

## Reflections on Snauwaert's *Teaching Peace as a Matter of Justice*

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**Abstract:** Snauwaert's ground-breaking idea is to define peace positively as the presence of justice. Orienting peace studies to the promotion of justice creates an instructional space in which students enact a pedagogy in developing social structures that constitute a peaceful society. Engaged in collaboratively writing a peace constitution, students reach toward shared understandings, accepting a congruence of opinion, and coming to consensus through shared decision-making. Following Snauwaert's conceptual and pedagogical innovations, students learn explicitly about the concept of peace as they collaterally bring peace into their own lives.

How do each of us know about justice? Where did each of us learn what we know? When do we encounter questions or dilemmas of justice in our research, teaching, learning, and in our daily lives? Institutions of religion, government, and education are foremost in shaping our sense of what justice is and how to apply what we learn. These are where principles and values of justice are taught and where we learn how to incorporate them into our lives. These institutions also formalize, hold, and stabilize the foundational principles and values of justice on the societal level. In these times of extreme polarization, when democracy seems to be weakening and threats of fascism rising, Dale Snauwaert reminds us of the urgency to strengthen the norms of peace, justice, and democracy. We are riveted to the news of wars, and yet we often feel helpless to act to stem rising violence. The challenge of climate crisis requires global cooperation, yet the reality of cooperative global problem-solving seems beyond resolution. How might education provide learning for citizen contributions to these urgent matters? *Teaching Peace as a Matter of Justice* (2023) offers key normative processes necessary to keep justice and peace efforts alive. In relatively simple terms, Snauwaert elucidates moral theory and practical classroom exercises to demonstrate how students can become agents of peace and justice. The process of agentic transformation begins with reconceptualizing peace and justice.

### **Conceptualization: Peace as the Presence of Justice**

Snauwaert's ground-breaking idea is to define peace positively as the presence of justice. He states that violence has been "the operative concept" in peace studies, that is, that peace studies traditionally focused on the dangers and horrors of violence in order to prevent, eliminate or diminish it (Snauwaert, 2023, p. 7; Galtung, 1969, 1990). By contrast, Snauwaert emphasizes the urgency of reconceptualizing peace by finding justice at its normative core. Focus on the normative core contributes to advancing positive peace. He elaborates through five steps the idea of positive peace as justice.

First, Snauwaert defines peace as a social system regulated by principles of justice and ethical values essential for the pursuit of the good life. Establishing and sustaining peace within all levels of society is a basic and urgent matter of justice (Snauwaert, 2023, p. 2). Although the complex of violences assaults our individual sensibilities, he invites us to challenge violence from the point of view of a social-moral community of learners. This understanding of peace is succinctly defined as a social system that depends upon moral conceptualization. The moral conceptualization of peace is cultivated through reflective inquiry on questions of justice and modes of moral reasoning that bring together citizens into a shared moral community, one that better supports a just and democratic body politic.

The democratic view does not appeal to an independent moral order. Instead, the view invokes the authority of our human capacity to engage in moral reasoning for the purpose of constructing basic principles of justice that can be agreed upon by citizens (Snauwaert, 2023, pp. 2- 3). Snauwaert builds on John Rawls's conception of a citizen as "one [who] understands that society is held together not simply by the satisfaction of particular interests but by a sense of reasonable [i.e., just] order ..." (Snauwaert, 2023, p. 4, paraphrasing Rawls, 2000, p. 355). A shared sense of reasonableness is the core goal of a peaceful society based on the presence of justice. This does not mean a uniformity of opinion or lack of contention, but a balance between state and society, a communal walk along the "narrow corridor" between political power and societal consent (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2019). When political legitimacy is achieved through societal consent, state political power exists in balance with the power of society. Consent creates a space of positive peace within a society; and constitutes a *sphere of peace as a balanced structure of State-Society relations* (Snauwaert, 2023, p. 5, italics original) Furthermore, as Snauwaert (2023) asserts,

"the importance of citizens becoming reasonably reconciled with their governing regime is a key dynamic involved in creating and maintaining a balance of power between political institutions and citizens. In other words, engaged, informed *citizens are both necessary and essential participants* in the pursuit of peace and justice, and... citizens need to be capable of exercising moral and political judgment regarding a complex array of basic conflicts and questions of justice, and not mere recipients of justice" (pp. 4-5, emphasis in original).

Thus, peace as a matter of justice does not depend solely on leaders/powerbrokers: peace and justice depend more fundamentally on citizens who can engage in and contribute to maintaining them.

Second, peace as "presence of justice" recognizes justice as more than reified moral principles and rarified ethical values. Justice also needs to evolve dynamically as societies face emerging challenges. The ecological crisis is a prominent example of how our consideration of moral inclusion in the scope of justice must broaden to include all living species sharing the environment of Earth upon which human survival depends (Opatow, Gerson, & Woodside, 2005).

Third, Snauwaert's idea of peace as the presence of justice is dependent upon citizens engaged in moral reasoning to maintain a balance of power with the state. Peace as the presence of justice takes us away from conceptions of justice as loyalty to Origin texts or rehearsal of already determined rules and laws. Citizen engagement in sustaining justice also demands engagement of considerate, reasoning participants who have concern for their society as a whole. The capacity to see beyond one's own personal interests is crucial to broadening the scope of justice to include a plurality of diverse concerns. Broad scope of moral vision is necessary to address the circumstances of our ever-transforming societal challenges.

Fourth, justice depends on moral reasoning that "seeks *consistency* between principles and values *and fairness*" (Snauwaert, 2023, p. 40, emphasis in original). This implies a balance between ideals of justice and the practical realities confronting people. These tensions can be deliberated using moral reasoning. Following Rawls (2001), justice as fairness recognizes the need of citizens, conceived as free and equal persons, for reminders to acknowledge and means to incorporate into their daily lives respect for their actual interdependencies.

Fifth, skillfulness at recognizing and improving justice is an *educatable capacity* realized through practicing methods actually usable in supporting society through process-oriented, inclusive decision-making processes designed to strengthen recognition of and response to the plurality in the collective. Learning the capacity for moral reasoning requires experience via replicable, thoughtful experiment, not rote repetition of moral regulation. Providing opportunities for students to become facile and skillful at promoting peace is education for civic engagement. And learning to undertake and execute moral action should not be relegated to training for technical schools, sports or for children or even the military; but should be welcome in higher education, as well. Like Reardon (2010), Snauwaert (2023) shows the value of practice and experiment accompanied by further “reflection on experience” (p. 66) as he elaborates justice as lived fairness.

Snauwaert’s (2023) focus on *justification* as constituting justice identifies the need for achieving validity and legitimacy for norms, laws, policies, and judgments through rational deliberations guided by principles and *values in terms of the elements of fairness*. He writes, “We can and should ask whether the political values and principles of justice and the judgements concerning laws, policies, and practices based upon them are morally justifiable.... If so, what is their source or grounding?” (Snauwaert, 2023, p. 40). Here, Snauwaert refers to “grounding” as a means searching for and developing reasons that constitute justification in terms of a moral base. Distributive justice policies should aspire to “fair distribution of social goods and opportunities” (Snauwaert, 2023, p. 144). However, these ideals are always confronted with inequalities, tendencies to take unfair advantage, disinformation, and structured oppression. Therefore, ways to delve into the relevant values and principles that rationally support a given position must be found. Citizens involved and affected must deliberate to reach reasonable solutions which enact mutual compromises, finally agreed upon after grappling with a broad range of possible solutions. Educating citizens for promotion of positive peace through exercise of their capacities for moral reasoning and communicative deliberation can inculcate individual empowerment for increasing collective peacebuilding through inclusive practices of distributive justice.

### **Peace Pedagogy as Moral Reasoning**

Snauwaert (2023) elaborates moral reasoning as both philosophical conceptualization and as “process-oriented, inquiry-based pedagogy grounded in the logical structure of moral reasoning and judgment” (p. 65). Snauwaert lays out moral reasoning as a pedagogy for peace based on *reflective inquiry*, the methodology Reardon (2010) used to engage students, in practices of reasoning and communicating. Participatory engagement is a safeguard against falling into ideological or polarized or passive citizenship. Moral reasoning is at its core a relational point of view supportive of peace thinking and engagement in citizenship. Working dialogically, students can become reflective, morally grounded, articulate, mutually cooperating citizens rather than depending on institutions to teach, maintain, and enforce justice.

If we review the sources Snauwaert has incorporated into his text, we recognize his comprehensive grasp of the vast literature on justice, peace, and the foundations of education. In the pedagogical section of his book, Snauwaert himself has also learned from teaching. With his undergraduate, graduate, doctoral, and continuing education students, he has developed (seemingly) simple guiding questions for engaging in reflective inquiry pedagogy about justice. By resolving justice into a set of core questions societies must continuously answer, Snauwaert explains and demonstrates the interrelatedness of theory and practice in peace studies. Each

question of justice is elaborated in individual chapters. These questions are 1) Whose security? 2) Who belongs? 3) Whose truth? 4) Who gets what? 5) Who decides? 6) Whose resistance? and 7) How do we hold violators accountable? (pp. 9-10) These questions invite discussion facilitated by Snauwaert's resolution of fairness, drawn from Rawls (1971, 1990, 1993, 2000, 2001), into elements of 1) equality, 2) impartiality, 3) reciprocity, and 4) recognition (p. 52). Snauwaert further encourages the practice of communicative action by resolving that idea into aspects he elaborates (p. 40) as expression, explanation, justification, argumentation, and deliberation (Habermas, 1990, 1993, 1994; Forst, 2017; Forst and Flynn, 2012; Snauwaert and Reardon, 2011, 2019, 2020a, 2020b, 2022; Reardon, 2010; Gerson, 2013, 2019, 2020). As they provide answers to Snauwaert's questions, students operating under these guidelines enact a pedagogy in developing social structures that constitute a peaceful, that is, a just society.

### **Student-Generated Peace Constitution**

Engaged in collaboratively writing a peace constitution, students are invited to aim toward reaching shared understandings, accepting a congruence of opinion, and reaching consensus through shared decision-making. Thus, the peace constitution project prescribes moral reasoning. On Snauwaert's (2023, p. 72) view, "A 'constitution' is a declaration and/or statement of principles of justice that articulates the fair terms of regulation of the institutions of society: it is a statement of what a just society should be, defining a just society in principle." Snauwaert devotes a chapter to each of his questions concerning central issues of justice. Each question-of-justice chapter ends with a summary and a "Peace Constitution Basic Template" which guides students through a series of steps involving inquiry and reflection on relevant principles. Students are invited to "[a]rticulate a justification of these principles by employing the elements of fairness" (Snauwaert, 2023, p. 72) — equality, impartiality, reciprocity and recognition.

The peace constitution project is structured so that students begin working individually and then bring their written work together in small groups to share with classmates and the instructor. Next, the students draft a combined statement using their individual findings. These statements are reviewed and revised with instructor suggestions. The final document is compiled from the collective group reports and framed by an introduction and conclusion. The project engages students in the logical structure of moral reasoning and judgment as they explore and construct a constitution of a just and peaceful society comprised by their reflection on the basic questions of justice (p. 73). These learning-in-action processes inculcate gains in cooperative action. Mutual commitment is generated through participation and on-going, joint decision-making. Each participant can claim some ownership in the outcome of the co-constructed peace constitution. Thus, through a reflective inquiry pedagogy, the participants have not only cooperated, but they have *collaborated* to produce something more than any one of them could have generated alone.

The structure of learning that Snauwaert lays out aims to empower students for intense engagement as citizens. This entails far more than voting or other bureaucratic procedures such as following rules and laws. Intense participation in democratic citizenship requires more than voicing opinions or being active in protests. Snauwaert (2023, p. 201, emphasis in original) writes, "...the pursuit of peace and justice is contingent upon the active and informed political participation of democratic citizens as dynamic agents of justice, which is the core of *political efficacy*... this agency is contingent upon the citizens' moral reasoning and judgment capacity. This development requires a pedagogical process that *exercises* their moral reasoning and judgment, a *pedagogy of moral reasoning*."



Snauwaert's theoretical and pedagogical assertions are in fact used and exemplified by two real world documents. First, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was developed by a pluralistic convening of global representatives in 1948 (Adami, 2012). This coincided with the formation of the United Nations (UN) which took UDHR as a moral foundation for its work. UDHR has guided deliberation and approval of many treaties and more specific documents of international law, including expansion of human rights. Second, the Earth Charter initiative was launched by the UN in 1987 and more fully developed in 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit. In 1997, the Earth Charter Commission brought together leaders of civil society and governments to begin deliberating and drafting the document that would become the Earth Charter. In 2000, the Earth Charter was launched and accepted as an official declaration of the UN (Earth Charter).

In conclusion, Snauwaert accomplishes the task of laying out the logical structure for both inquiring into the nature of justice as the basis of a peaceful society and for carrying out a pedagogy of moral reasoning as a method and means of teaching peace. To challenge current threats of fascism and authoritarianism, he asserts these can be resisted through "...citizens capable of exercising moral reasoning and judgment that enables them to effectively engage in public deliberation concerning justifiable principles of justice and who can further exercise reasoned judgment regarding laws, policies, and institutional practices and their effective enactments in the context of justice" (Snauwaert, 2023, p. 203). Snauwaert's shift in the paradigm of peace has potential to enable transformation of human societies by changing the ways people think so their deliberations regularly include moral consideration about others, communities, and societies. This transformational shift can bring us closer to a world in which we can all feel safe living.

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