

Environmental Peacemaking, Peacekeeping, and Peacebuilding

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INTRODUCTION

The French philosopher, Blaise Pascal, observed that human beings are "running carelessly towards a precipice" (cited in Nastase, 1982, p. 185). This metaphor applies accurately to environmental crises that are the outcome of excessive human consumption, toxic pollutants, and other unsustainable human practices. Such practices ultimately kill human beings as well as exterminate thousands of species on this planet. The metaphor also applies to increasing human violence ranging from child abuse and domestic violence to street violence, civil strife and interethnic violence, terrorism and international warfare. Environmental education and peace education try to make students aware of this abyss and offer skills to avoid such destructive behaviors. In doing so they fall within the tradition of education for social responsibility whereby teachers help students learn about pressing problems and search for solutions.

Both peace and environmental educators proceed from the premise that worldviews and systems rooted in a will to conquest, dominance and power over the other is inimical to true security and well-being. They strive to enable students to supplant these worldviews, values and practices which support violence with those that will support ecological balance and a sustainable peace. Underlying the violence by humans against both Nature and other humans is an allegiance to a myth of human domination and conquest. Peace and environmental education also aim to deconstruct this myth and replace it with a vision of and competencies for humans as nurturers cooperating to preserve the natural world and human communities. They share UNESCO's view that since war and violence begin in the minds of people, it is in the minds of people that peace needs to be sowed and nurtured. This axiom also applies to human relationships with nature. As Patricia Mische (1986) has observed:

Human destruction of the Earth begins first in the mind, when we objectify it (see it as object rather than subject of creative life processes) and, psychologically distancing ourselves from these processes, gradually devalue, deny or succumb to collective amnesia concerning our integral relationship and participation in those processes. A similar mental process is undergone as prelude and psychological preparation for war. The 'other' is first seen as distinctly "other," as alien, "enemy," then as subhuman and monstrous and "deserving" destruction (p.2).

On the other hand, peace and environmental education differ in the focus of their educational interventions. Peace education has tended to focus on conflict in human interactions. It is concerned about violence and seeks alternatives to violence (e.g. Smith & Carson, 1998; Reardon, 2001). It includes the study of conflict, conflict prevention and conflict resolution between individuals, groups and nations.¹ Ian Harris (1988) has stated that the ten goals of peace education should be: to appreciate the richness of the concept "peace;" to address fears; to provide information about security systems; to understand violent behavior; to develop intercultural understanding; to provide for a future orientation; to teach peace as a process; to promote a concept of peace accompanied by social justice; to stimulate a respect for life; and to end violence (p. 17). He also emphasizes that a peaceful pedagogy must be part of any attempt to teach about peace. The key ingredients of such a pedagogy are cooperative learning, democratic community, moral and environmental sensitivity, and critical thinking.

In contrast, environmental education is concerned about human relationships with the natural world. It has focused on human exploitation of the Earth and the damaging effects of human activities in the

biosphere--how one group of humans exploits natural resources to the detriment of both nature and other humans.² In teaching ways to live more sustainably on the planet, environmental education aims to:

- provide opportunities to acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes, commitment, and skills needed to protect and improve the environment.
- encourage pupils to examine and interpret the environment from a variety of perspectives—physical, geographical, biological, sociological, economic, political, technological, historical, aesthetic, ethical, and spiritual.
- awaken student curiosity about the environment and encourage active participation in resolving environmental problems (Palmer, 1998, p. 20).

In their efforts to address the complex forms of violence in human communities, peace educators often overlook the devastating impact of human violence upon the Earth, its ecosystems, and the various species that inhabit it.³ Likewise, environmental educators often overlook the importance of peace to environmental sustainability. This chapter will address this shortcoming. It will propose how insights about natural systems can enhance concepts of peace, and how peace strategies can be applied to environmental crises.

ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING ENHANCES CONCEPTS OF PEACE

Peace theory distinguishes between negative and positive peace (Galtung, 1969). Negative peace is the absence of *physical* violence such as war. Positive peace is the absence of *structural* violence or systemic injustice. Recently these concepts have been expanded to include the absence of direct and indirect human violence against Nature. Expressed as a *presence* rather than an absence, negative peace can be defined as the presence of norms, policies, structures and practices to prevent or end physical violence, which undermines human life and Earth's functioning integrity. Positive peace can be defined as the presence of norms, policies, systems, and practices that respect human dignity, meet human needs, uphold standards of social and environmental justice, and sustain human and natural communities. Both negative and positive peace imply a commitment to nonviolence in interhuman relations and human relationships with nature. However, peace educators can further refine and deepen their definition of peace by studying natural systems.

Conflict in the natural world

A study of nature shows that just as there are inevitable conflicts in inter-human relations, conflicts exist in Nature. But conflict in nature, as well as in inter-human relationships, needs to be distinguished from violence. In interhuman affairs, violence is only one way some humans may employ to resolve conflict. In fact most human conflicts are resolved creatively, without recourse to violence. And in nature, some Earth processes may seem violent to human observers – e.g. volcanoes, earthquakes, tornadoes, fires caused by lightning, and predators hunting and eating their prey. But these processes are more properly understood as part of Earth's tremendous evolutionary creativity. Through such processes have come the conditions in which life has emerged and proceeded toward increasing diversity. The overall direction of these Earth processes is toward greater life.

Such understandings of the natural world open us to new understandings of "peace." Like the Earth's evolutionary processes, peace is not a passive, static, or finished state. It is an active process in which tremendous creativity is expended in an effort to balance conflicting forces and find equilibrium. It is also a process of mutual nurturance of conditions that will help sustain humans and other members of the community of life.

Earth as an Interdependent Community of Life

A study of Earth processes further shows that natural systems are interdependent communities of life. While some consider the “eating” of members of one species by those of another as a form of violence, those who view the Earth as a community of life see it as a form of mutual nurturance. This view was held by conservationist Aldo Leopold in his ground breaking, 1949 essay on a “Land Ethic.” More recently it is supported by the work of biologist, Elisabet Sahtouris in *Gaia: Living Systems in Evolution* (1989). In this communal view of nature, soil, water, sun, and microbial life nurture plants that in turn nurture animals who nurture one another. All go back to the soil contributing to an ongoing process of regeneration and self-renewal. Predators help prevent other species from overpopulating and thus contribute to a healthy planet. They do not destroy their food supplies and are themselves held in check by other predators. This system of checks and balances preserves the precious balance of Nature. Each species and element plays a part in the life and health of the whole community, and complex interactions between the individual members serve to preserve and enhance its diversity.

Understanding the Earth as an interdependent and mutually nurturing community of life can help peace educators deepen their understandings of the communal aspects of peace. First of all, it can help them extend their concept of the community beyond the human social realm to include the whole biotic community. The spiritual/religious concept, “I am my brother’s keeper,” also applies to animals and plants. In such a view humans are not apart from or over Nature, but part of Earth’s larger community of life. The Earth is like a single cell in the universe, and all -- humans and all other species-- are part of the cell. They will live or die as this single cell lives or dies (Berry, 1979). It should be understood, therefore, that a culture of peace has both social and ecological implications.

Second, while peace educators often discuss human violence in ways that ignore its impact on Nature, the expanded concept of community derived from an understanding of the Earth as an interdependent and mutually nurturing community of life suggests that the study of peace should consider the impact of human violence upon natural systems. For example, recent violent conflicts in Southeast Asia and Africa have created millions of refugees whose movement into concentrated settler communities has harmed the natural habitat of those areas, which, as a consequence, can threaten the food source of these communities. Thus, what harms humans also harms the land, and, in turn, when the land is harmed, humans will suffer. Greedy materialism, which is often described as an aspect of structural violence in peace studies (because of the poverty it produces), also has a negative impact on the environment. Therefore, when teaching the different forms of violence that threaten human communities, peace educators should include the environmental impacts of those forms of violence upon natural systems. Their study of the impact of human violence upon individuals and social communities is incomplete without also describing the devastation of violent human behavior upon the natural order. Conversely it should be understood that peace implies the well-being of all living organisms. In fact, the goals of peace education should be to nurture all forms of life.

Finally, the study of natural systems, which teaches us about the interdependence and preciousness of life, further encourages a holistic approach to peace education. Peace educators can teach humans how to live as responsible members of the larger life community, extending our sense of ethics to the whole. Human violence that destroys natural systems – e.g. a wetland to build a resort or a desert or ocean to test weapons – should be viewed as the antithesis of Earth’s creative, self-renewing and healing processes. Peace theory and peace education can provide insights into how to transform such human behavior that might lead to ecocide into behavior that promotes environmental sustainability. Peace educators who share concerns with environmental educators about the threats to human existence caused by degradation of the environment should teach ways to minimize human harm to natural systems. Their goal should be “to have humans live in peace with nature,” appreciating that their own survival and health depends upon the health of water, air, plants, animals. They can teach humans how to use natural resources in ways that do not degrade or destroy them. That is, we can eat from the whole, but we also have to help nurture and give back to it. They can help them develop an appreciation for natural processes and for the human interconnectedness to all beings in the life community. In sum,

they should prepare students to live responsibly within the life community, nurturing and preserving its rich diversity and not exceeding the limits of its self-renewing capacities.

APPLYING PEACE STRATEGIES TO ENVIRONMENTAL CRISES

Peace theory examines a variety of approaches to peace, including preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). Peace educators (for example, Berlowitz, 1994; Forcey & Harris, 1999) teach about how these different strategies can be taught both to children and adults. They can expand their teachings by showing how these peace strategies can be applied to environmental crises in a process of making peace with the Earth. Environmental educators can also use insights gained from a study of these peace strategies to expand their teachings of ways to preserve ecosystems.

Preventive diplomacy

As defined by the United Nations, prevention is “action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur.” The goal is to “ease tensions before they result in conflict -- or, if conflict breaks out, to act swiftly to contain it and resolve its underlying causes” (Boutros-Ghali, 1992, p. 11). Measures include confidence-building (e.g., arrangements for the free flow of information, exchanges of military missions, monitoring of arms agreements); information gathering and formal and informal fact finding; early warning systems (e.g. concerning environmental threats, nuclear accidents, natural disasters, mass movements of populations, the threat of famine, and the spread of disease); and demilitarized zones to separate potential belligerents. Preventive diplomacy has counterparts in everyday lives in family, community, workplace, and other settings.

Preventing environmental harm

The maxim, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” applies to both peace and environmental protection. If preventing war is the best way to safeguard peace, preventing environmental harm is the best way to assure a healthy planet. Where harm has already occurred, prevention of further harm is needed. Preventing violence to the Earth costs much less than cleaning up after environmental disasters. It spares the suffering, death, and social, economic, and health problems that result from environmental destruction. The same measures used to prevent war can be used to prevent environmental harm.

Peacemaking

As defined by the UN, peacemaking is “action to bring hostile parties to agreement by peaceful means” (Boutros-Ghali, 1992, p.11). There are a wide variety of peacemaking methods, including negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and the use of the World Court or regional courts. Such means of resolving conflicts appeal to agreed-on standards of fairness and justice and accepted authorities. When parties to a conflict feel that their concerns are heard and that they are treated equitably and fairly by legitimate authorities rather than being forced to submit, the resulting peace is likely to be more stable and enduring.

Peacemaking is akin to preventive diplomacy in that it brings together opposing forces to resolve conflicts, but usually after they break out or when hostilities are at a crisis point. In its broadest sense, peacemaking begins with the commitment to talk about tensions and relies upon the tools of creative problem-solving—genuine communication, effective listening, step-by-step problem solving, and shared decisions about actions. Peacemakers are *facilitators* – ones who help conflicting parties negotiate a peaceful resolution of differences. *Peacemaking* is also used by ordinary people in every day life – in families, communities and the workplace.

Environmental Peacemaking

The same peacemaking skills can be applied to environmental crises. How is this to be done? First, the world community needs to agree on a clear definition of what constitutes an environmental crime. The United Nations is currently facilitating international dialogue and negotiations to arrive at an accepted definition. If successful, it will be a step toward more effective international environmental protection. Second, just as an International Criminal Court and war crimes tribunals were instituted to hold individuals accountable for crimes against humanity and other gross violations of human rights, so some are proposing that an International Environmental Court be established to hold individuals and corporations accountable for crimes against the environment. Governments alone have not caused environmental damage and alone cannot stop it (Mische, 1989). The private sector and individuals also need to be accountable. Third, citizens can be called upon to act as environmental peacemakers, that is, to use their rational, ethical, and legal skills to develop norms, treaties, and legislation to protect nature from human-caused degradation. Such activities, for example, led to the Clean Air Act in the United States and to the Earth Charter, a statement of ethical principles for sustainability developed as a follow up to the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, where governments agreed on several major inter governmental treaties, which aimed to promote sustainable economic development.

If effectively developed and supported by the world community, the existence of such ethical, legal and judicial measures can serve as both a deterrent and remedy for environmental crimes. When they are applied, they usually do help to diminish environmental harm, just as effective laws, courts and police help diminish violence between nations and groups within nations. Of course, the question of enforcement is a challenge. While most international agreements provide that compliance will primarily be the responsibility of national governments who are party to the agreement, many developing countries lack the means to train and support the personnel needed to monitor the implementation of these measures. Moreover, some violence will elude even the most vigilant and conscientious authorities, and authorities who should enforce compliance can be corrupted. Thus, measures aimed at environmental peacemaking while making a potential difference, cannot be expected to totally eliminate the problem of ecological harm.

Nonetheless, through these measures and other environmental peacemaking initiatives, which need to be undertaken in tandem, humans can gradually move toward norms that respect Earth's functioning integrity and agree to regulate their behavior to stay within the limits of environmental sustainability.

Peacekeeping

As used by the United Nations, peacekeeping refers to the deployment of a United Nations presence in the field to help prevent or stop violence between hostile parties. UN peacekeepers traditionally could be deployed only with the consent of all concerned parties and were prohibited from taking sides or using deadly force except if they were personally attacked. The purpose of peacekeepers is generally to serve as a buffer between conflicting parties so as to prevent armed combat and assure that preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacebuilding processes can effectively proceed. In recent years UN peacekeepers have sometimes been deployed to prevent one country from attacking another, or for humanitarian intervention (e.g. to assure that food gets through to refugees or to stop genocides within a country).

Environmental Peacekeeping

Along lines similar to the way blue berets are deployed to areas requesting UN peacekeeping services, environmental peacekeepers could be deployed to areas in environmental crisis. Such forces could be comprised of women and men with the needed environmental, health, public safety, and other forms of expertise to assess the environmental threat. They could propose ways of containing the threat, either

by developing capacities within the community necessary for doing so and/or organizing local representatives of the broad based environmental movement of international NGO's and local community based organizations, including political parties (e.g. Green parties), formal organizations (e.g. the Sierra Club, Audubon Society), and spontaneous groupings for purposes of advocacy. Their newsletters and protests can inform populations about threats to the natural community. Environmental peacekeepers could also assess the extent of the environmental damage if it has already occurred. They could propose short-term remedies for containing the damage and preventing further harm. They could monitor public health and safety and work with the local residents in developing ways to prevent further harm and restore environmental health.

Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is employed by the UN in post-conflict situations once violent hostilities have ceased. It is a comprehensive strategy to prevent a recurrence of violence and to sustain peaceful relationships among and between different sectors of society at local, national and regional levels. Methods employed may range from "disarming previously warring parties, repatriating refugees, monitoring elections, advancing human rights, reforming or strengthening governmental institutions, and promoting a vibrant civil society and formal and informal processes of political participation" (Boutros-Ghali, 1992, p. 32). Whereas peacekeeping and peacemaking are reactive, seeking to end and resolve conflicts once they have flared up, peacebuilding seeks to prevent this recurrence by redressing the causes of conflict.

Peacebuilding is related to both negative and positive peace in that it aims to prevent the recurrence of physical violence and warfare, but does so in a way that addresses underlying conditions of structural violence and social injustice that cause conflict. To that end, peace educators teach peace-building strategies for resisting and overcoming norms and institutions that would otherwise lead to violence and war. Through these strategies repressive laws, norms, and institutions are replaced with attitudes, policies, institutions and laws that will advance social justice and make peace sustainable. Conditions whereby human needs and human rights are realized and human dignity is respected are developed. This involves the development of participatory government and a strong and vibrant civil society able and willing to participate in governance. Thus, peacebuilding promotes political discourse and standards of social justice that guarantee that all people have their rights protected, as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as adopted by the United Nations (1948).

The old dictum of *real politic* was "if you want peace, prepare for war; peacebuilding proposes the new realism that "if you want peace, prepare for peace." Preparing for peace includes developing social, economic, cultural, and environmental conditions that will sustain a stable peace. The aim of peace building is to advance nonviolent and sustainable communities. Like the other peace strategies described above, it has applications in homes, communities and workplaces as well as within and between states.

Environmental Peacebuilding

Applying peacebuilding to environmental crises would include developing an understanding of eco-justice and promoting its advancement. Racial or ethnic minorities and poor people often see their neighborhoods become dumping grounds for toxic waste or sites selected for polluting industries. Eco-justice would prevent such environmental apartheid. Eco-justice also points at the enormous disparities between consumption and waste levels in wealthy industrialized countries of the North who use a disproportionate share of ecological capital and resources, and those in poorer sectors of many countries in the South. It is concerned about equitable distribution of Earth's resources within sustainable limits of natural systems.

A universal declaration setting forth a set of principles that would provide some beginning standards of eco-justice is the Earth Charter.⁴ This charter urges human beings to think of the Earth as their home. It encourages signatories to, "Strengthen democratic institutions at all levels, and provide transparency

and accountability in governance, inclusive participation in decision making, and access to justice” (Principle 13). It urges the application of standards of justice to human interactions with Nature, providing norms for fairness and equity so that all are treated with full human rights and dignity. Concepts of eco-justice envision and seek to achieve a sustainable community where all humans have equal access to the world’s resources within sustainable limits, and the needs of the natural world are considered in making decisions about human activities. Achieving ecological justice requires that humans accept personal responsibility to preserve resources for future generations.

CONCLUSION

Just as peace educators saw the growth in conflict–resolution education in the 1990’s as a response to increased levels of violence in schools, so environmental educators have seen the emergence of education for ecological responsibility as a response to human violence against the Earth. Massive deforestation, desertification, global warming, acid rain, the depletion of fishing stock, the extermination of an average of one hundred species a day, shortages in clean water, population growth, soil erosion, and wide spread pollution – all these interactive and compounding environmental problems have social and economic impacts that in turn lead to conflicts and civil strife that may grow into low intensity warfare or even international strife. Peace and environmental educators alike need to recognize this interconnectedness between the degradation of Earth processes and destructive human activities.

Both peace and environmental educators have a common goal--of stopping violence. The challenge both face is learning and teaching ways to resolve conflicts nonviolently, to share limited resources equitably, and to live within the limits of sustainability. This will become increasingly important as the 21st century unfolds with increasing human populations all seeking a better life. Peace will require environmental sustainability and environmental sustainability will require peace.

¹ Other types of peace education include: “international education,” “human rights education,” and development education.” Each has a form of violence it is addressing and different strategies for achieving peace (Harris, 2002).

² Like peace education there are different types of environmental education. In teaching about the damaging effects of human activities in the biosphere, environmental educators have helped to create a new branch of education for social responsibility, education for sustainability (or sustainability education). According to Frans Verhagen (2002), “Ecological sustainability refers to the continued health of interdependent local and global ecosystems as they are impacted upon by activities of humans and other organisms. Thus, ecologically sustainable societies are those that live within the ecological limits and opportunities of the Earth’s carrying capacity” (p. 12). Here the concept of education for social responsibility is expanded to include environmental responsibility. Environmental education is also sometimes referred to as “ecological education”: Rather than seeing Nature as other—as set of phenomena capable of being manipulated like parts of a machine—the practice of ecological education requires viewing human beings as part of the natural world and human cultures as an outgrowth of interactions between our species and particular places (Smith & Williams, 1999, p. 3). Ecological education tends to rely more on the hard sciences and explores relationships between species and the Earth’s strata. Sustainability education rests more on the study of human behavior and how it can develop precious resources in ways that do not degrade the environment. It includes insights from anthropology, economics, history, sociology, as well as the study of the hard sciences. Whereas the hard sciences pretend to be value neutral, sustainability education and environmental education promote the value of decreasing the impact of humans upon natural systems and of using resources in a way that preserves the natural diversity. In this chapter, the term “environmental education” will be used in a broad sense to include education for sustainability and ecological education though it is recognized that there are technical differences between them.

³ A recent contribution to the field of peace education, *Peace Education: The Concepts, Principles, and Practices Around the World* (Salomon and Nevo, Eds., 2002), and one to the field of peace studies, *Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psychology for the 21st Century* (Christie, Wagner, and DuNann Winter, 2002) make no mention of the environmental crisis. On the other hand, P. Mische (1988/91; 1992), B. Reardon, E. Nordland, and R. Zuber (1994), and B. Reardon (2001), all discuss the educational implications of the relationship between environmental sustainability and peace.

⁴ For a discussion of the history of the Earth Charter and its educational uses see <http://www.earthcharter.org>.

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