

Peace Now! Creating Peace in Difficult Times Symposium, 15-17 September 2017, Vienna

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Keynote: “Pluralism and Education for Peace”

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Abstract

Accelerating globalization has brought about a degree of normative pluralism that stands in stark contrast to the glaring decrease of mutual tolerance. This holds true for all notions of tolerance, ranging from the mere toleration of another person's, or group's existence to a genuine appreciation of the otherness of others. Ever more often, ethical values are harnessed to define the limits of tolerance, while what we need is a to be better equipped to be able to cognitively and psychologically bear with the growing diversity – to be able to experience our shared humanity as the most fundamental precondition for peace.

Preliminaries

I thank the organisers of this symposium for the honour of sharing some of my thoughts on the relationship between pluralism, which for me is the ability to respect and appreciate the value of difference, and education for peace. I do not intend to provide answers, though. I find it more productive, particularly at the beginning of our symposium, to raise certain ethical and pedagogical issues that I find crucial for our conversations on peace and peace building. That said, I do intend to make a plea here for the necessity to develop a holistic education for peace that is not predominantly grounded in intellectual discourse, but that equally engages our subliminal dispositions and needs. It is this subliminal level, I hold, that both enables and constrains us in effectively contributing to peace building, to rendering the world around us more peaceful. With this plea, I seek to underscore the profound importance of engaging the didactical methodologies offered by other speakers as well as the various workshops announced in the programme.

Resonances from the Past

Allow me to start by sharing some thoughts on the instructive resonances between our time today and “Vienna” as a widely shared imaginary of fin de siècle European society at the height of imperialism and its subsequent fall into fascism.

In his book, *Schnitzler’s Century: The Making of Middle-Class Culture 1815 – 1914*, the Jewish-German emigrant to the US, Peter Joachim Fröhlich, who became the well-known American historian of European thought, Peter Gay, wrote about Arthur Schnitzler,

“(…) Schnitzler was [Viennese](#) to the bones. He travelled relatively little – he was born in Vienna in 1862, died in Vienna in 1931, and (except for brief visits to London, Berlin, and Paris, and short vacations in northern Italy) lived in Vienna. But with his lively, discriminating appetites, he touched on an extraordinary spectrum of styles and ideas, and captured his tastes and feelings for posterity in the diary he conscientiously kept for many years. (...) His culture, in short, was [cosmopolitan](#) indeed, his life and work document that it is not necessary to undertake long voyages in order to be well travelled. The mind can, and with Schnitzler it did, receive and work through impulses from faraway places and across generations.” (Gay 2002: xx)

Arthur Schnitzler was an Austrian-Jewish medical doctor and, during his time, a highly controversial writer. He was one of the protagonists of Viennese Modernism, along with luminaries, like Sigmund Freud, the painter Gustav Klimt, the architect Otto Wagner, and others.

Schnitzler is worth mentioning here not only because of his cosmopolitanism, which a well known philosopher of today, Kwame Anthony Appiah, propagates as an ethical stance that has the potential to render the world more humane. Schnitzler was also among the very few European intellectuals of his time who did not support, even at the beginning, what was to become the pinnacle of modern, dehumanised warfare – World War I (Roberts 1986: 219). In his novel *Leutnant Gustl* (Schnitzler 2001), published in 1906, for instance, Schnitzler took issue with the militant patriotism of imperial Austrian society and ridiculed the rigid code of honour and entrenched anti-Semitism of the Austrian imperial military. By the time *Leutnant Gustl* was published, his “anti-patriotic” stance had already earned him severe rebuke of his contemporaries. Apart from verbal

attacks on his works, he had been stripped of his rank as officer in the medical corps of the Austrian imperial military reserves in 1901 (Lorenz 2003: 5).

In a diary entry from 1880, Schnitzler, who in his writings used irony as his sharpest weapon, distinguished between three kinds of war: firstly, war – or violence – that springs from the negative psychological traits that are passed down from one generation to the next; secondly, the violence – or war – brought about by autocratic governments bent on increasing their wealth and expanding their territories; and thirdly, the war or violence resulting from revolutions, which, to Schnitzler, are a combination of social problems combined with psychological weaknesses (Roberts 1986: 213-214).

Shortly after the Great War, in 1921, Schnitzler's play *Reigen* (Schnitzler 2014) – roundelay or round dance in English – was staged in Berlin and Vienna, where it elicited one of the biggest theatre scandals of the 20th Century. The play allegorically described, and thereby exposed, the lasciviousness and moral decadence, the glaring “heartlessness” of Viennese fin de siècle society. The theatre scandal greatly contributed to Schnitzler's growing notoriety as a producer of “degenerate” (“*entartet*”) art (Schneider 2003: 37-49). In the much more introspective works he wrote thereafter, we get a feel for the narcissist and parochial atmosphere that grew ever more threatening to the meanwhile almost completely assimilated Jewish population (see also Judson 2016: 316-462).

This leads us to two themes that I find particularly instructive for us today:

- (1) The futility of cultural assimilation as a valid avenue for “foreign newcomers” in the face of increasing parochialism and xenophobia
- (2) The experience that when verbal violence becomes increasingly pervasive in public discourse, it is eventually followed by physical violence on a societal scale. This mechanism was, if you recall, meticulously described by the German-Jewish survivor of the Holocaust, Victor Klemperer, in his instructive book on the vernacular of the Third Reich, *Lingua Tertii Imperii* or *LTI* (Klemperer 1975).

In the light of present-day European debates on how to integrate the increasing number of migrants fleeing from the inhuman conditions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, and elsewhere, it is of paramount importance, I believe, to reflect on the historical futility of the efforts of far-reaching cultural assimilation on the part of European Jews, as cultural assimilation did not save them from becoming victims of the widespread active and passive support of the holocaust among the majority populations throughout Europe.

Taking into account the fact that Schnitzler wrote from a position of an unbridgeable difference between him as a Jewish middle class author and the gentile Viennese bourgeoisie increasingly steeped in German nationalism, we need to distinguish his cosmopolitanism from the cosmopolitanism of other contemporary writers, such as Rudyard Kipling, who acquired cosmopolitan tastes from quite another position, that is, a position of privilege. Kipling, the author of – inter alia – *The Jungle Book* and *Kim*, was born in 1865 in Bombay as a son of British colonials. Lauded for his ability of detached observation as astute as that of Schnitzler, Kipling was called “the first chronicler of an integrated modern world, where every place is accessible” (Lycett 2015: pos. 139), that is, the chronicler of the British Empire, in which the sun never sat. Kipling’s works were widely read and, in contrast to those of Schnitzler, loved by many. Kipling received many honorary degrees and awards during his life. The most prestigious of them were the Nobel Prize for Literature (1907) and the Gold Medal of the Royal Society of Literature (1926).¹

With regard to our common theme here, it is worth noting that Kipling had received a higher education at the United Services College at Westward Ho!, near Bideford in North Devon, England. This was a public boarding school that prepared the sons of military officers for military service. When Kipling returned to India to work as a journalist for a period of seven years, he became impressed by what he perceived as the dedication of the administrators and soldiers in the service of Her Majesty in the Punjab. He was therefore inclined to glorify the common soldier in the British imperial army in his literary works (see e.g. Kipling 2016: pos. 831ff; Kipling 2016: 3798ff), the fact notwithstanding that he also dealt out some criticism of particular colonial establishments (see also Lycett 2015: pos. 147).

Later, Kipling travelled widely throughout Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas (Kipling 2010). He was very knowledgeable about different native cultures, and through his narratives, his readers could encounter subdued native voices. The difference between Schnitzler’s and Kipling’s portrays of others can best be described as the difference between lending a voice to an otherwise silenced other (in the case of Schnitzler) and to speak for another (in the case of Kipling). Lending a voice to an “other” implies that we truly respect and appreciate another’s otherness, while speaking for others actually

¹ See also

https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1907/kipling-bio.html

means that we patronise them and co-opt their difference into our scheme of things. We have, in other words, consumed their difference for our purposes, and have thus undermined their dignity.

Speaking for another is in point of fact a strategy of subjugation, which is akin to what the anthropologist Gerd Baumann called “encompassment”. In his research on multi-ethnic London, he had noticed how members of local Hindu communities often referred to Hinduism as a religious tradition that values pluralism and tolerance. The very same people, however, also viewed Jains, Sikhs or Buddhists essentially as Hindu, thereby denying them identities and perspectives distinct from those of Hindus (Baumann 1996: 116-122).

In the following, I will argue for the necessity to appreciate otherness on its own terms, without any ontological premises. This, I hold, is both a precondition for forging and putting fair limits to commonality and cooperation. Revisiting present notions of cosmopolitanism and tolerance, I will inquire into what it would take to be able to appreciate the otherness of human beings, particularly that of strangers. In so doing, I will make the case for an education for peace that goes deeper than rational discourse.

Further Resonances from the Present

As an illustration for the points I make throughout this presentation, I would like to refer to another peace movement of today, whose name is almost identical with the title of our symposium, to the point that one might be inclined to assume direct linkages. I refer here to the “Peace Now” movement in Israel:

Founded in 1978, right after the visit of Egypt’s President, Anwar Sadat, to Israel, “Peace Now (without an exclamation mark, M.R.) is the largest and long-standing Israeli movement advocating for peace through public pressure. Peace Now currently works to ensure Israelis embrace the only viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: two states, meaning the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. In the early 1990s, after identifying settlements as one of the largest obstacles to the two state solution, Peace Now established Settlement Watch, taking upon itself to track and analyze developments in the settlements. Through research, analysis and exposure of settle-

ment developments, Peace Now works to prevent settlement expansion and stop illegal settlement activity.”²

Cosmopolitanism Revisited

Interestingly, Peace Now’s advocacy for the separation of Israelis and Palestinians into two different nation states is diametrically opposed to the “cosmopolitan vision” advanced by the influential German sociologist Ulrich Beck. Viewing cosmopolitanism as a kind of “globalization from within” (Beck 2003: 457), Beck questions the validity of what he calls normative nationalism, that is, the pervasive view that every nation has the right to self-determination on the basis of its cultural distinctiveness. While his normative stance might be debatable, he rightly takes issue with the fact that social scientists as well as politicians take for granted the nation state as the predominant organisational frame for societal and political action. This conceptual frame does not “(...) capture the reality of blurring boundaries between political, moral, and social communities (...)” all over the world (Beck 2003: 455). We should therefore take seriously the emergence of a new transnational system, in which “everyday practices involve an exceptional level of cosmopolitan interdependences” (Beck 2003: 455) and “multiple belongings” (Beck 2003: 454).

For Beck, cosmopolitanism has thus democratised, to the extent that it factually, if not consciously, informs the way of life of almost everyone on our planet today (Beck 2006: 2-3). It does not presuppose a particular ethic drive, as it is only the result of a de facto cultural mixture brought about by globalisation. As such it is not coupled with a conscious respect for and appreciation of difference.

This is in stark contrast with Appiah’s notion of cosmopolitanism as an ethics in a world of strangers (see title of Appiah 2006). The Anglo-African philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah does not foreground either universalism, that is, the belief in universal human traits as the basis for promoting solidarity between people, or a cultural relativism that seeks to keep cultures “pure” (Appiah 2006: 57). For him, cosmopolitanism is primarily grounded in an understanding of what makes people human. People’s humanity shows itself precisely in their foremost concern and care for those to whom they feel close, and

² <http://peacenow.org.il/en/about-us/who-are-we>.

whom they love. This does not mean, however, that people are not capable of reaching out beyond their own little world to care for the wellbeing of perfect strangers. In an interview, Appiah referred to his own experience of the solidarity of strangers, when his father, as a parliamentarian in newly independent Ghana had a fall-out with Nkrumah and was subsequently imprisoned. During the imprisonment of her husband, Appiah's mother – an Englishwoman and acclaimed author of literary works – received much support from people all around the world, many of whom were indeed perfect strangers. Given the fact that he is an academic philosopher, it is noteworthy that Appiah does not consider rational discourse or dialogue on common values as essential for developing a mutual understanding, solidarity and care. For, oftentimes conflicts are sparked by different intellectual understandings of seemingly shared values. Engaging in a common life world, that is, living together as neighbours, is much more important, so Appiah, for getting to know each other, for reaching out and cooperating across cultural and religious differences (Appiah 2006: 45-67).

Habitus and the Limits of Tolerance

Appiah furthermore exhorts us to not form stereotypes, or fixed generalisations that are based on our culturally biased perceptions of only a few traits we find conspicuous in single individuals we have met, or worse, just heard about (see Appiah 2006: 13-31).

But how can we not form stereotypes about others, particularly strangers, when we have never received an education that allows us to release our almost automatic urge to form quick, over-generalised and fixed judgments that then inevitably inform our attitudes and actions? According to the late French sociologist and cultural theorist Pierre Bourdieu, this human urge is an effect of the generative habitus that we have acquired in the course of our socialisation and enculturation into our particular life worlds. This habitus consists, so Bourdieu, of conscious as well as subliminal dispositions that put serious constraints on our capability to change our perspectives, and to appreciate the difference of others (Bourdieu 1990: 9, 45, 53). Our habitus thus severely limits our capability of being tolerant.

Last week, I attended a EU Expert Meeting on Religion and Human Rights here in Vienna, which was organised by the European Agency of Fundamental Rights. During that meet-

ing, Muhammad Umar al-Qadri, the chair of the Irish Muslim Peace and Integration Council, related his experience with newly arriving Muslim refugees who would complain to him that in their dealings with the authorities of their host country they would have to deal with women, most of whom were furthermore unveiled. Al-Qadri then explained to us that these complaints of the refugees were not based on Islam but on the customs of their home societies. Their complaints were thus culturally, rather than religiously motivated. In order to instil the ability for a cultural reorientation in Muslim refugees, the Irish Muslim Peace and Integration Council offers in-depth cultural trainings, in which Islamic values are reinterpreted in such a way that they give legitimacy to the dominant cultural traits of Irish society.

Similar intercultural trainings (Mbodj 1982) should also be made compulsory, I argue, for the members of those societies receiving migrants from far-away places. During a panel organised by the Commission for Education and Culture on the occasion of the Winter INGO Conference at the Council of Europe in 2016, speakers identified attitudes, competences, and skills necessary to entrench the following values: human dignity and human rights; cultural diversity, democracy, justice, fairness, equality, and the rule of law. These values are predicated, they said, upon attitudes, such as openness to cultural and convictional otherness, respect, and tolerance of ambiguity. Among the skills deemed indispensable for translating these values in everyday practice, were listed the ability for a critical understanding of self, skills of listening and observing, as well as conflict resolution skills.

It struck me at the time that tolerance of ambiguity was viewed as an attitude, rather than as a competence, ability, or skill; in other words as something that requires methodically specialised education and training.

Tolerance is in point of fact not an ethically uncontroversial term. Rainer Forst, Professor of Political Science and Philosophy at the Johan Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main, distinguishes between four notions of tolerance (Forst 2000: 120 ff):

1. Tolerance as mere toleration of the presence of an “other”, an alien or stranger from a position of privilege, dominance and hegemony. If the other begins to threaten one’s position of privilege, toleration often quickly transforms into verbal and physical violence

2. Tolerance as acknowledgement of the presence of an “other” for pragmatic reasons, which usually presupposes a balance of power between different groups

Neither tolerance as toleration, nor tolerance as pragmatic acknowledgement of others, to me, has any ethical value. Only the last two notions of tolerance described by Forst qualify as ethical stances:

3. Tolerance as respect for others. Here one meets others at eye level, and recognises the dignity of their fundamental humanity
4. Tolerance as appreciation of the otherness of strangers is predicated upon the respect for those strangers. It moreover entails the readiness and willingness to learn from them. This again presupposes, I believe, an ethical attitude of humility

Concluding Remarks – A Plea for a Holistic Education for Peace

In terms of enabling different cultural and religious groups to live together peacefully as neighbours, I consider only the last two notions of tolerance appropriate attitudes to foster. That we do have to foster them has become sufficiently clear, I think, in Europe, not the least in Vienna, where members of the rightist Identitarian movement frenetically claim the superiority of phantasmagoric “Western values”, yet leaving out in their rhetoric the ethical foundation of contemporary Western cultures – Human Rights and their legal implementation throughout the Western world. The fosterage of a notion of tolerance, which is based on respect for and appreciation of otherness as well as a clear formulation of the limits of such tolerance, is and ought to be part and parcel of the international culture of Human Rights. Such a culture involves, however, as I have argued, the development of a holistic education for peace.

With that I hand over to the next speaker, Ms Susan Gillis Chapman, who is going to instruct us in one of the didactical methodologies that I regard as an essential ingredient of a holistic education for peace, that is, mindful communication.

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