

Unity-Based Peace Education*

H.B. Danesh, Ph.D.

Founder and President, International Education for Peace Institute

INTRODUCTION

The conceptual dilemma of peace education is most consequential. Many theories of peace use conflict as their point of departure and the cessation of violence (negative peace) as their dominant objective. This focus on conflict as an inherent and therefore an unavoidable and even necessary aspect of human life has had far-reaching consequences, the most important of which regards the orientation of the discipline of peace studies and the effectiveness of peace education programs. By placing “conflict” at the core of theories of peace and “conflict management” as their ultimate objective, the discipline of peace studies has abandoned its primary *raison d’être*—to study the nature of peace and the dynamics of peacebuilding. Most theories of peace do not place adequate emphasis on the process of peace building and the development of the inherent capacities of individuals, institutions, communities, civil society, and governments, both to prevent violence and to create harmonious relationships. Furthermore, the current conceptual formulations of peace studies and peace education pay little or no attention to the all-important task of building a civilization of peace— peaceful and just, united and diverse, prosperous and benevolent, technologically advanced and environmentally healthy, intellectually rich and morally sound.

A careful review of current thought on the causes of conflict and violence shows that certain basic assumptions form the foundation of most existing theories with regard to the phenomena of human conflict in all its varied expressions—intrapersonal, interpersonal, and intergroup. These assumptions basically focus on issues of survival, security, pleasure, and individual and/or group identity; consider interpersonal/intergroup power-struggle and intense competition as necessary and inevitable life processes; and deem conflict the unavoidable outcome of this struggle (Dahrendorf, 1958, Coser cited in Wehr, 2001). According to these theories, the best we could accomplish is to decrease the destructiveness of human conflict and develop tools to resolve conflicts before they turn into aggression and violence. Within this overriding prominence accorded to “conflict” in most peace-related theories and action, there have been notable efforts on the part of various researchers and practitioners to offset the unavoidable negative consequences of conflict. Among these are several concepts and approaches to conflict resolution such as “super-ordinate goals” (Deutsch, 1973; Galtung & Jacobsen, 2000; Worchel, 1986), cooperative conflict resolution (Deutsch, 1994; Johnson, Johnson, & Tjosvold, 2000), principled negotiation (Fisher, Ury, and Patton, 1991), conflict transformation (Lederach, 1995; Bush & Opp, 2001) and stable peace (Boulding, 1977; 1978; 1991; Galtung, 1996).

During the course of the past decade, a new and challenging perspective on peace and conflict has been proposed, defining unity as the main law governing all human relationships and conflict as the absence of unity. Based on these concepts, an Integrative Theory of Peace has been offered and a comprehensive Unity-Based Peace Education program—Education for Peace—has been formulated and successfully implemented in over 100 schools, involving some 80,000 students and thousands of teachers and parents in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) (Danesh 1986, 2002, & 2006; Danesh & Danesh 2002a, 2002b & 2004; Clarke-Habibi, 2005).

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THE INTEGRATIVE THEORY OF PEACE

The Integrative Theory of Peace (ITP) is based on the concept that peace is, at once, a psychological, social, political, ethical, and spiritual state with expressions at intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, international, and global areas of human life.

ITP holds that all human states of being, including peace, are the outcome of the main human cognitive (knowing), emotive (loving), and conative (choosing) capacities, which together determine the nature of our worldview. ITP draws from the existing body of research on issues of psychosocial development and peace education, developmental approach to conflict resolution, and the lessons learned and observations made during seven years of implementation of the Education for Peace Program (EFP) in 112 schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). ITP consists of four subtheories:

- Peace is a psychosocial and political as well as moral and spiritual condition;
- Peace is the main expression of a unity-based worldview;
- A unity-based worldview is the prerequisite for creating both a culture of peace and culture of healing;
- A comprehensive, integrated, and lifelong education is the most effective approach for development of a unity-based worldview.

Additionally, ITP posits that peace has its roots in the:

- Satisfaction of human needs for survival, safety and security;
- Human quest for freedom, justice, and interconnectedness; and
- Human search for meaning, purpose, and righteousness.

The theory further holds that peace is the finest fruit of the human individual and social maturation process. It is the ultimate outcome of our transition from self-centered and anxiety-ridden insecurities of survival instincts and the quarrelsome, dichotomous tensions of identity-formation processes to a universal and all-inclusive state of awareness of our fundamental oneness and connectedness with all humanity and, in fact, with all life.

Three concepts, described below, form the foundations of ITP: Unity, Worldview, and Human Individual and Collective Development.

The Concept of Unity

The concept of unity states that unity, not conflict, is the central governing law of life and that once unity is established, conflicts are often prevented or easily resolved. Unity is defined as:

...a conscious and purposeful condition of convergence of two or more unique entities in a state of harmony, integration, and cooperation to create a new evolving entity(s), usually, of a same or a higher level of integration and complexity. The animating force of unity is love, which is expressed variably in different conditions of existence. (Danesh & Danesh, 2002a)

This definition states that unity in all its expressions—psychological, social, and moral—is a deliberate phenomenon and not a chance occurrence devoid of intention, purpose, and informed operation. We have the option to create unity and conditions conducive to life or to do the opposite. As soon as the law of unity is violated, conflict with all its destructive properties shapes our intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social processes and relationships. In brief, *conflict is the absence of unity and disunity—the source and cause of conflict.*

The Concept of Worldview

Worldview has been variably defined, often within three different frameworks: mechanistic, organismic, and contextualistic.

- The mechanistic worldview sees both the individual and the world, as well as the dynamics of their respective development and change, within a mechanical and machine-like framework;
- The organismic worldview sees the world as a living organism in a constant state of change, adaptation, and modification;
- The contextualistic worldview considers all human behavior to have meaning and to be open to comprehension within a specific social–historical context (Miller, 1999).

In the ITP and EFP literature, the concept of worldview refers to our view of reality, human nature, the purpose of life, and the character and quality of human relationships. The all-important issues of personal and group narrative and identity formation that play a significant role with respect to both conflict and peace are important aspects of this formulation of worldview (Bar-Tal, 1999, 2000; Salomon, 2002, 2006). Our worldviews are formed by our respective life experiences, education, and unique individual endowments and creativity. Of these three foci of influence on worldview development, the role of education is especially significant because, in the final analysis, education has a profound impact on how we both respond to and shape our life experiences. Every society determines the focus, philosophy, and scope of education it provides for its children and youth at home, in the school, and through community resources, particularly those of religion, culture, and history. It is within the framework of our worldviews that we understand ourselves, explain events, and interpret the words and deeds of others. Our worldviews also influence our philosophical perspectives and scientific formulations and paradigms.

Three meta-categories of worldview—survival-based, identity-based, and unity-based—are identified within the parameters of psychosocial developmental stages roughly corresponding to those of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Both survival-based and identity-based worldviews revolve around the issue of power—dominance and power-struggle, respectively—and are highly prone to conflict and violence. The main characteristics of these three meta-categories of worldview are summarized in Table 1 for ease of access:

TABLE 1: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE THREE META-CATEGORIES OF WORLDVIEW

| <i>Survival-Based Worldview</i> | <i>Identity-Based Worldview</i> | <i>Unity-Based Worldview</i> |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal during childhood. • Corresponds to the agrarian and pre-industrial periods of societal development. • Develops under conditions of poverty, injustice, anarchy, physical threat, and war. • Life processes are viewed as being dangerous. • Dichotomous view of human nature as either bad (weak) or good (strong) and human | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal during adolescence. • Corresponds to the gradual coming of age of both the individual and the society. • Is particularly prevalent during emergence from authoritarian and/or revolutionary circumstances and rapid social change. • Life is viewed as an arena of the “survival of the fittest”. • Individualistic view of human nature with focus on | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal during adulthood. • Corresponds with the phase of maturity of humanity based on the consciousness of the oneness of humanity. • Is the next stage in human individual and collective development. • Life is seen as the process of unity-building. • Views human nature to be potentially noble, creative and integrative and highly |

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| <p>beings are viewed as good or evil.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main purpose of life is survival. • All relationships take place in the context of domination and submission— Proclivity to use force and/or conformity. • Conflict and violence are inevitable. • Authoritarianism is the main mode of leadership and governance. | <p>individualism and group-identities—ethnicity, nationality, race, religion, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main purpose of life is to “have” and to “win”, which correspond with the notion of human nature as greedy and selfish. • All relationships operate within the parameters of extremes of competition and rivalry. • Conflict is viewed as inherent in human nature and necessary for progress. • Adversarial Democracy is the main mode of leadership and governance. | <p>responsive to the forces of nature and nurture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views the main purpose of human life to create a civilization of peace: equal, just, liberal, moral, diverse, united. • All relationships operate within the parameters of the law of unity in the context of diversity. • Conflict is viewed as absence of unity • An integrated unity-based democracy is seen emerging as the main mode of leadership and governance. (Danesh, 2002, 2006) |
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The Concept of Individual and Collective Development

The subject of human development has been the focal point of many researchers and theorists, among them Freud (1940), Piaget (1960), Erikson (1968), Flavell (1999), Bandura (1977), and many others. These theories are primarily concerned with the development of the individual and, secondarily address the dynamics of development of social entities and focus on biological as well as environmental and experiential dimensions of human development.

The environmental and experiential aspects of development refer to the monumental human capacity for learning, thinking, and self-awareness—in brief, human consciousness. Human development takes place on the axis of consciousness, which shapes both our worldview and the manner in which we engage in the task of influencing and changing our environments. Thus, over time, we develop a greater understanding of ourselves, of other human beings, of nature, and of reality in all its varied expressions. This new understanding, in turn, modifies our behavior toward self, others, and the environment, and helps us to continuously refine the nature of all our relationships. The normal direction of the development of worldview is toward ever-higher levels of integration and unity. The two main engines of human development are science, which discovers fundamental laws that govern all natural phenomena, and religion that enunciates and elucidates spiritual laws that inform us of the purpose and direction of human life.

Development of human consciousness has integrative and creative qualities and its beneficial outcomes affect all involved—the individual, the society, and the environment. In this creative cycle, the development of the individual contributes to the advancement of the society which, in turn, facilitates the process of individual development. It is here that the true power of the individual resides and the capacity of society to empower its members is expressed.

EDUCATION FOR PEACE

Based on the main concepts of the ITP, in the course of the past decade (1997-2007) several Unity-Based Peace programs have been developed, including Conflict-Free Conflict Resolution (CFCR) (Danesh & Danesh, 2002a, 2002b, 2004) and Education for Peace (EFP) (Clarke-Habibi,

2005; Danesh 2006, Danesh & Clarke-Habibi, 2007). In September 1999, a CFR workshop was held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Among the participants were BiH government officials, members of the international community in that country, and many journalists. The BiH participants were members of the three main ethnic populations of the country who had been engaged in the bitter and calamitous civil war of 1992-1995. Because of the positive outcome of the workshop, an invitation was extended by the government and international officials to the International Education for Peace Institute to bring their EFP Program to the BiH schools.

The EFP Program is a comprehensive and integrative program of peace education for primary and secondary schools. The program was initially piloted in six (three primary and three secondary) schools in BiH and later was extended to a total of 112 schools in that country. These schools together have some 80,000 students, 5,000 teachers and thousands of parents from the three main ethnic BiH populations—Bosniak (Muslim), Croat (Catholic), and Serb (Orthodox Christian)—who were engaged in the violent civil war of 1992–1995. These school communities are located in 65 villages, towns, and cities across the country.

Four conditions are identified by ITP for a successful program of peace education: a unity-based worldview, a culture of peace, a culture of healing, and a peace-based curriculum for all educational activities. Based on these conditions, the EFP Program focuses on four main tasks: a) to assist all members of the school community to reflect on their own worldviews and to gradually try to develop a peace-based worldview; b) to assist all participants to embark on the creation of a culture of peace in and between their school communities; c) to create a culture of healing with the capacity to help its members to gradually, but effectively, recover from the damages of protracted conflict affecting themselves, their families, and community members; and d) to learn how to successfully prevent new conflicts and resolve them in a peaceful manner, without resorting to violence, once they have occurred.

The process of worldview transformation from conflict-orientation to peace-orientation is the framework within which all prerequisites of EFP are met and its main objectives are achieved. In this context, the *culture of peace* refers to an environment in which the principles of equality, justice, individual and group safety and security, and freedom in the context of ethical, lawful, and democratic practices are the norm. The *culture of healing* is characterized by the principles of truth and truthfulness, trust and trustworthiness, empathy and cooperation, fairness and fair mindedness, forgiveness and reconciliation at interpersonal and intergroup levels. In the course of the application of the EFP Program in BiH schools, it was demonstrated that once a culture of peace and a culture of healing in and between the participating schools is created, a third beneficial outcome—a *culture of excellence*—emerges. The culture of excellence refers to an environment that encourages and facilitates high levels of accomplishment by all members of the school community in academic, artistic, behavioral, ethical, and skills aspects of their respective learning endeavors.

The EFP Integrative Curriculum is designed to be both *universal* and *specific*. The universality of the curriculum refers to the universal principles of peace—the common heritage of humanity, the diverse expression of this common heritage, and the absolute necessity to create a unified and peaceful world within this framework of oneness and diversity without resorting to conflict and violence. While the principles of peace education are universal, their implementation is context-specific. For each distinct society, the EFP-International faculty, in close collaboration with the educators and experts from that community, designs a specific version of the EFP Curriculum with due consideration of the unique characteristics, needs, and challenges of that community.

The EFP Integrative Curriculum is designed in a flexible format, allowing it to evolve and be modified in light of new research findings and insights gained in the course of implementation

of the EFP Curriculum and other peace education programs in schools around the world. The EFP Curriculum consists of ten interrelated but independent books that together, comprise a comprehensive and integrative peace education curriculum. The Curriculum is formulated to provide a framework within which all subjects—literature, history, math, biology, sociology, and music, etc.—are explored. Teachers trained in the EFP Program become familiar with the principles of peace and learn how to integrate these principles into their daily lessons and activities with students through the use of EFP’s “Understanding-Oriented” approach. Through exploration of the broad principles and concepts of peace, students develop the ability to contextualize information and data in each of their subject areas, and to connect learning in one area with relevant issues in other fields.

The EFP Curriculum is interdisciplinary in its approach and draws from various fields of study as they apply to the issue of peace at intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, and international levels. The Curriculum is based on the latest research and literature on peace education, as well as insights drawn from the fields of psychology, education methodology, political science, sociology, law, religious studies, history, conflict resolution, the arts, and other peace-related fields.

CONCLUSION

Unity-Based Peace Education is an emerging new approach to the field of peace studies with regard to both its conceptual and practical dimensions. The Integrative Theory of Peace, which considers unity as the main law of life and the central force for creation of peace, rejects the primacy of the role of conflict in this field. ITP holds that conflict is the absence of unity and both conflict resolution and peace creation are only possible in the context of a unity-based worldview. One outstanding example of unity-based peace education is the Education for Peace Program which has been successfully applied to many schools with thousands of students in the highly divided post-conflict societies of Bosnia and Herzegovina and is now being gradually introduced into schools in other parts of the world.

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