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Peace as an event, peace as utopia: A reimagining of peace and its implications for peace education and development.

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[Authors Accepted Version]

Abstract:

This paper seeks to provide a new approach to peace in order to contribute to a theoretically informed approach to peace education and development practice. Arguing that liberal peace is counter-productive and can actually betray peace, I offer an alternative approach in order to contribute to thinking on peace for educators and development practitioners. Introducing the theory of peace that I developed in my recent Ph.D., I explore how utopian and post-structural theory conceptualises peace as an open-ended promise, facilitating alternative thinking about peace and how to engage with it. I then discuss the implications this has for praxis and finish by looking at how the work of translating peace is an important aspect of peace education and development.

Key words:

Peace theory, peace education, the event peace, Derrida, utopia, Bloch, translation, the work of translation, Santos, Mindanao conflict.

Introduction

The topic of conflict and peace is receiving increased attention as, despite our technological progress, ‘terror’ refuses to decline. The attention conferred by the media, academics and policy makers is no less evident in the field of education, where discussions around education and conflict are gaining momentum, most recently culminating in the UNESCO 2011 Global Monitoring Report *The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education*. In addition to highlighting the impact of armed conflict on education and its detriment to achieving Education For All (EFA), the report also acknowledges the role education can have in nurturing identity and values, which can either fuel violence or contribute to peace.

Within this context this paper seeks to provide a substantially new theory of peace and discuss the implications this has on peace education and development. I will start by setting the scene for why an alternative theory of peace is needed, arguing that liberal peace is not sufficient and alternative theories of peace are required. I will then go on to introduce the theory of peace that I developed in my recent Ph.D. work: *peace-as-an-event-peace-as-utopia*, which stresses an undecided and uncontained future which houses an ethical space ‘to come’. I posit that conceptualising peace as an open-ended promise facilitates alternative thinking about peace and how to engage with peace, and creates an ethical and political imperative to act. I then ask how this theory of peace can inform peace education and development, and conclude by exploring the work of translation as an important component of peace education.

The case for rethinking peace

My case for rethinking peace is motivated from a criticism of current approaches to peace building which are grounded in theories of liberal peace. Liberal peace is synonymous with state building, extolling democracy, free markets and human rights as the, apparently, tried and tested solutions for peace. However, while liberal peace appears to have become embedded as the self-evident answer to conflict and fragile states, I argue that it can actually be detrimental for peace.

The mantras of liberal peace: democracy, free markets, and human rights, are not neutral or unproblematic concepts in any context, however the fragile and complex situation of a conflicted-affected context further problematises such concepts. In addition, a focus on security, where references to ‘peacekeeping’ denote military operations, engenders a reduction of peace to ‘negative peace’ (Galtung 1996).

The prominence of free market mechanisms in liberal peace I would argue is a barrier to peace. The market, which thrives on competition, can be seen as an adversarial force and neo-liberal policies in conflict affected areas can exacerbate social-economic inequality, undermining peace. The economic discourses of liberal peace, combined with a securitisation discourse, limits understandings of peace, to the exclusion of considerations of structural and cultural violence (Galtung 1990). A more critical and broader reading of conflict would recognise the role of economics in violence. The commitment to neo-liberal economics found in a liberal peace discourse arguably undermines peace. The irony of liberal peace betraying itself creates “*A violence that sustains our very efforts to fight violence and promote tolerance*” (Žižek 2008: 1). Neo-liberalism is considered such an important part of building peaceful states now that not only are free market mechanisms promoted in fragile states, but the economic language of the markets have colonised the language of peace, with terms such as ‘peace dividends’ increasing in use, revealing an economic rationalisation and instrumentalism within peace-building itself.

The uncritical imposition of democracy and human rights in conflict affected areas can also be problematic for peace. In liberal peace discourses democracy tends to mean representative democracy, often indistinct from Western models, and in volatile societies this can fuel divisions and lead to majoritarianism. While democracy does extol important values, a ‘democratic piety’ (Little 2008) which makes ambiguous promises that take no account of the multiplicity or variations of democratic forms can obstruct explorations of different types of democracy and end-up undermining democratic values. Also, human rights, usually linked with democracy in a liberal peace discourse, tend to focus on the rights of the individual with little recognition of collective rights.

Within a liberal peace discourse these problematised concepts merge together to reinforce each other and create a strong discourse. As already described, liberal peace relies on a formula of liberal state building and free market mechanisms to address conflict. Duffield’s (2001) work on the merging of (economic) development and security traces how economic stability has established its place in peace building so effectively that now one implies the other. This judgment has been so self-assured that it has now earned a status of truth that is ‘self-evident’. However, this security discourse fails to recognise the violence

inherent in economic systems. Pugh argues that the failure to address forms of violence embedded in global capitalism reduces peace building to “*a form of riot control directed against the unruly parts of the world to uphold liberal peace*” (Pugh 2004:41).

Liberal peace is a Western led discourse which is imposed on apparently fragile states, and while it values civil society as important, remains a distinctively international and state led intervention. Like all discourses, liberal peace has elements of truth which are worked and reworked into concrete knowledge. However, I would argue that it is not the panacea that many practitioners and policy makers in the fields of peace building and development have come to believe it is. While it may extol some important values it also has its shortcomings. An uncritical, blind faith in liberal peace reworks a discourse into a self-evident ‘truth’ so that opportunities to reconstruct and build on liberal peace are wasted, and through a violence of closure learning from alternatives is denied.

Peace theory and peace education

Peace education is, at its broadest, the fabrication of education (both formal, non-formal or informal) as a transforming process that promotes a culture of tolerance and peace. Education programmes, policy makers and educational and development practitioners need to intentionally adopt or develop a theory of peace to frame and guide them if this is to be successful. Despite being the dominant theory within the field of peace studies and peace education liberal peace is not the only theory of peace. Most notably Galtung has been influential in informing thinking on peace, as the principle founder of peace and conflict studies, and his theory of negative and positive peace is important (Galtung 1996). Hutchinson uses Futures Studies to inform her discussions of a futures orientated peace to challenge the dominance of empirical reality to include potential realities, in order to enable the imagination of more peaceful futures (Hutchinson 1996). More recently, in her book *Education and Conflict: Complexity and Chaos*, Davies (2004) uses aspects of chaos and complexity theory to frame her discussion around peace and conflict. Similarly, Page (2004) has explored the possibility of a theory of peace to inform peace education grounded in the idea of ethics, identifying five ethics of peace: virtue, consequential, aesthetic, conservative political, and an ethics of care. This list, by no means comprehensive, of theorists on peace contributes to an important collective of alternatives to liberal peace.

However, while a few pioneers of peace theory are challenging and exploring different theories of peace, liberal peace still remains the hegemonic and traditional discourse of peace building. Arguably, liberal peace has become embedded as the self-evident answer to conflict and fragile states and I argue that this is problematic for peace educators and development practitioners. Furthermore, liberal peace can be seen as part of a global liberal agenda, and it can be argued this is characterized by the positivist language associated with economics and the knowledge and information revolution. Consequently it is possible to identify underlying dominant values shared in a hegemonic neo-liberal and modern western scientific discourse in global education research and policy trends, with the advancement of a performativity and positivistic culture (Green 1997). Similarly, in the field of development, a dominant problem-solving approach has emerged, as Escobar explored in his seminal work, *Encountering Development* (1995), and more recently has been analysed by Duffield, who

describes the dominant perception of actors towards conflict as “*essentially Newtonian and machine-like in conception*” (2001: 85). The prevailing discourses within the fields of both education and development seem to be characterized by empirical/positivistic discourses and problem solving.

The impact on much education and development policy has been the general uncritical acceptance of a liberal policy agenda, including liberal peace, with insufficient exploration of alternative theories of peace, and the development of prescriptive teaching practices. This trend is also apparent in the area of peace education, with the literature mostly confining itself to ‘lessons learnt’ and evaluative research. The result has been a toolkit style production of manuals and formulas, “*a rather narrow recipe-book approach that is heavily dependent in workshop training in mediation and negotiation skills, conflict management, non-competitive dialogue and so on*” (Bush and Saltarelli 2000: 22), with little exploration of theories of peace. Without critical engagement the causes of violence, peace education will be limited to addressing inter-personal issues, doing little to go beyond the “*criticism of much current peace education, both formal and informal... that it relies on making people be nicer to each other*” (Fisher *et al* 2000: 146, cited in Davies 2004: 126).

None the less, I believe that there is a place for evaluative research, they make an important contribution to the field of peace education and must be encouraged. There have been some excellent examples of peace education initiatives which offer great insight and further understandings of how to promote peace, providing the much needed practical guidance to practitioners in the field. It is also increasingly important if peace education and peace orientated development is to compete for funding in an increasingly evidenced-based political climate. While this is helpful in the legitimate drive of informing policymaking and practice, however, I would argue that this should not be the sole domain of research on peace and peace education. Research and scholarship around theories of peace which contribute to diverse theoretically informed approaches to peace education are equally important, and will help peace educators to develop critically engaging projects and challenge the prominence of liberal peace.

My aim in this article is to introduce my theoretical ambition to imagine peace differently, developed in my Ph.D. As already discussed the motivation and catalyst of this has been a critique of liberal peace, and I hope to add to the conversations already occurring in the field of peace education which explore alternative theories and approaches to peace. My desire is to contribute to this conversation in the hope of bolstering, continuing and widening the discussion, in order to provide peace educators with a growing compilation of thoughts and thinking on peace that provide alternatives to liberal peace from which they can draw to inform their work.

Peace-as-an-event-peace-as-utopia

In my Ph.D. thesis I explore how Bloch’s realm of the Not Yet (1985) and Derrida’s work on the event, most famously justice (1992), can inform an undecided and fluid understanding of peace. *Peace-as-an-event-peace-as-utopia* combines aspects of Bloch’s work on utopia and the Derridean event to stress an undecided and uncontained future which houses an ethical

space 'to come', creating a poetic understanding of peace which seeks to agitate fixed ideas and create space for alternative thinking.

Peace as Utopia

Hope has always played a significant role in my perseverance in the topic of peace education. Having chosen the field of conflict and education as the focus for my preliminary exploration of post-graduate research I soon opted for peace education because of its potential for 'good news'. It is not difficult to see, therefore, why in search for an alternative understanding of peace I turned to the political philosopher of hope, Ernst Bloch, informed by the works Anderson (2006), Levitas (1997) and Moylan (1997). Bloch develops a language of hope in *The Principle of Hope* (1985) which builds a utopia orientated in real possibility, where hope is understood not "*only as emotion... but more essentially as a direct act of a cognitive kind*" (Bloch 1985: v1, 12). For Bloch a concrete utopia is cognizant of the possible. A concrete utopia replaces wishful thinking with will-full thinking.

The central thesis of Bloch's concrete utopia is the unfinished nature of the world as undecided, which he termed the realm of the Not Yet. This views an unfinished world whose future is not determined, and the essential utopian function is to anticipate and affect the future. In an unfinished world in a continual state of process, whose outcome is not predetermined, the future consists of real possibilities. Utopia functions as the refusal to respect the constraints of external conditions.

According to Bloch these real possibilities, even if not realised, are part of reality but at its very edge, a place that he calls Front. Front is the utopianly open matter for participating and changing the future, which Bloch describes as "*the so little thought-out, foremost segment of animated, utopianly open matter*" (Bloch 1985: v1, 200).

It is important to note that Not Yet is always "*utopianly open*" (Bloch 1985: v1, 200). Bloch never produced an outline of utopia and Moylan warns us to "*resist all efforts to contain its potentially unbound hope in any hypostatized definition*" (Moylan 1997: 115). It is the undecidability inherent in Not Yet and Front that is central to Bloch's utopian function. Levitas reminds us, "*with no other writer is the rejection of form as a defining characteristic of utopia as consistent and explicit as it is with Bloch*" (Levitas 1990: 100). It is from this undecidedness that I turn to the event.

Peace as an event

Informed by the work of Derrida (1992) peace can be re-imagined as an event. My understanding of an event is that which cannot be contained or institutionalised in language because it will always exceed the historical and cultural. In this sense the event is the potential which language fails to contain. In this case the word, or signifier, 'peace' points towards something greater than itself, the event peace. Because the event exceeds its name any attempt to codify, thematise, or objectivise the event immediately betrays it by trying to contain it. The paradigmatic example of the event can be found in the example of justice. Justice cannot be contained within the written law, which attempts to set out justice but never fully succeeds. The law can never fully encompass justice as it is possible for it to simultaneously represent injustice, for example the destruction of private property is an

injustice until it is done in the name of justice, for example in a revolution. The impossibility of containing justice in an affirmative, written code left Derrida to conclude that “*this idea of justice seems irreducible in the affirmative character*” (Derrida 1992: 25). In this example justice is impossible to signify in language because it will always exceed it. The event is not only limited to justice, and other events include ideas such as democracy, hospitality and friendship. While Derrida did not write about peace as an event, it does show a good family resemblance, and I draw on his work on these events alongside Caputo’s (2006) work on a theology of an event (whose work has heavily influenced my reading of Derrida) to inform my understanding of peace.

The event peace can be viewed as something different from its name. The name, or signifier, is not peace, but that which points towards peace, while the event peace is the excess which cannot be reduced to the signifier. However, while the event peace is different from its name they are intrinsically related and it is not my intention to sever the two. The relationship between the signifier and the signified, in this case the signifier peace and the event peace, is characterised by a spacing called *différance*, and it is the *différance* which produces a translation of peace. The space between the signifier peace and the event peace cannot be closed, it is impossible for the name to contain the event, which always exceeds it and will therefore burst out of any attempt to confine it. Therefore the word peace defers meaning, is always different from the event peace it attempts to signify. This differential spacing enables the endless linkages involved in translation and resists closure. By locating one’s self in the *différance* a deconstructive space emerges where peace is not stable and closed but tentative and open, where new opportunities for reconstruction emerge. Deconstruction and reconstruction play in the differential space between the signifier and the event they attempt to signify.

Peace-as-an-event-peace-as-utopia

Using both the works of Bloch and Derrida, I hope to bring both the idea of peace as utopia and peace as an event together as peace-as-an-event-peace-as-utopia. I believe utopia and the event share four important similarities:

Utopia		Event
Not Yet	i. to come/open-ended	Impossible
Hope	ii. aspirational	Translatability
Front	iii. rooted in the present/past	Heritage
Criticism	iv. process of engagement	Deconstruction

i. Open-ended

Both Derrida and Bloch stress an undecided and uncontainable future, which houses an ethical space ‘to come’. Both uphold the irreducible nature of the undecided and

uncontainable as the very virtue that enables the promissory hope of the future, one which can never be reduced to being, yet which they simultaneously demand.

Derrida achieves this through the uncontainability of the event which is “*possible as an experience of the impossible*” (Derrida 1992: 15). The event peace is impossible because it is the promise of something ‘to come’, always differing peace as an ethical space in the future. However, its impossibility is no excuse not to pursue it, instead its possibility lies precisely in its impossibility. The impossibility of peace keeps it open-ended, retaining its potential, rather than closing it off, and the impossible characteristic of the event is that which makes it possible. We can see this in glimpses and experiences of the impossible in the authentic acts of forgiveness, giving, hospitality and judgement, which for Derrida are impossible, yet they happen all the time even if they are relatively uncertain, temporary and hardly noticeable. If the possible is the foreseeable future for which we can reasonably anticipate, the event peace is something that, by its very definition, shatters pre-given horizons and exceeds all expectations.

Bloch achieves this open-endedness through the undecided nature of the *Not Yet*, which must always remain “*utopianly open*” (Bloch 1985: v1, 200). The refusal to respect the constraints of external conditions found in Bloch’s work is a resistance to closure and offers instead an opening. As “*utopia stands in the horizon of every reality*” (Bloch 1985: v1, 223), every moment offers a horizon of possibilities and resists the decline of multiplicity.

ii. Aspirational

Both Bloch’s and Derrida’s work is aspirational. Derrida achieves this through the event’s translatability. The impossibility of Derrida’s event makes peace act as an open-ended promise, which aspires towards itself. The relationship between the signifier peace and the event peace creates a cycle of translation. Because the word peace cannot contain the event peace, no translation, not even a good translation, will capture it adequately. And so a new translation is offered which improves on the previous yet is still partial, and so the cycle continues. Always aspirational, therefore, the event peace sets off chains off new understanding which continually surpass each other. The event peace is always searching for “*the excess or break that exceeds and shocks our expectations, which thereby depends upon anticipatory expectations and pre-given horizons that have been set too low or with too narrow a tolerance*” (Caputo 1997: 22).

Bloch achieves this through the cornerstone of utopia, the language of hope, which inherently means to look forward and to aspire, “*Anticipatory Consciousness*” being such a central theme that it became the subtitle to volume two of *The Principle of Hope*. For Bloch the capacity to press beyond the external conditionalities of the lived moment towards an anticipatory moment derives from the human experience of longing. This can be captured in his high regard for the creative arts, stemmed from their ability to cross the boundary into the *Not Yet* conscious. For Bloch, art has the power to embody hope and imagine alternatives, making the aspirational function of art-forms a recurrent theme in Bloch’s work on utopia.

iii. Rooted in the present/past

As well as the event and utopia sharing an aspiration for the future, both also, situate themselves in the present. The ethical space ‘to come’ utilised by Bloch and Derrida is not a distant dream but is seen in the present, although as a specter which haunts the now while resisting its grasp. Bloch achieves this through his idea of Front, the utopianly open space at the very edge of reality where the next is determined, and Derrida through the nature of translatability, which ties the event closely to its translation so that “*at the same time that it starts something new, it also continues something, is true to the memory of its past, to a heritage*” (Derrida, in Derrida and Caputo 1997: 6).

iv. Process of engagement

Both engage with utopia and the event through criticism/deconstruction. Bloch positions criticism as the central process of engagement, while Derrida seeks to disturb the present and the prestige of historically and culturally constructed language through deconstruction. Respectively, criticism and deconstruction are correlated to hope and reconstruction.

In addition to these four characteristics that come together in *peace-as-an-event-peace-as-utopia* it is also worth mentioning two other important aspects of this theory of peace, that peace is also weak and perilous.

Weak

The open-endedness of *peace-as-an-event-peace-as-utopia* which allows for its aspiration and translation also makes it weak. By nature of being irreducible peace remains soft and tentative, resisting historically, geographically and culturally constructed languages which seek to contain and institutionalise it. While it rejects the constraints of language it simultaneously rejects the power and prestige afforded to concrete entities. Instead a deliteralised peace “*deprives the present of its prestige and exposes it to something... beyond what is foreseeable from the present*” (Caputo in Derrida and Caputo 1997:42).

Perilous

Just as the open-endedness that accounts for the aspirational and translatable nature of peace results in a weak peace, so too does it make it a risky endeavour. The open-endedness comes together with an undecided future, which must be retained to allow for the excess and potential of peace, however, by the very nature of its undecidability there is no way of knowing which direction its translation will take. The endless linkages may spark off chains of translation allow peace to surpass itself, however they can equally destabilise it and diminish it. Consequently *peace-as-an-event-peace-as-utopia* is always menaced by the threat of disintegration through translation.

From theory to practice: Implications for peace education

From the outset my commitment to a theoretical framing of peace has been to aid peace educators and practitioners, and while *peace-as-an-event-peace-as-utopia* may be more abstract than problem-solving orientated scholarship, it is still helpful to inform peace

education programmes. My case so far has pressed a re-imagining of peace - I have put forward a case for rethinking peace, and by resisting a strong, instrumental, and closed discourse I have re-imagined peace as a weak, aspirational, and open-ended promise. While I have shunned the problem-solving approach of the technocrats, and resisted any kind of solution for peace, this rethinking of peace does have implications for how we engage with peace and move it forward, since part of moving towards a peaceful solution may come from how we approach peace in the first place.

While *peace-as-an-event-peace-as-utopia* may appear to have a strong transcendental philosophical leaning, it would be erroneous to assume that, therefore, it has no ethical or political impact. Bloch's work is more obviously based in a materialist world, with his emphasis on a 'concrete' utopia and obligation to anticipate and affect the future. Derrida too, is committed to a material world, extensively writing on responsibility and decision, which exist only as an action in the *aporia* which precedes it. By re-imagining peace as an open-ended promise my intention is to free it from that which would prevent it. While it may seem that the irreducibility of the event peace could be interpreted as an excuse not to address peace, my research instead interprets it as a possibility to move knowledge and praxis forwards.

Far from being transcendental, *peace-as-an-event-peace-as-utopia* has ethical and political implications for peace's being and becoming in this world. While I have stressed the uncertain nature of peace throughout, I have also stressed a responsibility to interact with peace in an attempt to move it forward, and have never used its irreducibility and flux as an excuse not to engage. What can be said about Derrida's work on democracy can similarly be said about peace, and one could easily substitute the word democracy and democratic with peace and peaceful in the following quote:

"The infinite arrive, the "to come", does not entail a passivity toward a working and striving toward a democratic state, it only recognises that the notion of absolute arrival, an absolute here and now of democracy without a future always to come, contains the seeds of totalised thinking. Democracy needs the "to come" of the future or it is not democracy" (Anker 2009: 44).

The irreducible nature of peace, therefore does not 'let us off the hook' so to speak, but *"calls us toward thinking here and now, a here and now, however, always open to a non-totalised elsewhere and a future to come"* (ibid 48). This imperative to engage with peace here and now creates a responsibility to demand peace now, while simultaneously deferring it. To understand philosophically one needs to locate meaning in the physical world, so while a conceptual understanding of peace helps us to think about peace, it also helps us to think about peace as we experience it in this world. In this sense peace has meaning, not in any sense of other-worldliness, but in a contextualised space of production.

This has implications for how we engage in peace education. For me, once you have re-imagined peace as utopia and an event, it impacts how you approach, discuss, and engage with it on every level. The recognition of the partiality of this knowledge and its translatability should inform how it is approached and how it can be moved forward. Through recognising the reciprocal incompleteness of differing and contradictory understandings of peace, a space for dialogue emerges which can aid the translation of peace, both as a concept and experience. The inherent translatability of peace enables it to naturally produce

translations of its own accord; however this natural process could be enhanced by the work of translation.

Peace education as the work of translation

The translation of peace is an important part of its promissory potential and hope for the 'to come'. It is the translation that enables the movement of peace, continuously bursting out of its inadequate interpretations to realise new translations that surpass our previous expectations.

Santos' (2005) vision on the work of translation offers some important theoretical insights into the translation of peace, and has helped me to start thinking about the translation of peace as a type of peace education. Santos's notion of translation is not identical to Derrida's; most noticeably he employs the idea of a *diatopical hermeneutics* (Santos 2002) where multiple perspectives converge in translation.

Arguing that, using enlightenment reasoning, the West actively produces the non-existence of alternative thinking, Santos contrasts 'the sociology of absences' with the 'ecology of knowledges'. Contrasted to the monoculture of a concrete definitive that creates absences, "*the idea of multiplicity and non-destructive relations is suggested by the concept of ecology*" (Santos 2004: 240). Santos suggests that traditionally the West has promoted her interests through scientific knowledge, which produces an exclusive 'canon of truth', consequently discrediting or trivialising alternative knowledges through the criteria of objective truth and efficiency. However, Santos argues that instead of a destructive relationship where a hegemonic monoculture actively produces inferior knowledges, a non-destructive relationship between knowledges is possible; this relationship is based on the work of translation. For Santos the work of translation involves addressing common concerns in an attempt to increase awareness of reciprocal incompleteness which brings different cultures together as "*the future of hope that another world is possible as an alternative to single thinking*" (Santos 2005:15).

The uncontainability and open-endedness of peace and its inherent translatability opens it up to the work of translation. The translatable nature of peace means that it will have differing translations for different groups, contexts and times, creating "*ecologies of knowledges*" (Santos 2007) and because the event peace is endlessly translatable none of these knowledges will be adequate or complete interpretations. The realisation of the incomplete nature of any peace knowledge is a central condition for the work of translation. The acceptance that all understandings of peace fall short in some areas leads to the need to translate peace further, surpassing the limited translations available. In Santos' idea of a *diatopical hermeneutics* (Santos 2002), where translation takes the perspective of all sides, new translations can be built in cooperation with multiple understandings of peace and the work of translation offers a shared comprehension of the experiences and understandings of peace.

Diatopical hermeneutics reveals the incompleteness of a given knowledge from the perspective of an alternative knowledge, which is also incomplete. The exploration of the reciprocal incompleteness creates a space for dialogue and the translation of new knowledges. Santos (2002) uses the example of Western Human Rights and Muslim *umma*

(community) to illustrate how different interpretations of human dignity can work together to form new translations of human dignity. From the perspective of *umma*, Western human rights are too individualist. The absence of collective rights erodes principles of solidarity and group linkages which are an important aspect of a thriving society. Alternatively *umma*, from a human rights perspective, finds its short comings in its detriment of the individual, where faithfulness to the collective overrides otherwise objectionable inequalities, such as the inequality between the treatment of those in the group and those outside of the group.

Santos is clear to point out that while the work of translation is concerned with multiple knowledges it should not be mistaken as cultural relativism, and does not automatically lead to an ‘all narratives are equally valid’ position. The work of translation requires a reciprocal respect for multiple knowledges, but that does not mean that no judgement can be passed on them. In this situation respect means worthy of critical reflection, where disagreement is not the same thing as mere dismissal. Furthermore, a cultural relativism fails to recognise the perils of translation, and the objective of the work of translation is to facilitate a “*race to the top rather than to the bottom*” (ibid: 46). The work of translation is not concerned with the simple acceptance of different translations of peace, instead its main objective is to promote cross-cultural dialogue in order to cultivate a will to produce collectively knowledges and practices with the potential to deepen peace.

Santo’s image of the work of translation provides an important starting point for thinking about peace education as a work of translation – the process of translating peace in context. The intentional work of the translation of peace can act to protect peace from disintegration through translation or speed up naturally occurring translation. To my mind his diatopical hermeneutics read like a kind of critical dialogue, and in my research context of Mindanao, home to a protracted conflict couched in religious language between Muslims and Christians, diatopical hermeneutics did seem to hold some relevance for translating understandings of peace. There was evidence of a work of translation characterised by cross-cultural dialogue and interpretation, which is illustrated particularly well in the example of Mindanao’s future. Considering the shared concern of peace, there was a reciprocal incompleteness between future visions for an Islamic Mindanao and the continuation of a ‘Filipino’ (read as Christian) Mindanao, as one vision denies significant representation of ethnic Muslims (or Muslim culture in government and institutions) and the other denies Christians’ representation. That both options are incomplete and fail to secure a peaceful future for the whole population of Mindanao led to the consideration of alternative options for a few of my participants. A shared comprehension of what peace means led some of the Muslim participants to think about the anxieties of the Mindanao Christian population in their aspiration for a peaceful future for Muslims. This was revealed in the assurances they offered Christians that conversion was not the objective of an Islamic Mindanao and Christians will be free to practice their religion under an Islamic solution. One Muslim participant particularly named the Christian poor in his vision for a peaceful Islamic Mindanao, asserting that land reform is for all the dispossessed. While these concessions did not completely address the incompleteness of an Islamic Mindanao as a solution for peace (Christians would still be unrepresented in government), they reveal a dialectical hermeneutics, where one side is showing a willingness and ability to view the concern from both sides.

However, conflict situations are complex, and when translating peace special considerations arising from the context may need to be taken into account, for example marginalized groups may feel understandably defensive and resistant to critique. This was also the case in my research context, where the colonial history of the massacres of Muslim populations in Mindanao, and the current Christian tide of aggressive conversion and Islamophobia made Muslim populations defensive. In some conflict situations it may be necessary, as an act of strategic reversal, for the more powerful groups to bear the majority of the critique, though only at the start of the process. In situations where sensitive and complex histories and circumstances prevent an overt dialectic hermeneutics characterized by critical dialogue, a significant challenge is posed to the work of translation. However, translation is something that naturally occurs as a result of the nature of the event peace and its irreducibility, and this provides some optimism in these cases. By refocusing on a naturally occurring translatability debate and dialogue is not necessarily required, and in situations where it would possibly entrench existing divisions, there are other ways for divergent groups to challenge each other, such as by example. This is where divergent groups can come to work together, where contact is facilitated for informal discussion and cross-over, and the work and actions of the groups will reflect the different values of those who come together. This can be illustrated by another example from my research. In this case a Christian NGO teamed up with Muslim volunteers, and in the process of co-running development projects in Muslim communities upstanding Muslim community leaders befriended and worked alongside gay ethnic Muslim volunteers from their community. During the continued work in the community the acceptance of the gay volunteers by the Christian NGO started to shift the attitude towards gay men for some of the Muslim community leaders involved in the projects. A shift towards peace occurred for those gay men who now feel accepted by at least some of the more religiously devout. This can be described as a work of translation because the Christian NGO intentionally partnered with Muslim communities, and their example helped to move understandings of peace forward to include the understanding of peace for gay men.

The work of translation can be seen as the work of peace education, as illustrated in the examples above. However, although as the examples show, Santos' understanding of the work of translation offers a helpful place to start thinking about what that might look like, nevertheless it is important to build creative and alternative practices from this. By refocusing on Derrida we come to a more elusive, subtle and sometimes mysterious understanding of the work of translation, to include that which is inherent and naturally occurs, understanding that the work of translation embodies both of these understandings and that they overlap and connect to each other.

Conclusion

In this paper I have shown how a re-imagining of peace can challenge the dominant discourse of liberal peace in order to open-up a journey towards an excessive, aspirational peace. The work of translation offers the means to travel with peace as it spills out of the words which try to contain it and moves towards aspirations yet to be born. The work of translation offers this opportunity not only through dialogue, but also engagement, and while the outcome is ambiguous, this ambiguity holds the seed of hope for peace. It is the uncertainty and flux of

the journey that opens a new optimism where opportunities for transformation are multiplied. The work of the translation of peace can be understood in the utopian spirit of hope, which plays on the Not Yet, where the future is still to be decided, and in the flux of the Derridean event, where uncertainty and irreducibility provide the opportunity for new possibilities.

In this paper I have contributed to a conversation around a theory of peace, offering peace educators a substantially new way of understanding peace, and a short exploration of the implications and possibilities it holds. This poses challenges for practitioners and researchers to further understanding of, and develop, new methods of translation which will retain the weakness of peace, diminishing the power to inscribe new understandings as concrete, and will also guard against the inherent peril involved in translation. It also requires that we understand what peace looks like in all of its impossibility, aspiration, weakness and peril in particular contexts. This means that not only must peace educators become learners of peace, but that peace is understood as an experience in this world, involving not only a discursive change, but also a material change.

My ambition to re-imagine peace is not confined to theory, and my efforts to research translation praxis are glimpsed in the couple of examples I offer from my own research in my discussion on translation. This paper focuses primarily on a theory of peace and its implications, and therefore further discussion of my research findings are beyond its scope, however, my motivation to explore theory comes from a commitment to practice. My hope is that this paper provides a starting point for further discussion on the development of the work of peace education as the work of translation, and contributes to theoretically informed, but practice relevant outcomes. I look forward to contributing to this broader discussion with further papers which explore and map ecologies of peace and translation praxis from my Ph.D. research in Mindanao as one example of many possibilities.

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