

## CONCORD & PEACE EDUCATION: SUGGESTIONS FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT

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### INTRODUCTION

It may be argued that there exists, in human nature, a dichotomy of the will. It has been suggested by Eckhardt that the instincts of compassion and compulsion battle constantly for higher ground, arguably representing man's two strongest drives. The 'rightness' or "wrongness" of either goes unquestioned. The value judgements placed on them relate only to the circumstances under which they are manifested. All men, be they pacifist or pugilist, sociable or sociopathic, display both traits. The trait of compulsion is present in everyone, and so, through rationalization, it has been woven into the fabric of normative morality. Thus, in spite of the fact that compulsion is wrong and compassion is right, it is not the uncompromisingly compassionate who are highly regarded in our society, but those who can (according to faulty, biased cultural norms) accurately assess which situations and/or people call for wrath, and which for benignity—and who have the power to exercise their judgement. Harshness towards those who oppose one's interests (individually and internationally) is acceptable and expected behavior. The world has accepted individuality and competition as a natural human trait and assigned nobility to those who use it well.

Accordingly, in spite of the advances that twentieth-century humankind has made in the areas of scholarship, technology and communication, it has been unable to rid itself of a plaguing disaccord among its ranks and races. Because of its failure to grow socially as it has grown technologically, it now teeters on the precipice of self-annihilation on various fronts.

Clearly, it is the responsibility of all to do what they can to promote peace; however, it would not be wrong to place a greater amenability on certain groups within the population. The world's political/economic powers are one example. Because of their influence, it is particularly important that they set an example. The educational system is also responsible to this duty. As a significant social influence, education should not ignore peace issues and, by omission, promote the kind of apathy that is as dangerous as the weapons themselves. A third example would be the professions. Professions are ethically obliged to do everything in their power to better human existence and help others. If they can do anything to promote peace issues, it is their responsibility to do so.

North Indian physical education meets all three criteria, and yet the curriculum and policies seem designed to promote compulsion, belligerence, and hatred. The competitive nature of the vehicles used to teach physical education along with the way they are practically carried out seems derived from the same combative nature that dictated physical education 700 years ago in the training of medieval knights.

In youth sport the emphasis is too often placed on victory rather than education. Athletes are conditioned to feel hatred for their opponents and are taught to take "cheap shots" whenever the opportunity arises—for surely the opponent will do the same.

## PEACE LITERATURE

"The fundamental postulate of peace is the preservation of human life as far as humanly possible, against human-produced threats of death and destruction."<sup>1</sup> Although this sounds relatively simple, it holds a number of ramifications that do not at once come to mind. The "preservation of human life" does not refer simply to the prevention of death, but to the maintenance of an environment in which human life can be lived to the fullest, and where pain and suffering are kept to a minimum. This includes reduction of nuclear arms, of course, but it also includes maintaining certain societal values toward conflict resolution and egalitarianism. It means fostering attitudes of respect for all of the environment, including fellow humans.

This type of peace is a defensible ideal from a humanistic perspective, of course, but even in metaphysical terms the value of peace can be asserted. Whether one ascribes to a traditional religious theory of man, or a secularist, evolutionary theory, there is logical reason to pursue a peaceful social environment. From either perspective, human life should be cherished and preserved as the means of achieving "intellectual and spiritual advancement. Assuming then, that peace is something that should be pursued, it is necessary to identify the nature of the obstacles. Is violent aggression a natural and inevitable human quality, or are there certain conditions of (or within) society that create conflict (i.e., nature vs. nurture)?

It has been suggested that conflict in our society is not borne of an instinctual need for aggressive behavior, but of the necessary confining structure of a society designed with certain goals in mind. Freud, among others, considered society to be based on the repression of natural instincts leading to unnatural tension, which in turn leads to violence, war and crime. Naidu added further that:

While the drives for instinctual, economic, political, social and cultural fulfillment necessitated the formation of human societies, the very process of collectivization and the demands of social existence, generated inter-personal and inter-group conflicts endangering

the very goals for which societies were formed. Kant described this inherent contradiction of social existence through an oxymoron: the sociable unsociableness of man

However, to exist peacefully, society must be based upon (not merely legislated to) deep feelings of common purpose and respect. This can be said of the 'world society' or of societies within cultures or specific countries. Unfortunately, modern governments have not only been unable to quell their own civil disputes, but have gone further to promote fractious attitudes toward other societies (often as a subterfuge to take attention away from their own problems). Even international sport has, at times, degenerated into contests depicting political manifestos. Further, anti-social behavior in the forms of physical contesting has been euphemized as demonstrating 'character' (or being 'character-building' when present in athletics by design), when it is in fact a compulsive expression of dominance, a reaction to fear of inferiority in a theoretical asocial world paradigm.

This phenomenon is experienced by the spectator as well as the athlete. Jokl claims that: "Sport, because it involves a particular facet of contest-play, is able to release and, in the Aristotelian sense, to purge the emotions of the spectator...the spectator finds special release: he is now at one with a primitive undifferentiated group...feels relieved from the passive role of taking orders and automatically filling them, of conforming by means of a reduced T to a magnified it."

What Jokl describes here, with respect to the spectator, is the abandonment of personal responsibility in gauging one's own anti-social tendencies (Eckhardt has also shown conformity to be a recognizable trait of military-industrial personalities.<sup>8</sup>) The fear of social alienation and inferiority is relieved through identification with a powerful group. In this way, attitudes prevalent in sport have negative implications for the spectator as well. This hostile fragmenting of society through athletics, be it between nations or high schools, does not have the inoculative power on social aggression that supporters of 'catharsis theory' maintain. Instead, it encourages an abandonment of social consciousness. Unfortunately, the tone and manner characterizing these contests has infiltrated the educational system via SPE and brought with it the euphemistic rhetoric designed to appease the cognitive dissonance it breeds in a society struggling to behave for the common good.

## EDUCATION AND SPE

The body of knowledge in SPE has proliferated to the point where most conceivable areas of study have been covered by one of its 'subdisciplines'. One notable exception is the conspicuous lack of scholarly work concerning the possible need for peace education in SPE, a topic which receives attention only by a handful of scholars and, even then, is crowded by other esotericisms on the purlieus of their scholarly agendas.

One of the problems, particularly in SPE, is that many administrators, because of personal choice and pressure from possible outside business interests (Provincial Chambers of Commerce and the Retail Council of Canada) have declared the classroom to be an inappropriate vehicle for teaching moral issues. This faction has made a firm decision with respect to Aristotle's educational dilemma (i.e. improve the reason vs. rectify the morals).

At present, the Ontario provincial government is witness to a debate over "whether teachers should stress the basics or the growth of students as individuals."<sup>14</sup> The Toronto Star describes both arguments.

One side invoked nightmarish visions of schools as assembly lines, producing human widgets for the economy; the other foresaw armies of pseudo-philosophers attempting to discuss the state of humanity but unable to read or write. In educational jargon, it's back-to-basics versus a holistic perspective.

Halfway through this century, Ontario's educational system was assessed by a royal commission on education that recommended "schools train students for the world of work."<sup>16</sup> The result was a 'crop' of new trade schools starting in the early 1950's. In 1968, however, a Supreme Court judge's report stated that the growth of the individual was paramount in education. Since then the holistic side has been stressed, though the tide is turning back to the old approach, triggering many in the Ministry of Education to make efforts to impede this regression.

Much of the support for the 'back-to-basics' approach is from business leaders. This support seems to be dwindling, however, as even business interests have grown to understand the need for some stake in humanistic education. "They say they need workers who can solve problems on their own and get along with other employees."<sup>17</sup> The pro-holistic group, led by Walter Pitman (Head, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education) feels that even the present curriculum is too structured and essentialist. They believe that "this curriculum should be replaced with one based on studying pressing social, political and economic issues, such as the environment and the nuclear threat."<sup>18</sup> As Pitman puts it, "Social issues, such as the nuclear threat, are much more relevant to students' lives than abstract 'subjects' such as physics."<sup>19</sup> It appears then, that there is a gradually growing interest in humanistic/holistic education, and that one of the more salient issues in support of this trend could be the need for peace education, both on the micro- and macro-levels (i.e. social skills to nuclear awareness).

## PEACE LITERATURE IN SPE

The literature in SPE dealing specifically with peace is very limited. Earle F. Zeigler and the late Dr. Laura J. Huelster have been the only scholars to approach the issue "point-blank". In their article entitled, "The Challenge to the Profession of Sport and Physical

Education: To Provide Experiences Basic to Peace", Zeigler and Huelster initiate their argument on the grounds that, the world situation has become so threatening that all professions should now work assiduously to make a contribution toward the goal of world peace the world situation in relation to strategic nuclear power is such that the public good demands that the established sport and physical education profession join the fray in the struggle required to achieve lasting peace and international good will. This first premise provides the warrant for SPE to take peace issues into consideration. Zeigler and Huelster argue further that the primary principle derived from this warrant is the "implementation of a social relevance perspective", and, concurrent with the thoughts of Delbert Oberteuffer, they consider this to be a first priority. Based on both the consideration of SPE as a profession and the obligation of professions to improve the world in any way possible, Zeigler and Huelster conclude that, "the sport and physical education profession should re-orient its entire program, including professional preparation, toward the overriding urgency of the development of a "world mentality" that will in the foreseeable future help to bring about a condition of world peace and international good will.

However, the present situation is such that conventional warfare is virtually obsolete. Where in the past it may have been valid to use SPE to improve the fitness of individuals so that the country could defend itself against hostile forces, we now have a situation where defending ourselves necessarily means learning to get along with other powers. The existence of nuclear weapons, enough to destroy the world ten times over, has pushed hand-to-hand combat (a considerable part of SPE's genesis) into antiquity. The focus of SPE is in need of a long overdue change. The physical can no longer be used to defend, it must now be used to befriend In Zeigler's Physical Education and Sport: An Introduction, Huelster outlines six assumptions from which principles may be drawn with respect to peace and physical education:

- 1) "unrestrained aggression in the world and potential nuclear devastation is forcing us to reconstruct our social environment"
- 2) "rational plans for peaceful resolution of conflicts are available that can move nations from ongoing wars to peaceful resolution of disputes"
- 3) "societies have before and can presently change their values, institutions and systems"
- 4) a willfflC-PGfllC will depend on the people's desire for it because of the attitudes, ideologies, and behaviors inculcated as they mature"
- 5) "education can prepare people to want to put known requirements for peace into practice"
- 6) "Sport and Physical Education provides experiences in compassionate fitness that are basic to peace.

These assumptions put the onus on SPE to change attitudes in its clients'. The world's present approach to defense is to acquire material defenses. The power of attitudes and the possibilities of benevolence are overlooked. Especially now, when no material defense can work against the caliber of weapons in the world's arsenal, we must change our understanding of the idea of 'defense'. Destructive forces must be defused, for they cannot possibly be deflected. This may be considered to be the most important issue facing the world today. The fact that SPE is balking at the opportunity to play a role in this change (or has not even thought of it) attests to the somewhat archaic structure in which it is mired and the power of static inertia in education.

Huelster's fourth assumption ("a will for peace will depend on the people's desire for it because of the attitudes, ideologies, and behaviors inculcated as they mature") brings up probably the most important warrant for a peace component in SPE. Peace must be desired if it is to happen; there must be a 'will' for it. As the second assumption states, a will for peace will depend on the attitudes of the people, that is to say, the attitudes which they have learned. We as physical educators can either promote compassion, thereby promoting a will for peace, or compulsion, thereby promoting a will for war. Zeigler further points out that most people highly desire compassion and peace, but that it will take a difficult confrontation with present norms to achieve it.

One of the most important principles in the pursuit of peace was demonstrated by the United Nations' Special Session on Disarmament in the late 1970s. It was suggested that arms be reduced with the resulting monetary savings "directed to the establishment of an international peace force and for the promotion of the well-being of people everywhere."<sup>35</sup> The principle here is that compulsive efforts cannot merely be stifled, but must be rechannelled. To simply eliminate nuclear defense would leave a "vacancy" in feelings of national security. To restore this loss, the money should be "rechannelled" into more compassionate security". What is removed, therefore, would be subsequently replaced.

This principle applies to SPE as well. The efforts and emotions that have previously been directed by compulsion must be redirected, rather than simply arrested, into activities that promote understanding and compassion. If activities that promote compulsion are simply eliminated, a great deal of 'outlet' will be sealed off. If positive, compassionate outlets are not provided to replace the ones removed, the compulsive attitudes will find other and possibly even fewer desirable avenues for expression. The elimination of the minor hockey program, for instance, might result in an increase in juvenile crime.

## CONCLUSION

1) There is general agreement that one of the main problems facing world society is war. Some social scientists have theorized that aggression is a natural and unavoidable human trait and that war is inevitable, however, most research seems to indicate that aggression is a

learned trait. Still, profound advances in technology, agriculture, communication, medicine, and science in the past century have not alleviated the situation. In spite of all that we have learned, we have not been able to "unlearn" aggression and war. With this in mind, it seems apparent that we should attempt to modify those social influences which we have some control over in order to elicit more peaceful attitudes in society. Probably the most important social influence that is under our control is education.

2) Although education is often passed off simply as society's "babysitter," or the place where children learn "the three R's," an examination of the North Indian educational system reveals a "hidden

agenda" of competition and individualism. Students must compete with their classmates for marks in order to advance further and reap the rewards of higher education. This is made particularly worse by the practice of "belling" grades, which rewards students for doing better than classmates, not for simply doing well (e.g., a 'B' student in an exceptional class may very well receive a "D").

3) Education alleges to "socialize" young people; to provide them with skills they will need to become productive and useful members of society. Toward this end, education has only half filled its responsibility. It does indeed prepare students for society; however, society itself ails from attitudes of obsessive competition and individualism. In its present structure, education is palliating society when it has the power to cure.

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