.

5. Contingency and plural views of reality

The change in our understanding of reality has led to a new way of viewing the foreign and the *other*. In the ancient world, reality was compelling present in the moment it appeared; in the Middle Ages, reality was guaranteed by God; in the Renaissance, sovereign reason ensured the smooth grasp of the world and interaction with it. In contrast, nowadays there is no fixed reality, but rather reality has become something not able to be controlled by the subject her/himself. It has become non-compliant, largely non-determinable and threatening.

When reality is understood in this way, it ceases to be homogeneous. It appears *constructed and interpreted* and is experienced as *fracted and heterogeneous*. Such an understanding involves not only one's own world view but that of the other with her/his own construction and interpretation. The necessary consequence of experiencing reality in this form is an inescapable plurality of views with each interpretation finding its limits where it meets the other's viewpoint; thus, experience of the world encompasses a new complexity since the other's viewpoint must always be taken into account as a possibility.

The increasing opacity of the world leads to the individual feeling more insecure and having to cope with the difference between her/himself and the other; uncertainty and insecurity become the central features of societal life. Their origins can be found both in the world external to the individual and in her/his own internal life and, in the end, in the changing relationship between external and internal. Confronted with this situation, there are no lack of attempts to make insecurity bearable by transforming it into ostensible certainty. But such 'certainty' cannot help to regain the security which has been lost. It has only relative validity and comes about primarily through excluding alternatives. What is to be excluded is partially chosen through the individual's own psychological and social constitution and partially by societal power structures with all the limits and exclusions entailed by their norms, values, ideologies and discourses.

Within the area of intercultural learning, the epistemological conditions governing knowledge are especially important. Through the plurality of views on reality and science, the experience of *difference* becomes a crucial moment in both the production and treatment of individual and societal knowledge. This experience represents our initial approach to *the other* and without it constructive relations to foreign cultures are impossible. Heterological thinking is required to cope with the multiplicity and multiple meanings involved in this situation, and to be the means through which thought absorbs the difference to the own. Only by such an encounter with the other and the development of heterological thought can there be peace education.

Contingency has a decisive role to play in all of these processes. Contingent may be defined as what could be otherwise. What is not apparently at one's disposal at a planning stage but may be influenced incidentally or through direct action is contingent. Contingency describes the room available for open possibilities within which events become contingent through a particular course of action without being able to say beforehand how and why things develop in this way and not in another. As Luhmann put it: 'What is contingent is neither necessary nor impossible; something which can be how it is (was, will be) but could also be differently possible. Consequently, the term covers things given, experienced, expected, thought, or imagined in respect of their being possibly different. The contingent defines objects (*Gegenstände*) with a horizon of possible changes. It assumes a given world, describing not what is possible at all, but that which from the point of view of reality is possible in another way'. This definition of contingency can also be seen as a description of today's experience of reality with the role the other plays in constituting that reality. In dealing with the other, we are dealing with contingency which can only be planned to a limited degree. The results of our plans remain unpredictable since they are partially coincidental. Yet, it is just through this situation itself that contingency presents us with different opportunities to experience the foreign and the own, opening up previously unknown horizons and matrixes. During these processes a *consciousness of virtuality* is created, leading to a new way of dealing with the

other: It is in this area that peace education is not limited by known borders, where non-determined spaces await shaping and structuring and where opportunities need to be created.

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