

NONKILLING EDUCATION

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Nonkilling Education for Peaceful Conflict Transformation

A Philosophical Study

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This text is an educational proposal that seeks to promote concrete capacities that should be addressed in formal education with the aim of building peaceful nonkilling societies. Through a philosophical approach, the value of education and the main characteristics of nonkilling education are presented in the first section. The power of conflict transformation and its role in the positive regulation of conflicts is presented in the second section. And finally, nonkilling capacities that can be acquired through this pedagogical proposal are presented.

Nonkilling education: An alternative based on peaceful means

In today's society, cases of violence and particularly lethal violence seem to be numerous and varied. It feels as if violence and killing surround us: in schools, at work, among youngsters who go out to have fun, among people of different sexes and backgrounds, against the environment and so on. At least, that is the impression that the media report on a daily basis through images, voices and words loaded with violent tones. Everywhere we go and everywhere we are it seems as if violence takes precedence, as if it generally characterised our society. These violent attitudes are also present in our daily routine when, on many occasions, we tend not to listen to what people say to us, and we choose the most negative possibilities that we have to fulfill ourselves as interactive individuals. However, are these really the only options available to us? Are they really our 'true nature'?

When it seemed that the debate about the inherence of violence to human nature had been overcome, certain studies have again put it in the spotlight. Neuroscience, in an effort to locate the universal neural bases that would explain the majority of our conducts, actions and feelings pro-

vided new approaches (Cortina, 2011), including works on neuroethics, neuroeconomy, neuropolitics, neuromarketing and neurophilosophy. Even neuroviolence has focused in studying the universal neural basis to explain violent actions. In spite of the now long legacy of the Seville Statement on violence, the debate about violence as an inherent characteristic of human nature is back again (for a critical examination, see Fry, 2013).

The question remains: Whether or not our biological *hardware* is the cause of violence or if the manner in which we are socially constructed has relevance in explaining such behaviours. Some neuroscientific works seem to provide evidence for the first argument, although in relation with the second (Raine, 2014; for further reading see Christie and Evans, Pim, 2012). Other studies emphasize the second argument (Mora, 2007). This has also been the approach at the UNESCO Chair of Philosophy for Peace at the Universitat Jaume I in developing its social constructivist programme highlighting the ways in which people are socially constructed depending on the environment they live in, the school system in which they are educated, and the individuals with whom they interact (Martínez Guzmán, 2001; 2005). Accordingly, such theoretical approaches allow us to re-establish the prominent role of education at all levels, formal, non-formal and informal.

Following the epistemological shift proposed in philosophy for peace (Martínez Guzmán, 2001; 2005; Comins Mingol and others, 2010; París Albert and others, 2011; Comins Mingol and París Albert, 2012), as interactive individuals people are *intersubjective*. Our interactions give us the opportunity to construct ourselves periodically, transforming us in accordance with our vital experiences. Education plays not only an extremely important role at all levels of society (formal, non-formal and informal), but it also plays an essential role regarding our interactions with others, since we mainly act and feel depending on the education we have received. It will probably be easier for those who have been accustomed to violence to opt for violence, in the same way it will be probably easier to use peaceful means if we are accustomed to them. But education is also capable of achieving transformations of tendencies and learned behaviours.

With this in mind the question of violence being biologically inherent in humans becomes secondary. The main question to pose is: Is killing and other forms of violence truly our only options? If we stop and think about it, we will come to realise that in we also have plenty of peaceful moments based on good deeds and personal relationships, relationships with people from other cultures, in schools and with the environment. In fact, as Paige (2012) stresses, not only does the overwhelming majority of people in any

society never kill, but this is also true in historical terms. People are increasingly aware of the alternatives to violence. We see this, for example, in mass nonviolent demonstrations demanding social and political change and acts of solidarity and protest to counter human suffering. These are the attitudes, actions and feelings that must be highlighted but are systematically ignored by the media and educational texts. Society needs to appreciate nonkilling and peaceful actions in order to realize that things can be done differently. Society also needs to be reminded that we are capable of making change by peaceful means. That is how we have been dealing with most situations in our daily life without even realising (París Albert, 2009; Muñoz and Bolaños, 2011). Education must be our main tool to develop the habit of using peaceful nonkilling means, and by doing so, get used to them.

But, what is *nonkilling education*? Nonkilling education is an education that does not emphasise violence and lethality but rather focuses on empowering our capacities in order to act by peaceful nonkilling means (Comins Mingol and París Albert, 2009). An education based on the deconstruction of violence and killing, educating about them but not for them. According to Bastida (1994), we must take into account violence in order to “educate on it”, but not to “educate for it”. Education should make us aware of the existence of violence and the consequences and costs of killing, but it must not educate people to be violent or accept lethality (Bastida, 1994). Nonkilling education also reconstructs peaceful moments bearing in mind their imperfection, recovering moments of peace that have already taken place in history helping us to build a better peace in the present and future (Muñoz, 2001). It must also be an education capable of creating individuals who mobilise themselves nonviolently when they feel outraged by certain realities, in the hopes of creating positive alternatives that transform those realities and an education that favours peaceful conflict transformation.

Keeping this definition in mind, nonkilling education, particularly in formal education settings, must be addressed in a transversal manner across all levels of education and from all the disciplines. Only in this way, the student body will be able to develop the competences mentioned above from any study area. At the same time, it will require trained faculty, not only in their study matters, but also in the teaching of these aptitudes and pedagogical perspectives. In this way, they will be able to teach the actual contents of their study matter, but using, for instance, appropriate materials to promote the acquisition of nonkilling abilities.

Non-formal and informal education will have to go hand in hand with formal education in order to create a joint endeavour to make these atti-

tudes part of common practice, and to coexist normally with them. Values addressed in formal setting must be relevant, implemented and proven in personal relationships with relatives, neighbours and friends, and even in the media. It is not only about changing structures but also about demonstrating how peace and nonkilling are possible, because they exist. Following Kenneth Boulding, “anything that exists, is possible”. Nonkilling education for peaceful conflict transformation should help not only to bring these realities into existence, but also evidence how they already exist.

In the list below a number of competences that nonkilling education for peaceful conflict transformation must address are presented:

1. To make violent and peaceful alternatives clearly visible in order to be able to distinguish how we act as well as its consequences
2. To practice cooperative experiences through techniques based on cooperative games
3. To distinguish among destructive, productive and integrative powers
4. To know about ways of transformative and nonviolent communication based on equality and freedom principles
5. To assume responsibilities when making decisions
6. To know about useful recognition theories in peaceful conflict transformation
7. Empowerment
8. To make visible the role of feelings in the way we act and behave
9. To comprehend what elements we must develop in a reconciliation process in order to know how to put them into practise

Nonkilling education: The tool for peaceful conflict transformation

Nonkilling education must be an education for peaceful conflict transformation, investing its efforts in showing that things can be done without violence and exemplifying this with all the moments of peace that have occurred throughout history (Adolf, 2010), without ignoring the threats of violence and lethality. As a realist approach to education, it must explicitly show the alternatives to violence and killing, identifying our capacities and competences and emphasising our responsibility when choosing how we interrelate with others (Martínez Guzmán, 2001; 2005). Harmonious coexistence, among people and with nature, requires and investment in promoting peaceful attitudes, in building cultures of of peace, understood as a plurality of different ways to understand peace, with underlying nonkilling premise.

Nonkilling education must focus on the peaceful transformation of conflicts, a concept and methodology that has also evolved through the years. Following the three stages proposed by Lederach (1995; 2010), in the 1950s the focus was on conflict resolution, which perceived conflicts as negative situations in life, to be avoided. Most approaches proposed solutions that could be implemented quickly in order to avoid pain or suffering to people and the environment. *Conflict resolution* was therefore based on the negative perception of conflict, which linked it to violence, and also attempted to quantify the physical and personal consequences of conflict.

Criticism of this interpretation argued that the urgency to find solutions to a conflict often overlooked the problems of justice tied to those solutions and the underlying factors of the conflict. In response, *conflict management* emerged in the 1970s, generating a new methodology. Conflict management was not highly regarded within peace research because of the influence business management had over it, but it still produced alternative and interesting conceptualisations regarding the notion of conflict. It was the first time that conflict began to be understood not as something purely negative, but that it could also be interpreted as a positive life situation.

This positive view of conflict was firmly established from the 1990s onwards, with the emergence of *peaceful conflict transformation*. This new methodology was relevant to peace research for three main reasons (París Albert, 2009). Firstly, it delves deeper into the idea that the positive and negative character of conflict depends on the means used for its regulation, breaking the apparent link between conflict and violence. Conflicts can also be regulated by peaceful means, and if this is done, they become normal situations in life that help us to transform the structures causing tension, which will in turn bring social changes. Secondly, it assumes the conflictive nature of human beings, without equating it to a violent nature. We are conflictive because we experience conflicts, but that does not mean that we are violent. We need to get used to coexist with our conflicts, and get used to transform them by peaceful means (Muñoz and Bolaños Carmona, 2011). Finally, it emphasises our competences and abilities to regulate conflict by peaceful means. We have peaceful means at our disposal to face conflictive situations, thus we have to recover them. The verb 'to recover' is used, as they are not means to be learnt or acquired, but rather retrieve them, following the elicitive method (vs. prescriptive) proposed by Lederach (1995) or the work conducted at the UNESCO Chair on Philosophy for Peace. This will allow us to discover which tensions have caused the conflict in order to transform them into new goals that make reconciliation

and the maintenance of relationships possible in the future. Understanding these dynamics also allows those who feel disenfranchised and angry with the injustices and grievances to mobilise in peaceful struggles to recover their rights, to be recognized and to transform unjust social structures.

Nonkilling education from a philosophical perspective: a toolkit

Nonkilling education can enable us to recognise and feel recognized. Mutual recognition (Ricoeur, 2005) or reciprocal recognition (Honneth, 1996; 2009; 2011; Honneth and Fraser, 2003) is critical to achieve and develop social justice. According to Axel Honneth, social justice depends on people being able to recognize others and feel recognized, as this is the only way to explain our continued claims for rights throughout history, up to the present time. Philosophers of the dialectical tradition such as Fichte, Hegel and Mead, recognition was also key as only when we recognise the other person, we will be able to recognise ourselves, through the observation of our similarities and differences.

When people mobilise in order to improve their rights, they have done so because the need to be recognized is felt in a particular area, because recognition was lacking. In the face of rationality pathologies caused by the absence of reciprocal recognition (Honneth, 2009), such struggles for recognition substitute those for self-preservation of the past (as presented by Hobbes or Machiavelli). Most importantly, struggles for recognition have in nonviolence a powerful method (Comins Mingol et al., 2011a; 2011b; París Albert, 2010). Reciprocal recognition is both the cause and goal of these peaceful struggles.

Honneth (1996) proposes three levels of recognition: 1) *Recognition towards physical integrity*, resulting from the sentiment of love which produces self-confidence; 2) *Recognition as members of a legal community with rights and obligations*, resulting from the attitudes based on respect which generates self-respect; and 3) *Recognition of different ways of life*, resulting from solidarity which builds self-esteem. According to Honneth, the three types of recognition are relevant and necessary, because it is only when we feel recognised on these three levels of mutual recognition, avoiding the denigration caused by lack of recognition, that we can define our integrity as human beings and act in favour of social justice.

Besides recognition, other capacities are relevant to nonkilling education. Transformative communication (Schnitman, 2000) is another tool that enable people to communicate efficiently, in accordance with the concept of communicative solidarity as pointed out by Martínez Guzmán in his studies of Austin's *Theory of Speech Acts* (Austin, 1962). Following this approach,

both the speaker and the listener must take responsibility for their functions during the speech act. They must transmit the messages properly (as speakers) or understand and interpret the messages appropriately (as listeners) in order to avoid misunderstandings. Only in this way, can a communicative solidarity, which enables the proper course of dialogue between the different parties in the communicative act, be achieved. Austin developed this idea after a philosophical study of communicative speeches which led him to distinguish between three elements in each speech act. These three elements can be explained from the perspective of conflict theory: 1) The *performative act* makes reference to the consequences that are derived from each speech act. Austin asserts that words are actions, and that we perform an action when we pronounce words, or even when we remain silent. This is the reason why he assures us that each speech act has consequences on the listener, positive or negative, depending on the nature of what we say or not say. For example, if I tell you that you do everything right, my statement will have a different effect on you than if I constantly tell you the contrary. 2) The *illocutionary force* refers to the force we use to say something. The term force refers to whether what we have said is a promise, an advise, a question, etc. 3) The *locutionary act* is the one which enables us to understand the force used when we have been told something, understanding the words that have been transmitted, or that have remained unuttered, in order to be able to interpret them. Consequentially, the locutionary act is directly linked to the performative act, as it is only when we understand the force of the words that have been transmitted, or that have been omitted, that we can comprehend and interpret their consequences. Austin's Theory of Speech Acts can also be put in connection with Gulliver's Communication Theory. This communication theory also distinguishes between the fact of expressing a message, the fact of listening it and the fact of understanding it in order to be interpreted (Lederach, 1995).

This Theory of Speech Acts allows us to discuss our responsibilities for our utterances and silences, over how we receive, comprehend and interpret something. In this sense, it makes it possible to incorporate another necessary peaceful tool: the acceptance of responsibilities. Nonkilling education should also develop capacities to accept our responsibilities, while at the same time empowering us in terms of our transformative communication abilities (Schnitman, 2000). The ability of individuals to take responsibility for the things they say and omit, and to communicate together in order to avoid misunderstandings, allows them to delve deeper into the transformative nature of alternative communication. For example, we can consider

the principles of equality and freedom—two additional characteristics that have to be taken into consideration in a conversation and that can also be taught. Ethical Discourse has been one of the philosophical movements that provided greater relevance to these two principles by highlighting their suitability for the creation of ideal communicative communities, where all parties involved must have the same right to make their voices heard with the same criteria for equality (Cortina, 2007):

These tools are also relevant to providing training in cooperation, empathic perception of others and in *soft* uses of power. Cooperation is one of many alternatives to competition that would also include accommodation, covenant, commitment, etc. Cooperation requires teaching people to comprehend conflicts as common problems; offering tools for working together with the other in search for a communicative agreement that can transform conflicts peacefully; changing the perception of the other party in conflict from that of an enemy for that of a collaborator; and problem-solving in a creative and imaginative perspective that can satisfy people's needs on the basis of equality (Rapoport, 1992).

Empathic perception fosters the ability of individuals to put themselves in the other person's shoes and see their worries, interests and needs (Fisher et al., 1996). It emphasizes our capacity to comprehend what are the concerns, needs and feelings of others, regardless of who is 'right' or 'wrong'. This is not about denying differences (which are not understood as negative) but emphasizing similarities among the different parties in a conflict, to expose what they have in common and how those commonalities can be used to transform the conflict.

Power can also be used alternatively, favouring the recognition of others, cooperative attitudes, active listening, etc. This is related to what many authors usually call *soft* power, to be distinguished from *hard* power that is based on threat, authoritarianism and subordination. In Boulding's (1990) definition, an 'integrative power' allows for relations and links between people. Arendt (1998) referred to 'agreed power' which takes into account the agreements that have already been made in a concerted manner, that is, taking into account the opinions of all those concerned.

All of the above are only some possible tools that are relevant in developing a nonkilling education for peaceful conflict transformation. Such an education should be 'open to infinite human creativity, in reverence for life', so other scholars and practitioners will be able to add a wealth of new or alternative possibilities. A nonkilling education is essentially an education that takes our humanity into account, together with our most peaceful set

of alternatives for doing things (París Albert and Martínez Guzmán, 2013). In this sense, it is an education loaded with emotions that cannot be achieved without taking emotions into consideration, both one's own emotions and the emotions and feelings of others.

This relates to Strawson's (2008) Linguistic Phenomenology, that measures concerns on three levels: (1) I have to feel responsible for and concerned about the things that are done to me, but (2) I also have to be concerned about the things I do to other individuals, without forgetting (3) all those other actions that other people do to each other. The last two levels are part of my responsibility and of my concerns, since only if I do it like this will I be able to mobilise myself proposing structural changes to those things that produce suffering, even if certain problems do not concern me. I will be able to overcome the most selfish attitudes by looking at others and by being outraged by things even if certain issues do not concern me.

Following this logic, nonkilling education for peaceful conflict transformation is a sentimental education that, in the end, tries to regulate our emotions; to train us to feel without letting ourselves get carried away by emotions that can lead to violence and killing, but rather to act in accordance with those which are more conducive to nonkilling peaceful conflict transformation, and to the positive regulation of the suffering of humans and nature, and contribute towards developing a harmonious coexistence.

Conclusions

This chapter has attempted to show the importance of recovering the role of education in order to change the habits, views and assumptions that lead and support violence and lethality and to imagine new peaceful alternatives within nonkilling societies. Education plays an important role and we should focus our efforts on it. It can train us towards actions by peaceful means; to mobilise disgruntled people peacefully; to be able to recognise the moments of imperfect peace in history; to realise that things can be done in another way, through actions that empower us help us to recognise and communicate in a transformative manner, to assume responsibilities, to cooperate, to perceive empathically and to make other *soft* uses of power.

Nonkilling education has been reviewed in this article in relation to the peaceful transformation of conflict from a philosophical perspective, something which has also helped to identify the role that philosophy can play in today's society, offering alternatives and reflections for the transformation of its sufferings. An education which recalls Freire's problematizing proposal

where he makes us aware of our realities, and he empowers us to transform them, without using violence, but rather with imagination and peace.

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