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**Recasting Classical and Contemporary Philosophies to Ground Peace
Education: A Review Essay of**

**James Page, *Peace Education: Exploring Ethical and Philosophical
Foundations* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Press, 2008)**

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One semester, my doctoral advisor and I planned a course entitled “global and philosophical perspectives of peace education.” Along with a number of graduate students, we embarked on a journey to study the cultural context and philosophy of peace education in another country. Graduate students from the host peace program happily joined us as we explored the philosophical roots of peace education and local contexts. The reoccurring sentiment from the graduate students, who joined us, was that philosophy of peace (education) was the missing element of their peace education program curriculum. Dr. James Page has provided an important text “Peace Education: Exploring Ethical and Philosophical Foundations” which is, in a part an answer to critiques pertaining to the lack of and call for philosophical grounding in the field of peace education. Page’s project is necessary both practically in the development of the emerging field of peace education, but philosophically to continue the exploration of philosophical thought which provides essential articulation of a framework for this robust, essential field of experience and action.

Dr. Page begins by questioning some key assumptions about peace, and addressing criticisms targeting peace studies, research and education. One such notion is

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the presumed need for peace and what peace is. Many have misused the term peace, to paint it as ineffective, idealistic and to justify the need for war. Criticism of peace education ranges from accusations of political and ideological indoctrination to a field that is unscholarly and missionary in nature. To be fair, some who claim to do peace education fit this description. Page describes how peace education has developed in response to global wars, key thinkers, instruments, and institutions. Page approaches the philosophy of peace education through engagement in the question of indoctrination. Page utilizes philosophy of education methodology, which he suggests is based upon the respect of student autonomy. Autonomy in this context does not mean the disregard for inquiry into controversial issues and subject matters¹. Page suggests that since violence is pervasive, deeply engrained in human culture, education for peace is a necessary alternative to that violent norm. According to the author, peace education is the exploration of peace moments and educational movements² as well as a challenge to authority.³ Peace education connects the political violence to the personal. Since meaning is derived from such violence and conflict, Page rightly questions how might we derive meaning from peace? Thus, this book is partly phenomenological, in that it describes what peace education is, by examining some philosophies that might uncover and inform our thinking on peace.

Dr. Page takes up the challenges of peace researchers and educators to engage in philosophical exploration of peace education. Page's stated aim is "to investigate and enunciate ethico-philosophical foundations for peace education"⁴. This aim results from the taken for grantedness of a philosophy of peace education. Just as peace has assumed meaning, the philosophy of peace education is assumed. Page frames his argument as dialectic, and postfoundationalist in his exploration of how virtue ethics, consequentialist ethics, conservative political ethics, aesthetic ethics, and care ethics might represent the possibilities for foundations of peace education.

Virtue Ethics

The chapter on virtue ethics describes an agent centered ethical stance concerned with being, and the good, while rejecting duty and utopian ideals as characterized in the enlightenment project⁵. Page briefly mentions virtue ethics of Confucianism, Buddhism and Islam, but focuses on Christian theological arguments explaining its underlying aspects as rooted in nonviolence and peace itself as a virtue. Page explores virtue ethics from the perspective of Aristotle's moral philosophy. Aristotle presents a praxiological perspective, which connects just acts with peaceful ones. This connection is essential, for justice is a necessary condition for peace. The concept of *eudemonia*, expressed by

¹ James Page, *Peace Education: Exploring Ethical and Philosophical Foundations*. Charlotte: Information Age Press, 2008 p 14.

² *ibid.*, p. 15

³ *ibid.*, p. 16

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 18

⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 23-24

Aristotle as happiness or human flourishing, is connected with UN documents articulating the need and actions necessary for a culture of peace. Aristotle's thinking about means and ends connects with the process orientation of contemporary peace educators⁶. Other philosophical concepts within the virtue ethics frameworks come from Erasmus' humanism and Spinoza's disdain for war. Page suggests that the theological commitments of Dietrich Bonhoeffer provide an example of moral courage. Some modern thinkers on virtue ethics and peace education include such prominent figures as Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Alasdair MacIntyre ' *After Virtue* provides a powerful argument for the reclamation of virtue described by the ancients to be revived in our every day practice of living and attainment of the good life and common good. In the discussion of virtue ethics (and thinkers attributed to this perspective) and peace education, Page gleans it as a kind of positionality, or way of being in the world, that can be learned and must be educated, for it to take hold. He describes how certain virtues are used to justify war and violent tendencies, and traces how violence is not virtuous and or the desired end, unlike peace. He suggests that nonviolent virtues cannot be reasoned away in the face of social pressure.⁷

Consequentialism

Ethical positions are based on the consequences of particular acts. Page delineates but finds many similarities between consequential and utilitarian ethical arguments (utilitarianism is a prominent type of consequentialism). Consequentialism attempts to give equal weight to everyone's interests. Yet the act, which provides the greatest good, within this system is given preference.⁸ Consequentialism, according to Page can be indirect, motive, *qui bono*, egoistic, altruistic and universal.

Page finds Francis Hutcheson (1725/1755), whose work focuses on international law, war and peace, compatible with peace education because of Hutcheson's believe that the advantages of peace are the most beneficial to society. Jeremy Bentham's work on what would bring about the greatest happiness and least amount of suffering is applied to his plan for peace through international politics and law. Page argues that Bentham's ethics is a basis for political education to produce peace. John Stuart Mill (1861) furthers the utilitarian project, but focuses on the idea of liberty to imply agency and obligation for individuals to act for the greatest good. Mills also suggests that education about international law be a significant part of liberal education. Page argues that the work of Karl Marx, by virtue of worker revolution to remedy injustice, has a consequentialist-utilitarian outlook. Page counts Social Reconstructionism in American educational theory as consequentialist. Based on normative values espoused by educational theorists, John Dewey (1897/1916), and George Counts (1932), education ought transform society into one that is truly democratic, cooperative and peaceful. Page discusses critical literacy and pedagogy in terms of Paulo Friere work to help individuals read oppressive

⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 27-30

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 55

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 67

conditions for liberation, for the sake of the entire society. Elaine Scarry looks at how some use language to hide the social reality of violence (indirect and direct), to mislead the public. Bringing this reality to light is part of the work of critical literacy. Page suggests that Martin Luther King 's (1968) work goes beyond the nonviolent principles and civil rights to education about the connections of economic, political and social injustice as well as violence (as manifested in American involvement in Vietnam) to a peaceful social order. If there is no justice, there is no peace. All of the aforementioned theorists fall within the consequentialist framework because they advocate transformation and reform (action) for the greatest good (effect) of all society.

Conservative Political Ethics

Page traces conservative ethics from sources like Plato, Aristotle, Hegel, Michael Oak shot and Anthony Quinton, not as beginnings of ideologies, but retrieval of true conservatism. True conservatism sees the quick movement into war as radical and unthoughtful. Violence itself disrupts the social order. For instance, Page points out that much conservative political ethics were a response to the violence of the French revolution, not the injustices the revolution attempted to change. Page suggests that conservatism can be identified in terms of the empiricism of Aristotle's moderation, morality between excess and defect- the two extremes; and Plato's rationalism, in which the concept of peace might be considered a form. Grounded in the same rationalism, Michael Oakshot, like Gandhi suggests that peace is the way.⁹ Anthony Quinton suggests conservative political ethics, establishes the customs of nonviolence within world religions, as well as skepticism needed to question political ideologies and dogmatic approaches- such as militarism in nationalism.¹⁰ To conserve does not preclude change, but requires thoughtful strategy and careful tactics. Conservatism in this light is not inconsistent with long-term social transformation.

In this section, Page is involved in a retrieval of conservative political values to recast what might be considered a misinterpretation of what it means to be conservative. Conservatism, in this light, values peace, cooperation and nonviolence, as the opposite to direct and indirect violence, which is disruptive to all forms of social life. This exploration into conservative ethics is important for public examination, especially since they present an alternative view of the impetus for political conservatism. Modern conceptions have veered far from Page's recapitulation of conservative - ethical grounding to mindless, unexamined political ideologies that are aimed at disrupting peace, making war and wasting natural resources.

Aesthetic Ethics

The aesthetic ethical aspects of philosophy in peace education are based on what things; actions, ideas, and material are found to be beautiful, attractive and or pleasing. Page finds aesthetic ethical values emanating from Judeo-Christian, non-legalistic

⁹ *ibid.*, p.102

¹⁰ *ibid.*, pp.107-108

perspective. For instance, planetary consciousness fostered by peace educators is desirable. The possibilities for aesthetics as an ethical framework hold greater possibility, as a result of the failure of enlightenment obligatory ethics arising from duty. Traditional ethical systems fail to deal with human suffering and have been used to justify direct and indirect violence. Classical notions of aesthetics are beauty, symmetry, taste and judgment. Plato's form of beauty refers internally to one's character and externally to the state. Religious traditions equate aesthetic beauty to God, justice and peace. All of which are related. In this section, Page deals with Buddhism, Christianity, Islam¹¹, David Hume, Adam Smith, Kant, Kierkegaard, Dewey and Albert Schweitzer. The analysis of Adam Smith is extremely important in light of his thought in the *Wealth of Nations*. Smith's thoughts on morality are profound. Adam Smith suggests that individuals ought to experience displeasure for the pain experienced by others. Smith also argues that people are less likely to feel for others when they are wealthy.¹² Page describes as aesthetic ethics in a histo-linear movement from classical, religious, enlightenment, to modernity, ending with contemporary perspectives. Page includes Elise Boulding's work on imagining preferred futures, as well as Maxine Greene's work in moral imagination. Work toward a culture of peace (education) is especially at home in aesthetic - ethical ideas of tolerance and educating the senses to respect the beauty of humanity and justice.

Care Ethics

Care is the final and most critiqued source for peace education philosophy in this document. Care ethics comprise a major aspect of thinking about peace education. Care has been described as a women's way of knowing, and as relational (existential) in nature. Page deals with the work of Carol Gilligan (1982/1985), Nel Noddings (1996/2008), and Heidegger (1975). This reading considers care as problematically situated as a contextual- feminist ethics and in need of expansion. Page argues that the aspect of care, focusing on women as natural peacemakers reinforces dichotomies. Men, he suggests also participate in nurturing and activities. Page calls for a universal ethic of care, without qualification. These critiques are understandable, but ignore the strong influence of patriarchy on most of the women (and men) of the world. Thus, reinforcing women as peacemakers is necessary for the purposes of empowerment, and affinity. To argue for universal care ethics (non-gendered), and its expansion beyond immediate relations is important, but one cannot deny the importance of women's ways of knowing and contributions to peace making. The fact that many women are involved in a culture of violence does not negate the need for women's affinity groups in peacemaking. Page rightly includes the expansion of an ethic of care to the environment.

Analysis

¹¹ *ibid.*, pp. 123- 130

¹² *ibid.*, pp. 134- 136

The work of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Kant, Hume, Dewey and Judeo-Christian theology, are reoccurring fixtures in each of the ethical perspectives. In focusing on these western thinkers and theologies, James has articulated the nuanced interpretations supporting peace education, while debunking some thought used to justify war and structural inequities. James is masterful in his retrieval of classic ideas to ground us in thinking peacefully.

Page is honest in his description of the limitations in scope of this project. It is acknowledgement that this study is, for the most part, from a Western Eurocentric, epistemological framework. This is helpful in terms of realizing what needs to be articulated in the philosophy of peace education.

The focus on Judeo-Christian ethics is often juxtaposed with a few references to world religion. Yet, although the mention of Islam, Buddhism, and Gandhi shows that 'positive cultural contributions' to the philosophy of peace education are present, these contributions need further, nuanced development. In our articulation of various worldviews through 'world religions', we should be careful of essentializing global philosophies into religions that correspond with various cultures. Sen writes "well-meaning attempts at pursuing global peace can have very counterproductive consequences when these attempts are founded on fundamentally illusory understandings of the world of human beings."¹³

Page's philosophy of peace education is mostly positive in terms of his annunciation of classical, enlightenment and philosophical thinking. This is necessary. There is much value in this kind of project. In "Prophetic Thought in Postmodern Times", Cornell West¹⁴ suggests that we should have discernment. We should understand the complexities of the past. Because we are thinking humans, we cannot help but connect with ideas, but we must track hypocrisy (colonialism, enlightenment, and patriarchy etc...), reintroducing ourselves to old and new knowledge in order to expand the progression of our understanding. Finally, West suggests that we must have hope- by facing the skeletons of histories as a challenge, not as a conclusion. Page's imaginative recasting of philosophy, that has, at times, been used to justify the horrors of war and structural violence, is necessary. This capacity has been lost, social imagination for peace is not matched by our collective capacity for destruction.

Yet, inquiry might be continued through ongoing examination and deconstruction of patriarchy, and the overlapping hierarchies, racism, and sexism found in western intellectual history. The exclusion of thinkers and experiences from members of oppressed groups and classes are foundations of contemporary exclusion that the philosophy of peace education must explore. Some possibilities for expansions of a more

¹³ *ibid.*, p.13

¹⁴ Cornell West, *Prophetic Thought in Postmodern Times* (Monroe ME: Common Courage Press, 1993), p.5

holistic philosophy of peace education include Confucius, Mary Wollstonecraft¹⁵, Sojourner Truth (1851) “Ain’t I a woman”, W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) *Souls of Black Folk*, Simone De Beauvoir (1953) *Second Sex*, Franz Fanon’s (1961) *Wretched of the Earth*, Chinua Achebe’s (1951) *Things Fall Apart*, Senegalese President Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Martinican poet Aimé Césaire Senghold work in the Negritude, Hannah Arendt’s work on moral imagination in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Cornell West (1993), Howard Zinn’s (2003) *A People’s History of the United States*; and both Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im (2001), and Jack Donnelly’s (2001) discussion about LGBTQ issues in the *Philosophy of Human Rights*. Even this listing is grossly incomplete.¹⁶ Martin Berlowitz (2006) writes about the exclusion of African American perspectives in peace education.¹⁷ This work is necessary and important. The philosophy of peace education is planetary and cosmopolitan. It is especially important to recognize the voice of those excluded, not only to redress past exclusions, but also to begin to address how much we don’t know about humanity, because of the forced silencing of the oppressed since the beginning of human history. As Alistair Macintyre suggests in *After Virtue*, we only have fragments of morality.

Dr. Page is involved in a recasting of well-known thought to begin gathering, filling in and connecting those fragments. Our author explains how social theory, political philosophy, ethics and educational theory, contribute to the peace educational enterprise, whether explicit or not. *Peace Education: Exploring Philosophical Foundations* reveals how the envisioning, proposing, planning, teaching (of numerous schools of thought) for a better world all correspond with explicit goals of the field, as well as encouraging the good in the individual, community, through values and norms. Despite the difficulties in any articulation that philosophy of peace education will have, this book is an impressive piece in the development of intellectual foundations for peace education. It should be used as a primary source of curriculum and research for peace educators, students, advocates and scholars. I plan to use it in my courses.

¹⁵ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the rights of women*, 1792

¹⁶ Jack Donnelly, Non-Discrimination and Sexual Orientation: Making a Place for Sexual Minorities in the Global Human Rights Regime. In Patrick Hayden. Eds. *The Philosophy of Human Rights*. St. Paul, MN. :Paragon Press, 2001 (p.574).

¹⁷ Marvin Berlowitz; Long, Nathan A.; Jackson, Eric R. The Exclusion and Distortion of African American Perspectives in Peace Education. *Educational Studies: Journal of the American Educational Studies Association*; v39 n1 p5-15, 2006.