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### **Crafting Peace. Influential Contributions to Johan Galtung's peace theory**

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This work, being the result of personal testimony from someone who had the opportunity to meet Galtung and work directly with him, has not been peer reviewed.

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## **Crafting Peace. Influential Contributions to Johan Galtung's peace theory**

**Erika Degortes\***

### **Introduction**

Johan Galtung is a towering figure in the realm of Peace Research. For over six decades, he has passionately explored and meticulously investigated the complex facets of peace and conflict. Throughout this time, he has not only provoked thoughtful discussions and critical debates but has also actively engaged with diverse communities and audiences. By challenging established norms and pushing the boundaries of conventional thinking, he has educated countless individuals, fostering a deeper understanding of the root causes and solutions to global conflicts. His pioneering work introduced innovative concepts (such as structural and cultural violence, negative and positive peace, just to mention a few of the most famous concepts) which became foundational in the field. Moreover, his insights and invaluable guidance on key issues have significantly contributed to shaping contemporary peace and conflict studies. However, Galtung's intellectual journey throughout his life would not have been the same without the numerous encounters with influential and inspirational figures whose ideas and philosophies profoundly influenced his work. Among these individuals, each remarkable in their own realm, we have selected three who offered fresh perspectives, deep insights, and critical guidance to Galtung's approach to peace and conflict studies. From the moral and social teachings of his father, August Galtung, to the ecological philosophy of Arne Naess, the practical wisdom and the spiritual values of Daisaku Ikeda, each played a vital role in shaping his vision and commitment to peace.

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This article delves into the influence of his father and these key thinkers, highlighting how their teachings and principles have contributed to Galtung's enduring legacy in peace and conflict resolution.

## **1. Household influence. The Galtung's family**

Understanding the family context in which Johan Galtung grew up is crucial to appreciating the formative experiences that shaped his perspective on Peace Research.

The Galtung family has its roots in the Hardangerfjord region of southwestern Norway, an area celebrated for its stunning natural beauty, including fjords, waterfalls, and lush fruit orchards. The family's history dates back to the Viking period when they were part of the old low-level aristocracy. Over the centuries, the Galtung family became more prominent, with members taking on significant roles as politicians and contributing to various aspects of Norwegian society.

Much of what we know about Johan Galtung's family, and his formative years comes directly from him, as he has consistently expressed gratitude towards his parents (Interview with Johan Galtung 2010). On a hand, his mother, Helga Holmboe, a dedicated nurse, was the daughter of a distinguished figure who served as the Director of Health in Norway. On the other hand, his father, August Galtung, a Norwegian physician, became the deputy mayor of Oslo. August had a profound effect on Johan's early life, educational path, and intellectual development and Johan eloquently portrays him as an «incurable, wonderful optimist» (Galtung 2000). Furthermore, August instilled in Johan a keen awareness of social injustices and a relentless thirst for knowledge. These elements were decisive in shaping Johan Galtung's perspectives and guiding his future contributions to Peace Research and social change.

## **2. August Galtung**

To provide further context, Johan's description of his father emphasized his determination, eclecticism, and his ability to integrate knowledge from different fields to gain a deeper and

more complete understanding of the complex realities he faced (Urdal 2022). First, August's education at the Norwegian Military Academy, where he excelled in military tactics, highlighted his ability to distinguish himself in a highly competitive and strategic environment. This exposure made him well-versed in matters of war and defense, a subject he took great pride in (Urdal 2022). Secondly, in addition to his military training, he earned a medical degree, showing his passion for science and healthcare. Thus, August Galtung became a respected medical doctor. He was not just involved in treating patients but was also dedicated to addressing the broader social determinants of health. Indeed, this approach meant looking beyond immediate medical needs to understand and tackle the underlying social and economic inequalities that affected his patients' lives.

Hence, as a socially committed doctor, August showed Johan the importance of community service and understanding power structures. Certainly, August's efforts to address the roots of social disparities were mirrored in Johan's later academic pursuits. Indeed, this familial impact laid the foundation for Johan's future interest in sociology and peace. Inspired by his father's holistic approach to health and well-being, Johan adopted a similarly comprehensive view when addressing issues of peace and conflict. Furthermore, he understood that achieving peace was not merely about resolving conflicts but also about creating systems—to put it more accurately “structures”—that promote social harmony, equity, cooperation. In other words, what he would later refer to as “structural peace” (Galtung 1969).

Moreover, his father's dedication to health and well-being instilled in Johan Galtung a deep understanding of positive and negative health, influencing his later theories. For instance, the concept of positive peace, which, already in one of its early formulations (with several more to follow), is defined as the “integration of human society” (Galtung 1964) was also inspired by his father's holistic view of health. Then, Johan Galtung often emphasized that achieving peace isn't automatic, much like staying healthy isn't something that happens on its own. We've managed to live longer lives not due to some natural trend, but because of relentless hard work and research. In fact, by figuring out what causes illnesses and promoting good health practices, we've made great strides. However, Galtung believes we haven't been as successful in promoting what he calls “positive health”—the ideal state of well-being. Similarly, while we've made some progress in preventing wars and conflicts

(negative peace), we haven't focused enough on building societies where justice and harmony thrive (positive peace). This idea, first introduced by Galtung in 1968, underscores the need for a proactive approach to fostering long lasting peace, much like the efforts needed to maintain good health (Galtung 2010).

Returning to August's academic pursuits, these endeavors did not cease there. In fact, he also studied political economy, demonstrating an enviable understanding of economic and social dynamics. This unique combination of skills allowed him to tackle complex problems from multiple perspectives and contribute significantly to various areas of society. His political expertise in the 1920s, serving as both deputy mayor and acting mayor, further solidified Johan's understanding of complex socio-political dynamics. Finally, August's diverse academic background, ranging from military tactics and medical studies to political economy, equipped Johan with a unique blend of knowledge.

### **3. Johan Galtung's Education**

August's ascendancy certainly extended to Johan's educational path. By encouraging a strong intellectual curiosity, August supported Johan's pursuit of knowledge in various fields. Undeniably, having observed firsthand how his father's work transcended the boundaries of traditional medicine and delved into social advocacy, Johan similarly ventured into numerous disciplines, languages, and cultures. Although his formative scientific roots were firmly planted in mathematics, Galtung remembers that while his formal studies in chemistry and physics were intellectually stimulating, it was the practical applications by physical and chemical engineers that truly captivated him—despite the troubling reality that some of their competence was directed towards the creation of nuclear bombs. (Interview with Johan Galtung 2010). Eventually, not finding mathematics to be his true calling, Galtung gravitated towards sociology (Galtung 2000), illustrating the belief that pursuing one field of study should not preclude exploration in others. Consequently, he felt encouraged and supported to follow in his father's footsteps by obtaining both a cand. real. degree in mathematics and a mag. art. degree in sociology (Urdal 2022).

Moreover, Johan Galtung reminisced that when he felt an undeniable "calling" towards Peace Studies in 1951, his academic inspiration deviated significantly from the

mathematics and statistics he was formally studying. Instead, he was heavily impressed by the realm of health science, a domain he had intricately understood through his father's vivid descriptions about his patients, their illnesses, how to treat them, and even more importantly, what could have been done to prevent them. Likewise, Galtung clearly recalled observing his father at work, including during surgical operations, and immersing himself in extensive readings on anatomy, physiology, and pathology throughout his high school years.

Thereafter, this broad spectrum of expertise inspired Johan to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to peace studies, integrating insights and methodologies from sociology, mathematics, medicine, political science, and cultural studies. His unique ability to synthesize diverse perspectives allowed him to address complex global issues with a nuanced and holistic understanding.

#### **4. Diagnosis, Prognosis, Therapy**

Undoubtedly, a crucial concept transmitted by his father, which deeply shaped Johan Galtung's future theories, was the notion of Diagnosis-Prognosis-Therapy (DPT). This medical triad evolved into the methodological foundation Johan employed across the extensive domains of social sciences and international relations, ultimately underpinning his framework for peace studies. He elucidated that DPT was ingrained in him from an early age and becoming almost second nature, thanks to frequent discussions at the family dinner table (Degortes 2016). This constant exposure cultivated a deep-seated understanding, rendering the principles of DPT as intuitive to him as the very air he breathed: beginning with comprehensive empirical analysis, advancing to theoretical predictions of potential outcomes in the absence of intervention, and culminating in concrete actions guided by this theoretical framework and a clear understanding of health.

However, Galtung brilliantly pointed out that beyond the realms of diagnosis and prognosis, when talking about peace, the intricate tapestry of values, politics, and visions of "improvement" invariably comes into play. He emphasized that a solid diagnosis and prognosis must underpin any proposal for therapy.

Furthermore, once again due to his father's example, Galtung astutely recognized a significant gap within the DPT triangle: while diagnosis and prognosis were inherently descriptive and therapy was prescriptive, there was a need for a retrospective understanding of past therapeutic actions. This involved the crucial task of discerning what could and should have been done in the past when events had clearly gone awry.

As a result, Galtung expanded the DPT triad to include the crucial aspect of trauma reconciliation, an understanding deeply rooted in the therapeutic interventions of the past. This added dimension required not only recognizing and diagnosing issues but also exploring the reparative measures that could and should have been implemented when situations had previously deteriorated. This methodological framework, which involves thorough empirical analysis, theoretical forecasting, and practical action, became a cornerstone of Galtung's approach to Peace Studies (The Transcend Method). He emphasizes that a comprehensive understanding of social issues, much like medical conditions, requires not only identifying and addressing current problems but also considering the historical context and potential future developments. Yet, the cataclysmic events of the Second World War elevated this groundwork to unprecedented heights.

## **5. World War II**

The War had permanent consequences on Galtung's family, particularly because his cherished father was imprisoned at Grini, located west of Oslo. In particular, the period was marked by intense tension, as the family was informed that prisoners would be executed following British bombings. On one hand, each night, when the air raid sirens sounded, Johan and his mother would hastily seek refuge in the air raid shelter, their minds consumed with worry. On the other hand, each morning, it fell upon Johan to fetch the newspaper, a task born out of his mother's fear of finding news that his father had been shot. This daily ritual left an indelible mark on his memory, a vivid reminder of the war's madness.

Additionally, visits to Grini were permitted twice a year. During these visits, Johan and his mother would arrive pale and exhausted, while his father appeared brown and sunburnt from working in the commandant's Kräutergarten, a medical herb garden. Certainly, the

stark contrast between their appearances highlighted the harsh conditions they all endured during these difficult times.

Definitively, reflecting on his formative years, Johan Galtung often spoke about the unfading impact the Second World War had on his family. These harrowing sufferings indelibly shaped his views on social change and the significance of peace work. His father's imprisonment deeply intertwined with his sense of the cruelty of war, played an enormous role in shaping Johan's perspective on the urgency of peace and conflict resolution. The recurring thought that no one should be allowed to take his beloved father away from him underscored his reflections (Interview with Johan Galtung 2010).

Emerging from the war with a palpable disgust for violence, primarily because it had temporarily stolen his father from him, Johan's hardships culminated in his stance as a conscientious objector.

Johan Galtung often reflected on the pivotal moments that shaped his career. One such moment was the mandatory military service in Norway. Galtung candidly admits, "But if it hadn't been for obligatory military service in Norway, I wouldn't have become the campaigner for and specialist on peace that I am today" (Urdall 2022). Galtung recounted that he had made this significant decision after extensive reading in preparation for potentially transferring from military service to alternative civilian service. He remarked that the arguments against war were notably clear, but there appeared to be a lack of discourse on peace and its benefits. This observation led him to distinguish between negative peace, which is the absence of war, and positive peace, which involves the presence of justice and harmony. This was *in nuce* the conceptual distinction he formalized in 1968.

## **6. Conscientious objection**

Reflecting on these formative practices, Galtung acknowledges the meaningful mark of his father's wisdom and the unexpected role of military service in leading him towards a life dedicated to peace and conflict resolution. In fact, Galtung's father consistently advised Johan not to simply follow the prescribed path, but to question the status quo and to be

mindful of every action he took. Taking his father's counsel to heart, Galtung embarked on a journey of discovery, seeking to understand the broader implications of military service and its repercussion on society. Finally, this quest led him to embrace conscientious objection at a time when an additional semester of service was mandated in Norway—a requirement Galtung refused. Consequently, he endured a six-month prison sentence, a learning journey that would prove crucial in steering him toward the field of Peace Research as will be elaborated upon in subsequent sections.

## **7. Preliminary Conclusions**

Undoubtedly, this tumultuous period ultimately led Johan to develop a profound engagement to understanding and resolving conflicts. It fueled his lifelong dedication to the pursuit of peace and solidified his unwavering pledge to Peace Research. Additionally, these events serve as a testament to the power of questioning the norm and the transformative impact of parental guidance and personal introspection.

In summary, the early familial influence of August Galtung was instrumental in shaping Johan Galtung's devotion to peace studies. This foundational experience not only directed Johan's academic interests but also imbued his work with a deep sense of purpose and a commitment to addressing the root causes of conflict and violence.

## **8. Intellectual Mentorship: Arne Næss**

In a paragraph of *Choose Peace* titled *Learning from Giants*, Johan Galtung expressed his deep gratitude to his philosophy teacher at the University of Oslo, Professor Arne Næss (Galtung & Ikeda 1995).

Besides, as a testament to Næss's influence in shaping Galtung's intellectual trajectory, Galtung dedicated the first volume of his series of methodological writings *Theory and Methods of Social Research Vol. I* to him (Galtung 1977).

Their relationship began during Galtung's academic career at the University of Oslo, where Næss was a professor of philosophy. At the time, Galtung was twenty-two, while Næss, at

forty-one, was a world-renowned specialist. His acclaim stemmed from his deep engagement with two great philosophical figures: Spinoza—who envisioned a spiritual unity and sacredness in nature, where the distinction between subject and object vanishes, merging the mind with the whole of nature—and Gandhi. It was through Næss that Galtung was introduced to the study of these two giants. (Galtung & Ikeda 1995).

Furthermore, this foundational period in Galtung's life was marked by a pivotal episode. In the early 1950s, due to his pacifist beliefs, Galtung spent six months jail for refusing both military and the additional six months civilian service required in Norway for conscientious objectors. It was in prison that he wrote his first book, *Gandhi Politiske Etikk* (1955) which he co-authored with his mentor, Arne Næss. Their collaborative work, particularly in synthesizing Gandhi's political ethics, stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of their intellectual partnership, although later Galtung will further develop his studies on Gandhi leading to his own theories on conflict.

However, the genesis of what would become Galtung's theories on the nonviolent transformation of conflicts can be traced back to their combined efforts. Indeed, Næss and Galtung have provided a richer, more nuanced understanding of peace, justice, and ecological sustainability, merging philosophical perspectives that emphasized nonviolence—the intrinsic value of all beings—and the interconnectedness of human and environmental wellbeing. These concepts are omnipresent in Galtung's writings where he highlights the need for systemic change to address underlying conflicts of all kinds, echoing Næss's call for a deeper, more integrated understanding of our relationship with nature.

## 9. Arne Næss's biographical notes

Arne Næss was, certainly, an exceptional figure. According to Galtung, he was “Norway's by no comparison greatest philosopher [...] A world philosopher, a human being with an incredible radiation. Nobody who came close remained the same” (Galtung 2012).

Born on January 27, 1912, in Slemdal (Oslo), and passed away on January 12, 2009, he is known as a distinguished Norwegian philosopher and mountaineer. He studied philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy at the University of Oslo, the Sorbonne, and Vienna, where

he attended the philosophical circle, enriching his understanding of the human mind and psychological dynamics through Eduard Hitschmann, a collaborator and disciple of Freud (Nasi 2023). Næss dedicated himself to writings on the philosophy of science, empirical semantics, linguistics, and the history of philosophy, the fruits of his long and prolific research career. Appointed professor of philosophy at the young age of twenty-seven, he became the youngest philosophy professor at the University of Oslo and the only philosophy professor in the country at the time.

## **10. Deep ecology**

Næss is most renowned for his association with Deep Ecology, a term he coined in his 1973 article *The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecological Movement*. In this seminal work, Næss delineates “deep ecology” from the “shallow ecology” movement, which he criticizes for focusing primarily on alleviating pollution and resource depletion to safeguard the health and well-being of individuals in industrialized Western nations.

In contrast, the deep ecology movement, as envisioned by Næss, is rooted in the understanding of the interdependence and relationality of all beings and emphasizes the intrinsic value of non-human nature.

Furthermore, deep Ecology is not merely a radical view of the relationship between humans and nature. Rather, it represents a philosophical and existential approach to ecological issues.

Thus, Næss's Deep Ecology proposes a holistic and interconnected vision of life, where every living being is part of a complex ecosystem that must be respected and protected. This approach has had a significant mark on the global ecological movement, influencing environmental policies and promoting greater awareness of the need to live in harmony with nature. Therefore, Næss later articulated this perspective, stating that “every living being has intrinsic value; the wellbeing and flourishing of human and nonhuman beings have intrinsic value” (Næss 2005). Also, this perspective contrasts with more traditional and anthropocentric views that prioritize human needs and interests over those of other species and ecosystems.

Surely, Næss's philosophy, which celebrates the richness and diversity of the Earth, both culturally and biologically distinguishes him as a unique figure in the philosophical landscape (Nasi 2023) and had an everlasting impact on all Galtung's written production.

Especially in his development theory that we can consider condensed in his book *A Theory of Development: Overcoming Structural Violence* (Galtung 2010), Galtung emphasizes the importance of equity, harmony, diversity and symbiosis as fundamental principles for sustainable development. Hence, he argues that real development should focus on building horizontal and equitable relationships that respect the interconnectedness of all forms of life and promote mutual and equal benefit.

Moreover, deep ecology's emphasis on the interdependence and intrinsic value of all living beings resonated deeply with Galtung's vision of positive peace, which extends beyond the mere absence of violence to include the presence of trauma reconciliation and harmonious relationships.

Finally, this ecological vision, advocating for a way of life that embodies harmony and ecological balance, is characterized by optimism, openness, joy, and playfulness. Consequently, Galtung learned from Næss the importance and the joy of research, cultivating a spirit that transcends the common perception of work as a duty separate from the rest of life.

## **11. Næss-Gandhi-Galtung**

While Spinoza's influence on Næss was substantial, the impact of Gandhi on his philosophy is equally significant. Gandhi's ideas are clearly reflected in Næss's formulation of deep ecology. Additionally, Næss himself acknowledged in a third-person summary of his philosophy that his ecological thought, or ecosophy, was shaped by his work on Spinoza, Gandhi, and his deep connection with the Norwegian mountains (Devall & Sessions 1985).

Evidently, this holistic approach underscores the interdependence and intrinsic value of all living beings, emphasizing the need for harmony and balance in both human and natural worlds. (Weber, 1999). Moreover, Næss rejected the logico-empirical confines of

positivism in favor of possibilism, embracing the world's diversity inspired by the Duhem-Poincaré thesis of theory manifold. He also opposed the reduction of philosophy to Western thought, advocating for a world philosophy inclusive of Indian and Chinese perspectives (Galtung 2012)

So, from Næss, Galtung learned that philosophy is as pluralistic as the world itself. More importantly, he gained the ability to envision multiple representations of the world, as well as numerous possible worlds existing in harmony.

Of course, Næss had a distinctive approach to Gandhi, aspiring to a systematic reconstruction wherein the essence of Gandhi's actions and speeches would be drawn from the deeper layers of his thought. Additionally, Næss's exploration of Gandhi is perhaps best exemplified in the appendix of his book *Gandhi and Group Conflict* (1974). In this work, Næss attempts a systematic reconstruction of Gandhi's thoughts), which outlines 25 norms and 26 hypotheses as the foundational elements of Gandhi's political philosophy. This appendix offers a brilliant depiction of Gandhi's world, emphasizing the intrinsic value of nonhuman nature and the interdependence among all beings. Nevertheless, according to the mature Galtung—who continued to reflect on these themes throughout his life- Despite its brilliance, Næss's interpretation and application of Gandhi's philosophy have their limitations, and it falls short as a practical guide for conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Galtung 2012). Næss believed that moral-normative power originates from fundamental principles, flowing deductively to norms and actions. This approach, however, renders the system vulnerable; if the foundational principles are questioned, the normative strength of the derived norms and actions is compromised. (Galtung 2012).

For this reason, starting from his collaboration with Arne Næss on Gandhi's political ethics, Johan Galtung dedicated his life to reflecting on Gandhi's ideas.

Particularly, Galtung, in his subsequent works, goes far beyond, defining Gandhi as a “conflictologist” and the founder of a “science of conflicts” (Galtung 1996). Furthermore, Galtung identifies some fundamental points in Gandhi's teachings which subsequently became a cornerstone of his theories on the transformation of conflicts through nonviolence. Among these: *Never fear dialogue. During his struggles, Gandhi engaged in*

*dialogue with anyone, including the viceroy of an empire he despised, which bore fruitful results.*

*Never fear conflict: more opportunity than danger.* For Gandhi, conflict was an opportunity to understand one another, to find common ground, and to avoid indifference between opposing sides. Moreover, Gandhi considered violence a preferable option to cowardice and viewed conflict, or disharmony, as better than having no relationship whatsoever. However, he held in highest regard the nonviolence demonstrated by the courageous and the cultivation of harmonious relationships (Galtung 2007).

In other words, Galtung contributed to making it more evident that Gandhi's nonviolence is not only an ethical principle but also an effective political strategy for resolving conflicts. He emphasized the importance of the idea of conflict, not only as a theoretical concept but also as a fundamental practice for conflict resolution, Peace Research and education in nonviolence. This led to a greater awareness of the need to understand and manage conflicts nonviolently to promote lasting peace.

## **12. Nature and frugality**

Næss, gifted with his extraordinary intellect and personality, not only promoted theoretical concepts but also embodied the principles he advocated.

Indeed, his mentorship extended far beyond intellectual guidance for Galtung.

Firstly, Galtung observed that Næss dedicated himself to his work with exceptional diligence, exploring topics with remarkable depth and breadth (Galtung 2012)—traits Galtung himself would emulate throughout his life.

Secondly, both shared an immense love for nature and frugality. While Galtung enjoyed nature and having a simple life wherever he was, Næss translated this approach into a radical lifestyle choice that went against the grain of consumer society. In fact, already in 1937, he built a spartan cabin at 1500 meters on Hallingskarvet. The Tvergastein cabin, reachable only on foot after a two-hour climb from the nearest train station and had no

modern conveniences: no electricity, running water or heating for the long Norwegian winters, illustrating his commitment to simplicity (Nasi 2023).

Additionally, Næss was an avid mountaineer and became a legend among Norwegian climbers in the 1930s, scaling the 106 highest mountains in Norway. He was renowned not for “conquering” mountains, but for advocating a philosophy of honoring them (Jicking 2000).

Furthermore, an essential dimension of Næss's life was his unwavering pacifist activism—inspired by Gandhian principles—in defense of the environment. His famous 1970 protest at Mardalsfossen against a dam project, where he chained himself with 300 protesters, demonstrated his commitment to nonviolent resistance, further reinforcing these ideas in Galtung's work.

### **13. Preliminary Conclusions**

Galtung's intellectual relationship with his mentor and his enduring gratitude towards him lasted a lifetime (Galtung 2012).

Moreover, Galtung emphasizes that Næss's message for the next century is the urgent need to implement nonviolence in practice. He further notes that Næss's work will be reexamined and valued once again, as his vision has the ability to deeply inspire people, guiding them towards building better, less violent societies (Galtung 2012).

Indeed, the significant influence of Gandhian studies, as interpreted by Næss, on the subsequent evolution of Galtungian theories was crucial. Nevertheless, we wish to underscore that, while this contribution was extraordinary, it was not the sole facet of the Næss-Galtung relationship.

Above all, besides encouraging Galtung to integrate environmental concerns into his peace research, Næss's philosophy of deep ecology led Galtung to recognize the interconnection between environmental degradation and social injustices. He realized that addressing one without the other would be incomplete (Weber 1999).

Moreover, Galtung's participatory and dialogical methodologies were enriched by Næss's emphasis on community engagement and dialogue. Galtung incorporated these principles

into his research, promoting the idea that sustainable peace requires the active participation of all stakeholders, including local communities and marginalized groups.

To conclude, this approach aligns with the deep ecology principle of valuing diverse perspectives and fostering a sense of global responsibility. Consequently, Galtung adopted a more holistic approach to peace studies, considering not only political and social factors but also ecological ones.

#### **14. Buddhism and Human Revolution: Daisaku Ikeda**

The book *Choose Peace* (1995) is the result of a thorough dialogue between two eminent figures in peace studies: Johan Galtung and Daisaku Ikeda.

If for Ikeda dialogue books are a common practice, in the case of Galtung this is the only one, proving the high regard he had for Ikeda, “an extraordinary person and a fine intellectual” (from private conversations).

While identifying the influences of August Galtung and Arne Næss on the young Johan may be more intuitive, it is more challenging in the case of Ikeda. When they met in 1984 (Galtung & Ikeda 1995), they were already two mature intellectuals from completely different cultural contexts. As a result, their dialogue bridges Eastern and Western philosophical traditions, providing a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding. This integration enhances both philosophies and offers a robust framework for tackling complex global issues. Therefore, it is more appropriate to speak of their dialogue as a meeting of minds, rather than just an influence of one on the other, between two distinguished personalities of our time.

Ikeda, a Buddhist philosopher and a religious leader who passed away in November 2023, had served as the President of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) since 1960. The SGI (founded in Japan in the 1930s and today present globally) is a secular organization inspired by the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, a 13th-century Japanese monk.

Like Galtung, Ikeda was a highly prolific writer, with an extensive literary output encompassing numerous essays, speeches, novels, and poems. Additionally, throughout

his life, Ikeda engaged in dialogues with many eminent figures in science, culture, and politics. These encounters resulted in significant exchanges of ideas, shaping key debates on important issues and creating a permanent legacy of knowledge and inspiration. His dedication to peace and intercultural dialogue is evident in his collaborations with notable personalities like Arnold Toynbee, Aurelio Peccei, and Mikhail Gorbachev. Together, they tackled complex social, economic, and political issues, such as the decline of natural resources, the nature of political institutions and international relations and nuclear disarmament, with extraordinary simplicity and naturalness.

However, Ikeda has not confined himself to dialogues with intellectuals or delivering lectures at prestigious universities; instead, he has created an extensive network of cultural exchanges with various political leaders based on mutual respect. With a pioneering approach, he has transcended the divisions imposed by the Cold War, working relentlessly to establish peaceful relations among the main adversaries of the two blocs, including countries such as China, Russia, the United States, and Europe.

Furthermore, Ikeda has been a passionate advocate for the abolition of nuclear weapons for decades. As a survivor of the horrors of war and a dedicated pacifist, Ikeda has consistently emphasized the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, urging for a collective commitment to disarmament. Ikeda's efforts have been particularly notable through his *Peace Proposals*, issued annually since 1983 and submitted to the United Nations, where he argues for practical steps toward a world free of nukes. His advocacy is grounded in the belief that true security is achieved not through the accumulation of weapons but through the building of trust and mutual understanding among nations.

## **15. Ikeda's Brief Biography**

Born respectively in 1928 and 1930, Ikeda and Galtung journeyed together as contemporaries in the realm of Peace Research and practice, despite their different backgrounds.

Ikeda's dedication to peace - like Galtung's - was shaped by his childhood experiences of the atrocities of war, as he grew up in militaristic Japan during World War II. The fifth of eight children in a family of seaweed farmers in Tokyo, Ikeda experienced directly the pain and anguish of the war. His four older brothers were enlisted in the army, and the eldest, Kiichi, lost his life on the front in 1945 at the age of 29. Therefore, Ikeda frequently penned reflections on the outcome of these events: witnessing neighbors perish in air raids and firebombings, hearing from his conscripted brother about the cruelty of the Japanese army towards Chinese civilians, mourning the loss of his brother, and observing his mother's immense sorrow. In addition to it, he also expressed his intense anger towards the political leaders whose cold-hearted arrogance caused such suffering (Ikeda 2018).

Though, drawn to Japanese militarist ideology, the young Ikeda attended advanced courses at Haginaka National People's School and considered enlisting to train as a pilot for the Imperial Navy. Accordingly, he believed the war was sacred and necessary for maintaining peace in Southeast Asia. However, his eldest brother Kiichi, who experienced the brutality of war firsthand, revealed its harsh reality to him: war is mass murder, with humans tormenting each other. This shifted Ikeda's perspective significantly (Ikeda 2018).

In 1947, just two years after the end of the war, Ikeda attended a meeting of the Soka Gakkai, where he was introduced to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and met Josei Toda, an active pacifist who, along with his mentor Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, had been imprisoned by the Japanese military regime. Immediately, a strong human and spiritual bond developed between Toda and Ikeda. Ikeda found in Toda a simple and open-hearted man, and became convinced that Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, was capable of concretely realizing the universal values of human dignity and peace (Ikeda 2000).

Also, Ikeda's commitment to the abolition of nuclear weapons is inspired by Josei Toda's declaration on September 8, 1957 (Toda 1957). Toda, then president of the Soka Gakkai, urged 50,000 young members to commit to abolishing nuclear weapons, emphasizing their threat to the right to live and the dignity of human life. This declaration deeply influenced Ikeda who has, ever since, promoted these ideals through dialogues with global leaders and annual peace proposals at the United Nations.

## **16. Choose Peace: a call to personal commitment**

The book-dialogue coauthored by Galtung and Ikeda addresses crucial themes, reiterating that the responsibility for change lies in the hands of each individual. Thanks to this perspective, the misunderstanding of seeing good and evil, right and wrong, love and hate as separate aspects is avoided; it is a common experience that they are destined to meet continually, calling the individual to a permanent exercise of "choice". Great individuals, starting with Gandhi, are those who have acted to make understanding prevail over resentment, nonviolence over (self)destructiveness: peace is like the music of an orchestra, born from many people playing the illuminated score of life (Urbain 2022).

Undoubtedly, the theories supporting the peace philosophies of Galtung and Ikeda share many common points and are highly complementary. Despite coming from different traditions, both fundamentally agree on the essence of peacebuilding and the steps necessary to improve and realize it in various contexts (Urbain 2022). By examining their collaborative discussions and individual contributions, it is possible to identify their shared vision for peacebuilding based on dialogue, inner transformation, and global citizenship, as well as the ways in which their approaches complement and reinforce each other.

## **17. Humanism**

To begin with, the philosophical foundations of the dialogue between Ikeda and Galtung are rooted in humanism, with a shared dedication to nonviolence and peace.

While Ikeda refers to a humanistic-religious principle founded on the idea of a common humanity that connects all human beings, Galtung draws on the humanistic influence of sociology and a Spinoza-inspired faith in humanity. This convergence of views underscores their shared commitment to promoting peace and nonviolence, applying wisdom as a resource for the peaceful transformation of differences. This idea leads both towards the notion of achieving emancipation through peace education, using the dialogic tool to promote a creative and nonviolent transformation of differences.

## **18. Dialogue**

Dialogue, described as “a mutually enriching, free and open discussion” (Galtung & Ikeda 1995), is not merely a method of communication but a mean for growth and mutual understanding. This concept has transcended traditional boundaries to become the cornerstone in the educational philosophies of both Ikeda and Galtung. For Ikeda, this philosophy is embodied in the principles of Soka University, which aims to foster global citizens through the power of constructive dialogue. Similarly, Galtung’s Transcend Peace University serves as an educational institution that highlights the transformative potential of dialogue in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

In particular, dialogue, in its ultimate essence, is a “creative dialogue”. It emerges from a process of spiritual refinement aimed at limiting the manifestation of negative aspects and expanding the positive ones towards ourselves and others. Moreover, reflecting on the true role of dialogue and communication in the current era, it is fundamentally necessary to seek this process of spiritual refinement. Indeed, such dialogue necessitates a commitment to enhancing the constructive elements of human interaction while curbing the destructive tendencies that hinder genuine understanding. Furthermore, it involves a continuous effort to cultivate empathy, respect, and a deep appreciation for the intrinsic dignity of every individual, thereby fostering a more harmonious and compassionate society (Ikeda 2007).

Galtung and Ikeda believe that true peace cannot be achieved through mere agreements or treaties; it requires a continuous process of dialogue that fosters empathy and cooperation. For example, Ikeda, supports the idea that the true seeds of peace are found in human understanding and the empathy of ordinary people (Ikeda 2002). Consequently, rejecting dialogue means distancing oneself from the essence of human connection, ultimately denying one's own humanity (Busacchi 2021). Hence, his work with the Soka Gakkai International promotes dialogues that can transform individuals and societies, leading to lasting peace.

This approach aligns with Galtung's concept of positive peace, which goes beyond the mere absence of violence (negative peace) to include the presence of equity, empathy, and a joint project for mutual and equal benefit.

## **19. Inner transformation**

To shed some light on Ikeda's most original contribution to Galtung's theories, as found in this text, we should focus on the emphasis on spirituality and inner transformation.

First, according to Ikeda, the main barrier to effectively utilizing dialogue stems from an attachment to differences, rooted in a fundamental subjective illusion and a lack of mental, emotional, and spiritual self-discipline. This is why the true value and effectiveness of dialogue as a soft power lie within the realm of religion. Secondly, the genuine social and civic role of religion is to foster and support the authentic emancipation of individuals, encouraging growth and maturation in relational, dialogic, and empathetic capacities (Busacchi 2021).

Whereas Galtung focuses on broad structural and cultural reforms, Ikeda posits that the pursuit of a better world hinges not solely on institutional and circumstantial changes, but profoundly on the transformation of the human heart. Where Galtung speaks of an individual's ability to have non-violent behavior, empathy and creativity, Ikeda asserts that the three fundamental attributes individuals should develop through inner transformation are courage, wisdom and compassion. This transformation in people's perspective and mindset, referred to by Ikeda as "human revolution," allows for a perception of oneself, others, and the world with greater empathy and kindness (Urbain 2022).

Both authors agree that sustainable peace begins with an individual's commitment to self-awareness and personal growth. Galtung often reflects on the importance of questioning the status quo and being mindful of one's actions. This personal commitment to continuous improvement is mirrored in Ikeda's teachings, which highlight the cultivation of inner peace and wisdom.

In fact, as Ikeda suggests, the religious dimension operates at a deep level because it focuses on cultivating relational skills and self-control. This includes practicing speech and listening, recognizing the intrinsic dignity of others, and respecting their right to dissent. Indeed, such engagement represents a genuine humanistic exchange, and an authentic dialogue aimed at fostering the progress and emancipation of its participants (Busacchi 2021).

Both Ikeda and Galtung maintain that inner transformation is necessary for individuals to meaningfully contribute to social change. By promoting qualities such as empathy, compassion, and resilience, individuals can become agents of peace within their communities. This transformation is not a solitary endeavor but is supported and enhanced through dialogue and engagement with others.

While a spiritual dimension of peace studies emerges, Ikeda's philosophy of human revolution, which focuses on personal and social transformation through Buddhist principles, aligns perfectly with Galtung's Transcend Method, which seeks to address the root causes of conflict through dialogue and reconciliation. Indeed, this religious perspective has enriched Galtung's approach to peace, incorporating the idea that inner transformation is essential for achieving peace. It also emphasizes the importance of cultivating empathy and harmony, two elements that appear in Galtung's peace formula (harmony x empathy/trauma x conflict; Galtung 2012) in peacebuilding processes.

Naturally, in this context, the focus of both is not on just any religion, but specifically on Buddhism, and more specifically Mahayana Buddhism, which celebrates the principle of universal solidarity that extends to all forms of life, past, present, and future. In this principle, Galtung sees a receipt that should be applied to the struggle for development, environmental protection, and efforts to create a better United Nations (Galtung & Ikeda 1995).

Moreover, in another article, Galtung observes that Buddhist teachings, from their origins, are not only religious doctrines but also a social and political framework for the societal and inter-social structures of their time. He adds that what we might lack today is a heightened level of consciousness regarding the practical applications of Buddhism. Thus, Galtung explicitly expresses his gratitude to Ikeda, recognizing him as an inspiring and pivotal example of leadership that bridges this crucial gap (Galtung 1985). He also acknowledges Ikeda for providing the clearest explanation he had ever received about the principle of transforming karma through the path of human revolution (Galtung & Ikeda 1995).

To sum up, both authors emphasize that the responsibility for enacting change lies with each individual, rejecting the simplistic dichotomy of good and evil, right and wrong, love and hate. Instead, Ikeda and Galtung advocate for a nuanced perspective that recognizes

the continuous interaction between these forces, necessitating a perpetual exercise of personal choice.

## **20. Preliminary Conclusions**

The collaboration between Daisaku Ikeda and Johan Galtung marks a pivotal point in understanding and promoting peace. While Galtung focuses on the structural reforms necessary for building a peaceful society, Ikeda brings a complementary perspective, emphasizing inner transformation and human revolution. This integration of continuous dialogue and personal development constitutes a holistic and human approach to peace.

The authors illustrate how the seeds of collective suffering and conflict can be traced back to the darker tendencies inherent in human life. Furthermore, they argue that understanding and addressing these tendencies is fundamental to promoting a peaceful society.

Their theories demonstrate that true peace is not merely the absence of violence but the presence of harmony, empathy, and cooperation for mutual and equal benefit. This integrated model offers a powerful framework for building a more equitable and harmonious society, reminding us that peace begins within each of us.

Ikeda's philosophy of human revolution, rooted in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, emphasizes inner and social transformation through dialogue. Following this, Galtung recognizes the importance of inner transformation and the contribution of Buddhism to conflict resolution, which align with his Transcend Method. This method focuses on addressing the root causes of conflict through dialogue and nonviolence.

The integration of dialogue and inner transformation creates a dynamic and holistic approach to peace. Dialogue promotes understanding and collaboration, encouraging a sense of shared responsibility, and inner transformation ensures that individuals are equipped to contribute to peacebuilding efforts. This synthesis reflects the complementary nature of Ikeda and Galtung's work and underscores the importance of integrating diverse perspectives in the pursuit of peace.

## **21. Closing remarks**

In conclusion, the contributions of August, Arne Naess, and Daisaku Ikeda played a crucial role in shaping Johan Galtung's vision of peace and Peace Research. August's emphasis on the DPT medical approach provided a solid philosophical foundation for understanding peace as a scientific process. Arne Naess, through his concept of ecosophy, expanded Galtung's perspective, integrating an essential ecological dimension for the sustainability of peace. Finally, Daisaku Ikeda, with his commitment to interreligious and intercultural dialogue, and for inner transformation, demonstrated the importance of mutual respect and understanding as pillars of lasting peace. Together, these thinkers enriched Galtung's vision, guiding his work towards a holistic and inclusive conception of positive peace.

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