

# **The Two Moral Powers and the Purpose of Peace Education**

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to conceptualize the idea of the development of political efficacy as the core purpose of peace education in terms of what Martha Nussbaum refers to as the architectonic capabilities of practical reason and sociability and what John Rawls refers to as the two moral powers of rationality and reasonableness. An education for peace calls for the development of basic moral capabilities that empower future citizens for political and moral efficacy. It is argued that the development of the political efficacy of citizens is grounded in their basic moral capacities and the development of these powers through a pedagogy of reflective, dialogical inquiry can be conceived as the basic purpose of an education for peace.

**Keywords:** Peace Education, Justice, Rawls, Nussbaum, Capabilities, Moral powers, political efficacy of citizens, pedagogy of reflective inquiry

## **The moral primacy of political education**

At its core education is a *normative* enterprise in that it is driven by fundamental social values as well as the moral imperatives of social justice. These values and imperatives powerfully shape every dimension of educational theory, policy, and practice. Thus, it is generally recognized that there exists an intimate relationship between education and society (Banner, 1997; Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970; Gutmann, 1999; Hadot & Davidson, 1995; Jaeger, 1943; Marrou, 1982). As John Dewey notes, “The conception of education as a social process and function has no definite meaning until we decide the kind of society we have in mind (Dewey, 1916, p. 112).” Peace educator Betty Reardon (Reardon, 1988) succinctly shares this perspective as well: “Most . . . agree that there is no neutral education. Education is a social enterprise conducted for the realization of social values. The question is what values are to be realized through education, and how (p. 23).” From this perspective, education constitutes a social institution that is driven by the values and principles of the society’s conception of justice.

Fundamental to democracy is the claim that citizens have basic political rights as well as a fair idea of those rights in terms of the knowledge and the capacity to exercise them. The basic idea of democracy is that the basic structure, distribution, and enactment of power will be such that no reasonable citizen will have grounds to reject it (Forst, 2012a, 2017; Habermas, 1996;

Rawls, 1993; Scanlon, 2000). In this sense, the people are the source *and* agents of legitimate political power and authority. The exercise of power must be based on the consent of citizens. Consent means that the People freely endorse the founding values and principles of the government and its laws and policies in the light of those values and principles (Rawls, 1971, 1993, 1997; Rawls & Kelly, 2001). Such consent renders the coercive power of government justifiable and legitimate. From this perspective, power is the first question of justice (Forst, 2012a, 2013, 2014a, 2014b).

Democracy is therefore grounded in a consensual theory of power. The consensual theory of power understands power as a collective act grounded in mutual agreement (Arendt, 1970; Sharp, 1973). Power is the ability to act in concert, and such action is grounded in consensual agreement. Therefore, "[p]ower is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together (Arendt, 1970, p. 44)." The consensual nature of power is revealed "[w]hen commands are no longer obeyed, the means of violence are of no use; and the question of this obedience is not decided by the command-obedience relation but by opinion, and of course, by the number with those who share it. Everything depends on the power behind the violence ... (Arendt, 1970, p. 49)." As the political philosopher Rainer Forst suggests, being consensual, power is essentially noumenal and discursive (Forst, 2017). To be subjected to power is to be motivated by reasons that moves one to think or act in the way intended by the person giving the reasons (Forst, 2017, p. 38). "The real site of power struggles ... is the discursive realm—the realm where justifications are formed and reformed, questioned, tested, and possibly sealed off or reified (Forst 2017, p. 46)." Noumenal power motivates in the sense that the object of power must *choose* to do something; if it is just done to the person without motivating them, then noumenal character vanishes—it is no longer power but brute force (Forst, 2017). As Rainer Forst (2017) suggests:

The exercise and effects of power are based on recognition of a reason—or ... various reasons—to act differently than one would have acted without that reason. This recognition resets on seeing a ‘good enough’ reason to act. It means that you see a *justification* for changing how you were going to act. Power rests on recognized, accepted justifications ... threat can be seen as such a justification, as can a good argument. But power exist only when there is such acceptance (p. 41).

In turn, a political and social structure is constituted by its rules/laws. Being rule-based the political order is normative, and thus, the political order is an “order of justification (Forst, 2017, p. 44).” Thus, “there are certain justification narratives on which such an order or system is founded (p. 44).” The exercise of power is being able to influence and control the space of reasons within which the justification and thus the legitimacy of the rules that constitute and organize the political order is determined. The essential power is to define the values, norms,

rules, and thereby the social positions of the political order. Power is the capacity to “determine the space of reasons within which social or political relations are being framed—relations which form a structured, durable, and stable social order of action and justification (Forst, 2017, p. 49).” This power, however, is contingent upon the validity of the justifications it rests upon.

From a moral perspective, when power is exercised without the consent of those subjected to it, thereby being imposed, it is morally *arbitrary*. The basic moral constraint on power, upon which its legitimacy is dependent, is whether it is justifiable to all those affected by it. The first question of justice is power and thus the avoidance of arbitrary rule/domination: that is, being subjected to power without valid justification (Forst, 2012a, 2014a, 2014b). Citizens have a basic right to ask for reasons of justification and to question those reasons, a right not to be subjected to norms and practices that reasonable persons would have grounds to reject (Rawls, 1971; Scanlon, 2000).

What follows, therefore, is a societal civic duty to provide citizens with a political education that is devoted to the development of their capacity to participate in the political processes of their society (Snauwaert, 2020). As the political and educational philosopher Amy Gutmann suggests: “‘political education’ – the cultivation of the virtues, knowledge, and skills necessary for political participation – has moral primacy over other purposes of public education . . . . (Gutmann, 1999, p. 287).” The field of peace education is dedicated to the articulation, defense, formulation and assessment of an education devoted to developing the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for the political efficacy of citizens” (Reardon & Snauwaert, 2015).

Peace education as an essential form of political education, can be understood as the pedagogical processes that lead to the development of the capacities necessary for the realization of a politically efficacious citizenry: the capacity to engage in transformative political action on all levels of society, from local to global. (Reardon & Snauwaert, 2011; Reardon & Snauwaert, 2015; Snauwaert, 2019). As peace educator and scholar Betty Reardon suggests:

...the general purpose of peace education, as I understand it, is to promote the development of an authentic planetary consciousness that will enable us to function as global citizens and to transform the present human condition by changing the social structures and the patterns of thought that have created it. This transformational imperative must, in my view, be at the center of peace education. It is important to emphasize that transformation, in this context, means a profound global cultural change that affects ways of thinking, world views, values, behaviors, relationships, and the structures that make up our public order. It implies a change in the human consciousness and in human society of a dimension far greater than any other that has taken place since the emergence of the nation-state system, and perhaps since the emergence of human settlements (Reardon, 1988, p. x).

This transformational approach aims at the development of the human capacities and ways of thought necessary to sustain a just peace. Reardon maintains that a transformational peace education should draw out “anew mode of thinking that is life-affirming, oriented toward the fulfillment of the human potential, and directed to the achievement of maturation as the ultimate goal of ... positive peace.” (Reardon, 1988, p. 53).

The purpose of this paper is to conceptualize political efficacy in terms of what Martha Nussbaum refers to as the architectonic capabilities of practical reason and sociability or similarly what John Rawls refers to as the two moral powers of rationality and reasonableness. The two theorists have identified basically the two fundamental moral capabilities/powers upon which political efficacy rests.

### **The two moral powers**

According to Nussbaum, what specifically defines our humanity is our capacity for freedom manifested in two basic capabilities: practical reason and sociability. These two capabilities are architectonic, in the sense that they organize and animate the entire structure of human life (Nussbaum, 1988; Nussbaum, 1990). What is distinctive about human beings is that we are capable of freely conceiving, planning, executing, and evaluating our choices. We are capable of freedom. Freedom constitutes, as Nussbaum suggests, the capability of practical reason to define and pursue one's own conception of good life, to define and pursue what one has reason to value. This conception of practical reason is essentially equivalent to what John Rawls referred to as the moral power of “rationality” (Rawls, 1971; Rawls & Kelly, 2001). Rationality/practical reason is the capacity for a conception of the good, the capacity to know and decide one's own interests and ends, as well as the capacity to plan and execute the means to achieve those interests and ends. What is fundamental to a good life with dignity is the capability to conceive, plan, execute, and evaluate our choices, in other words, freedom. As Sen suggests, freedom has more than an instrumental value for well-being; it has an intrinsic, constitutive value (Sen, 2009).

The second moral power or capability is reasonableness or sociability (Rawls, 1993); the capacity to understand, affirm, and act from within one's duties to others. Reasonableness is the capacity for a sense of justice, for a sense of what is right in relation to others. Reasonableness is the power of reason that regulates rationality (the choice and pursuit of one's interests) in terms of what is right and just as defined by moral principles as it pertains to our relationships with other citizens within the basic institutional structure of society. We do not exercise our freedom to define and pursue our own individual conception of good life as completely separate individuals independently of others. We are called to respect other persons and that respect regulates the pursuit of our own interests. Sociability is central to our humanity (Nussbaum,

1995). Nussbaum suggests that “[t]he good of others is not just a constraint on this person’s pursuit of her own good; it is a part of her good (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 158).” A dignified life is not exclusively one wherein freedom is exercised without concern for others. The good life is a life of human affiliation wherein respect for persons as ends is affirmed as one’s highest good. To possess a sense of justice is to limit the pursuit of our self-interest out of respect for others. The good life is a life guided by a sense of justice wherein the reasonable regulates and limits the rational pursuit of our interests. To be reasonable is as fundamental to our own good as is the rational conception and pursuit of our individual interests.

### **Peace education and the development of the two moral powers**

In keeping with this duty of political education, peace education can be understood as the pedagogical processes that lead to the development of the capabilities necessary for the realization of a politically efficacious citizenry (Reardon & Snauwaert, 2011; Reardon & Snauwaert, 2015; Snauwaert, 2019). This approach aims at the development of human capacities and ways of thought necessary to sustain a just peace. Its aim is to *empower* students with the capabilities of practical reason and sociability, rationality and reasonableness, so that they are able to make free rational life choices as well as participate in the exercise of public reason and justification with a sense of justice (Chomsky & Otero, 2002; Dewey, 1916; Gutmann, 1999; Nussbaum, 2010; Scheffler, 1981). Furthermore, it can be argued that there are foundational ethical and moral capacities that underlie the capability of sociability/reasonableness, which include the capacities of moral self-reflection and empathy/dialogical relationships.

#### *Self-reflection*

A capacity for self-reflection underlies both moral powers. Following Hannah Arendt, “thinking” as an internal dialogue, a reflective activity upon the meaning, value, and validity of one’s thought (Arendt, 1971; Arendt & Kohn, 2003). Internal reflective coherence, or non-contradiction, is essential to “thinking” as conceived by Arendt. The validity of one’s ideas and claims are contingent upon internal consistency. From within a moral perspective, it can be argued that it is “better to suffer wrong than to do wrong.” Why? The dialogical structure of thinking, the internal dialogue, rests upon a capacity of self-awareness and self-consistency. In Plato’s *Gorgias* Socrates states metaphorically: “it would be better for me that my lyre or a chorus I direct were out of tune and loud with discord, and that most men should not agree with me and contradict me, rather than that I, being one, should be out of tune with myself and contradict myself (Plato, 2005, pp. 482b-c).” If I do X, then I will not be able to live with myself and therefore I can’t do it. The internal reflective discord creates an unbearable disequilibrium. As Arendt writes: “The criterion of right and wrong . . . depends in the last analysis neither on habits and customs . . . nor on a command . . . but on what I decide with regard to myself. In other words, I cannot do certain things, because having done them I will no longer be able to live with myself (Arendt & Kohn, 2003, p. 97).” Moral integrity grounded in the capacity of self-

reflection involves being at peace with one's self. Upon due reflection it is the threatened loss of internal coherence that motivates one to respond to others with respect, that is, to enact reasonableness.

Reflective capacity is of critical importance, for it asserts an independent moral capability that is *not* contingent upon social custom. It thus provides a moral check, enabling one to regulate one's choices and to be able to critique and reason, to reject morally invalid claims. The lack of a thinking population is very dangerous, for "the greatest evil is the evil committed . . . by human beings who refuse to be persons . . . who refuse to think . . . have actually failed to constitute themselves into somebodies (Arendt & Kohn, 2003, pp. 111-112)." From the perspective of thinking, reasonableness/sociability is a function of maintaining our internal integrity as reflective equilibrium.

When the absence of ethical and moral capabilities is widespread in a population, it becomes the fertile soil within which fascist political tactics can be effective and authoritarianism can grow (Arendt, 1958, 1994). This constitutes what Arendt referred to as the *banality of evil*. The lack of moral capacity in the citizenry is thus the primary threat to a just peace. Given the inability to think independently, individuals rely on the conventions of society as justifying reasons for supporting morally questionable governmental policies, what Antonio Gramsci referred to as "common sense," formed by layers of historically inherited beliefs and values, uncritically and unreflectively adopted and affirmed and used as justificatory reasons (Gramsci & Buttigieg, 1991). The absence of reflective capacity and the subsequent reliance on common sense often takes the form of blind obedience to authority, including a strong tendency to fit into prevailing social norms, whether morally justifiable or not. Given the current global attack of authoritarianism on democracy (Diamond, 2019; Nance, 2018), the ethical and moral capability of citizens is an urgent matter.

#### *Capacity for empathy and dialogical relationships*

Given that reasonableness/sociability rests upon the recognition of the dignity of the other, it can be argued that the capacity of *empathy* is also foundational. A sense of justice is grounded dialogically in our relations with others. It is dialogical. Duty to others is not merely a logical function but an imperative that follows from our interrelation with others. Following Levinas, it is the call of the other, the call of the other's dignity that defines responsibility (Grob, 1999; Levinas & Poller, 2003). From this perspective, the structure of reasonableness is *dialogical*.

Reasonableness is constituted by treating the other as an end. To treat another merely as a means is to objectify them, to turn them into an object. Respect is treating the other as an end; disrespect

is treating the other only as a means. By defining reasonableness in part as the capacity to treat the other as an end, what is being suggested is that the moral relationship is based upon recognizing the other as a subject, and this recognition signifies the entrance into a relationship based upon the cognition of a meeting between subjectivities. Therefore, a fundamental moral resource is the capacity for dialogical relationships with others. From this perspective, morality is not only based on internal dialogue as Arendt maintains, but it requires dialogical relationships: moral integrity is also contingent upon the capacity to meet the other, to respond to the call of their dignity (Fornari, [1966]1975; Forst, 2012b; Keen, 1986; Levinas & Poller, 2003; Miller, 1980; Reardon, 1996).

The development of capacities of self-reflection and empathetic dialogical relationships, that underlie the moral power of sociability/reasonableness--a sense of justice forms one of the basic aims of an education for peace. Political efficacy, the capacity to engage in transformative political action, is contingent upon these capacities.

The moral power of reasonableness grounded in the capacity for self-reflection and empathy/dialogical relationships suggests the employment of a reflective dialogical pedagogy at the core of peace education. A version of this pedagogy has been developed by Betty Reardon, which she refers to as “a pedagogy of reflective inquiry” (Reardon & Snauwaert, 2011; Reardon & Snauwaert, 2015; Snauwaert, 2019). Being a reflective practice it requires the space for authentic open reflective inquiry in dialogue. It requires authentic open dialogical inquiry in the classroom. This pedagogy is grounded in both John Dewey’s idea that education as the reconstruction of experience is contingent upon engaging students in processes of reflective experience (Dewey, 1916) and Paulo Freire’s dialogical critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970).

## Conclusion

In summary, an education for peace, an education for the establishment and enactment of a just society, calls for the development of basic moral capabilities that empower future citizens for political and moral efficacy. The capacities outlined above are foundational to the realization of justice and thus positive peace. It has been argued that the development of the political efficacy of citizens grounded in their basic moral capacities can be conceived as the basic purpose of an education for peace and that these capacities can be developed through a pedagogy of reflective, dialogical inquiry.

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<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/17400201.2020.1713068>

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