

When Democracy Is Not Enough: Towards Education For A Culture Of Peace

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Democracy's ghosts: exclusion

Democracy can be thought of as a system of government with four key elements:

- A political system for choosing and replacing governments through free and fair elections,
- the active participation of the people, as citizens, in politics and civic life;
- protection of the human rights of all citizens; and
- a rule of law, in which the laws and procedures apply equally to all citizens.

Democracy is a key means by which people to **choose their leaders** and to **hold them accountable** for both their policies and their conduct while in office.

It enables **citizens to choose between competing parties** in regular, free and fair elections.

Central to the idea of democracy is the aspiration that government is based on the **consent of those who are governed**.

Sovereignty of the people is a precondition, in that the real power flows from the people to the leaders who hold power only temporarily. The creation of laws and policies **require majority support in parliament**, but the rights of minorities are protected in various ways.

If one were to do a text analysis on a written piece on democracy, the registers that show up would consist of concepts like: **citizen, participation, choice, government, party or parties, rule of law, accountability, governance, majority, votes, right to vote, power, free and fair elections, consent, power** etc.

It is clear that the pillar in the thinking about democracy is the **citizen**, with the process being played out in a **nation state**.

The non-citizen's presence is not a factor, neither is democracy clear about events outside of the nation-state i.e. beyond the "familiar", the "community".

It does not have propositions as to how citizens should relate to one another outside of electoral processes, or in the private spheres of lived world.

In fact, the very arena within which democracy operates, i.e. the nation state, is not without its ghosts and blind spots. As Sartwell has so well put, communities as a form of group identity, are not made from the abstractions of shared beliefs, but on something more difficult to articulate... a deep level of

communication which Sartwell calls “**emitting noise in the right shape**”.

To the extent that conceptions of community miss the crucial formative role of **exclusion**, they misconstrue how and why they form and perpetuate themselves, while remaining quite unequipped to deal with this darker shadow... **the inbuilt exclusion inherent in the DNA.**

Communities are formed by exclusions and by violence, and what constitutes ‘normal’ is articulated by a **process of scapegoating** – i.e. creating and internalizing hallucinatory images that degrade the ‘other’ as excuses to dominate, abuse, murder, or exploit people while exalting the ‘we’ group.

Thus, exclusion is key in defining an identity in a community (Sartwell, 2002:47-49).

In other words, democracy does not equip the citizen with tools to reconstruct itself **from an exclusion based identity to one that is embracing.**

A cursory look at critical studies in democracy reveals this blindspot quite easily. One of the insightful ones by Luckham et al (1998) takes us down some path of disentangling the knots and ghosts.

It very perceptively delineates key points of tension in democracies. One of this is the tension between democracy as a ***universal aspiration for popular self rule*** and as a ***historically bounded form of governance*** in modern states (i.e. liberal democracy).

The second one is the tension between **democratic institutions** and the diverse forms and discourses of **democratic politics** in particular national and regional contexts.

From here, debates on:

- the *meaning of democracy* in different regions of the world;
- the *extent and 'depth' of democracy* – i.e. how far the actual practice of democracy is consistent with the aspirations of democracy especially in the way disadvantaged groups – including women, the rural poor – experience citizenship in democratic politics;
- the *'policy-effectiveness' of democracy* i.e. whether democracy can meet the demands of ordinary people, particularly the poor as well as reconciling the conflicting expectations regarding social equity and economic growth;
- the *'conflict-management' effectiveness of democracy* i.e. how far can democracies promote compromise in the face of conflicts, especially those that have the potential to be violent, including those based on seemingly primordial and non-negotiable identity claims (Luckham et al ibid: 4-5) – have been raised

In each of these instances, both the Athenian model of democracy practiced in early Greece which put great emphasis on **maximizing active citizenship**; and the liberal representative model very strong in the US and England which emerged at the end of the C18th with its emphasis on **political contestation, on rational discussion and on avoiding tyranny** can be queried from the perspective of substantive exclusion in that 'citizenship' excluded women and slaves; while in England, suffrage was based on property.

With exclusion identified as a central ghost in the practice of democracy, it can be said that in the West liberal states only became **substantive democracies after the political mobilization of the broad mass of citizens**, including urban **working class** and **women** behind demands which included the **extension of the franchise to all adult citizens**.

It is this democratic revolution which increased citizen involvement in the affairs of government, that **expanded the concept of citizenship itself to cover economic, social, as well as political entitlements** (Luckham et al. ibid 6-9).

The solution to this is usually posited through **greater democratic politics**: i.e. the development of a culture of **informed participation**, which, in turn depends of the capacity of citizens to hold powerful private and state agents to account.

It is hoped that by deepening the **politics of society** one can better influence the **high politics of the state**. As Waldon Bello aptly puts it, democratic politics would pay great attention to **democratic deficits** which can occur when democracy is:

- is **narrowed down to elections** as the arbiter of political succession,
- when **formal equality** does not say much about the **social, cultural or economic structure** within which this equality is embedded,
- when running for office at any level of government becomes a **very expensive affair**, which ends up leaving the masses with a narrow pool of people (elite of means) to choose from – legitimating perfectly the social and economic status quo, and
- When **popular sector challenge is repressed**, and **redistributive policies are blocked** (Bello 2005).

It is about **the citizen and their interaction with the state** within the framework of the nation state as the marker of identity.

Human Rights

In the attempt to find tools to help us manage diversity, the **human rights** framework has emerged as an overarching instrument of choice in international and national discourse across the world.

In the 1990s, the **human rights approach** to development championed by UNDP (see UNDP 2000) became the legislative and social justice-focused strategy which emphasizes the balance of rights, not content of rights, in the promotion of tolerance.

This approach is backed by the United Nations as proclaimed in its Charter, which states that human rights are "for all without distinction". Today, it can be stated that human rights is an accepted moral framework globally (Odora Hoppers 2007).

Democracy and human rights are not "rewards for development" but are **critical in achieving it**.

This implies that there is a collective commitment based on the **vision of humanity**, and the solidarity required in order to fulfil the vision of a better life for all.

The value addition element in the HRA is the introduction of the **moral dimension, urgency, responsibility and accountability** to the implementation of development objectives (SIDA 2000).

But like democracy, tolerance and globalization, the human rights discourse needs some critical attention as well. Falk has drawn attention to the historical fact that when the 1948 Human Rights Declaration (i.e. the Universal Declaration on Human Rights – UDHR) was drawn within the UN framework, the **United States** was the triumphant power that had just rescued Europe from itself.

The US's emphasis at that point in time, was on **the failure of the liberal democracies to heed the Nazi internal repressiveness in the years of the build-up to WWII.**

It seemed important then, to **posit an international humanitarian responsibility in relation to the possible re-emergence of totalitarian abuses of the future.**

For the old the **old East**, the UDHR was not contentious because the communists saw in it a **clear ideological high ground** with respect to issues of societal well being on which they had scored remarkably well.

Moreover, they had the **political power to contest the economic model of capitalism** on which the development of the west was premised, and had the military power to back their position and safeguard their inherent values, ideology and political systems.

They therefore regarded diplomacy related to human rights as an opportunity to challenge the western emphasis on **individual civil and political rights** by championing and invoking the socialist emphasis on the **economic and social rights of a collective nature.**

To **political and intellectual elites** on both sides of the divide as well as in the South, human rights was regarded as providing an

arena for the **exchange of propaganda charges on the plane of international relations** (Falk 1999:94).

The small and large scripts associated with the crafting of the UDHR were therefore not about a better world for all, but a mixture of triumphantism, minimalism, and containment.

The **liberal democracies** with strong class structures in particular were intent on ensuring that redundancy in this area was achieved, because of their worries about potential activism from the poorer sections of their respective citizenries.

Authoritarian states in the old East for their part, could subscribe to such normative standards which were so incompatible with their operating codes because of the sense that there was no prospect for either *implementation from without*, or *pressure from within*.

But it was the ***anti-colonial struggle*** which involved countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America that drew attention to active forms of oppressive rules at the transnational level; and the ***anti-apartheid campaign*** that created robust transnational political support for the human rights of self determination, which, though initially absent from the Universal Declaration, **became a foundational basis for human rights in general.**

The **right to self determination** was later elevated to the eminence of being posited as a **bridge between economic, social and cultural rights; and political and civil rights** (Falk 1999 pp:96).

Apart from these movements, there was a ***significant partially subversive presence*** within the sinews of government that adhered itself to idealist views and believed in some sort of global community based on ***law and morality*** that was both

possible and necessary. This force was guided mainly by notions of civilizational solidarity rather than conquest. (Falk *ibid*: 96, 97).

But the limitations of the Human Rights discourse have been most patently captured in Howard Richard's analyses. To begin with, he acknowledges that "rights" is an especially **valuable concept** because it is a concept that almost everybody respects as having **moral authority**.

It makes an **inward appeal to conscience** especially in the respect that most people develop inwardly to guide their own conduct and avoid infringing on other people's rights.

It has moral authority in the sense that one is considered **justified** while acting within one's rights, and also in the sense that one is considered to be justified in becoming **indignant** when one's rights are violated.

A cultural context where it is acknowledged that the rights of others are supposed to be respected provides a framework for meaningful dialogue (Richards 2004).

But according to Richards, what we need is something **more than respect for the rights of others** for three reasons.

FIRSTLY, citing Hegel Richards argues that there are too many rights. And **where there is a surplus of rights, force decides**. Commonly in a war, or in a bar room brawl, both sides can paint with the language of rights to give their cause the colour of moral superiority, and to give themselves the colour of 'knights errant' fighting for a righteous cause.

And where culturally recognized precepts of right gives both sides good moral arguments, there is a **moral stalemate** in

which both sides are **rhetorically armed with good reasons for declaring the other evil**. It is at this point that **force becomes the final arbiter**.

The SECOND argument he makes drawing from Karl Marx, is that **the stubborn persistence of poverty, the instability of capitalist systems, and the exploitation of labour are all consistent with recognizing the rights of humanity embodied in the laws of commerce**. Where everything is sold at its market price, in a free market, with property rights respected, it is often the case that labour is sold for little or nothing. This is a NORM which is also endorsed by the very same societies that harp on human rights.

The third argument drawn from Solzhenitsyn and Mahatma Gandhi, is that in principle, **rights without duties are unworkable**. Emphasizing rights at the expense of duties is similar to adopting Denis Diderot's 18th century definition of liberty: 'whatever the law does not forbid is allowed'.

Like liberty, rights-talk can easily lend itself to an **irresponsible ethic**.

It authorizes everyone to say what they are supposed to be ALLOWED TO DO, and ARE SUPPOSED TO HAVE and SUPPOSED TO GET.

But it does not make anyone responsible for contributing to the welfare of others, or to the common good (Richards 2004)

It is at this point that he points us to the need to go an extra step, and take seriously the need to work towards a culture of peace.

Understanding violence, negative and positive peace

Peace scholars distinguish between “negative” and “positive” peace. Another invaluable tool is the typology of ‘violence’ articulated by the founder of peace studies Johan Galtung who distinguishes between **direct**, **structural** and **cultural** or epistemic violence.

According to Galtung, **DIRECT VIOLENCE** kills quickly or maims. Its victims are numbered through body counts. Killing plus maiming together constitute what is commonly called ‘casualties’ - used in assessing the magnitude of the war.

“Negative peace” is therefore the absence of direct violence.

Violence is **STRUCTURAL** when force is not exerted wilfully by a person but by a structure created and perpetuated by a custom or law. It is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations. The violence which is inbuilt into the structures does not give the citizens equal power and life chances (Galtung 1996). When equality is withheld from citizens, the term structural violence can be applied to the state of affairs. Other manifestations of structural violence can be identified in:

- paternalistic and selective development which deprives arbitrarily certain areas of possible development.
- systems of slavery and colonial oppression (including ghettos in contemporary society).
- violence of the status quo, meaning the routine oppression and racism by the ‘good humour society’ which systematically robs and marginalizes people in everyday life situations.
- structural violence of apartheid institutionalized through racial legislation.

Structural violence shows itself when **resources and powers are unequally shared** and are the property of a restricted number who use them, not for the good of all, but for their own profit and the domination of the less favoured. Even **peaceful laws and practices which help to maintain this order can be seen as ‘instruments’, ‘masks’ or ‘guises of violence’**.

Violence, Thornton contends along with Galtung, **are meaningfully constituted**, and from that point of view, **are sustained by human actors in everyday life situations** (Thornton 1990; Galtung 1996).

CULTURAL VIOLENCE highlights the way in which the *act of direct violence* and the *fact of structural violence* are legitimized and thus rendered acceptable in society.

One way in which cultural violence works is by **changing the moral colour** of an act from wrong to right or to some other intermediate meaning palatable to the status quo.

Another way it works is by **making reality opaque**, so that we do not see the violent act or fact, or that when we see it, we see it not as violent (Galtung 1996).

By making reality opaque, cultural violence **prevents consciousness formation** (conscientization). Blocking conscientization and mobilization means preventing the processes needed to transform the interests in a structural conflict into consciously held values.

It also means preventing or blocking the processes needed to transform a non-organized, non-crystallized party to a structural conflict into **a conscious actor in a conflict**. A mere act of benevolence or charity (of whatever degree) from above

blunting repression and exploitation is primarily insufficient (Galtung 1985, 1996).

The analysis of the nature of violence at a cosmological plane therefore reveals three main types of violence. *Direct violence*, often expressed as **military power**, usually kills quickly, and intended to do so. *Structural violence*, often expressed as **economic power**, kill slowly for instance, by corroding the basis for self-reliance and aggravating vulnerability. *Cultural/epistemic violence* - often expressed as **cultural power**, legitimizes the other two types of power, finding language and telling those who wield power that they have a right to do so, even a duty - for instance, because the victims of direct and/or structural power are pagans, savages, atheists, kulaks, and communists (Odora Hoppers 1998).

Positive peace is the absence of structural and cultural violence.

Working for Peace

According to Richards, peace -- to the extent that it exists at all -- is perhaps best thought of as **a fragile, complex, ongoing, collective social achievement**.

In the words of former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan:

“Peace is never a perfect achievement,” Annan said, because it follows war, suffering, hatred. It follows the worst that man can do.”

“To restore humanity from such hell requires the patience of ages, the will to see light when all is dark and hope when all is bleak. It is truly the work of

those who shall run and not be weary ...of those who shall walk and not faint.” (cited by Cassandra 2004)

Many different motives lead people to **break the peace**. Tendencies toward violence are deeply rooted in the human body.

Furthermore, the institutions that culture has created have not as a general rule brought out the best in human nature. On the contrary, **war, overt violence, and structural violence** have been **readily institutionalized**.

Peace, when it happens, happens because, in spite of drives toward war and, generally, toward violence, **there are many peaceful institutions and practices**.

These practices build on tendencies toward peace which are, like those toward violence, also deeply rooted in the human body. (If it were not so, humanity would have become extinct long ago).

The positive institutions, **the labours of love**, strive to make sure that all of the many things that might go wrong don't happen. **When peace succeeds, when humans do not kill other humans, it is a multi-faceted accomplishment** (Richards 2004).

From this perspective, war can be thought of as failure. When war breaks out, on any scale, at any level, it means negotiations have failed. **The blame for the failure belongs to all of the institutions that could have contributed to creating a context and an atmosphere in which cooperation and mutual respect on agreed terms might have succeeded** -- governments, churches, schools, courts, families, parenting, entertainment,

labour unions, psychology, history, business, economic structures ...

War is therefore **collective failure, a failure of complex processes**. No institution, no set of human relationships and practices, can make peace alone. It takes all of them (or, rather, positive transformations of all of them) to carry out the cooperative task of building peace.

TO WORK FOR PEACE therefore is to work **against violence**.

We analyze its forms and causes, we predict in order to prevent, and we act preventively and curatively (Galtung 2002).

It is **performing peaceful acts**, which when repeated become **peaceful practices**, and give rise to **peaceful traditions**. Richards argues that we learn how to make peace by studying peace that has already been made.

He notes, for example, that the border between the United States and Canada is thousands of miles long and completely unfortified, as are the borders that separate Sweden from Finland and Norway. Peace, at some places, at some levels, has become so much a part of **networks of trusting relationships that people and nations have disarmed**.

Citing Boulding, he states that when the **strength of peaceful institutions exceeds any stress that threatens to tear them apart, then peace is stable**. (Boulding 1978).

Thus the negative meaning of peace (trying to make sure that violence does not happen) leads inevitably to its **positive meanings**.

Creating a context where **negotiations can succeed, cultivating agreements, practicing a spiritual discipline, moral development, and strengthening peaceful institutions are names for some facets of positive peacebuilding.** They are inseparable from building a world that is more fair and just, more welcoming and inclusive (Richards 2004).

Conclusion

Peace, like war, is a **disposition**, or a **set of dispositions and acts of human will** – i.e. **conscious activity**. On the road to attaining moral change and cultural transformation, we therefore need to study more closely **intentionality** in human conduct. We also need to pay attention to both aggressive impulses AND calculated self interest as both lead to violence. The building of a culture of peace begins with **respect for the rights of persons** because it is a cornerstone of the global civic culture that exists.

But **peacebuilding** does reach further than respect for the rights of others, or regular elections because it **employs and enhances other ethics**. **Trust, solidarity, love, caring, respect for nature, integrity, honesty, character, forgiveness, non-violence, generosity, sacrifice for the common good** can all be found embedded in cultural norms of one group of people or another.

Peace building works to draw from the diverse cultures these **positive norms** and seeks to develop **ethical growth points** above and beyond the ethic of respect for the rights of others.

Education for a culture of peace would **infuse the living and coming generations with a profound aversion against violence**. It also means **understanding conflict as part of**

human existence, and learning the skills for transformation of those conflicts **without resorting to violence**.

It builds on the good and the best from different cultures, traditions and faiths, to create a **new ethics for human existence**.

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