The Roles of Art in the Promotion of Peace:
Some Examples from Music, Literature and Painting.

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Introduction

Today we see an alarming trend towards the militarization and dehumanization of our world. There is an increase in the frequency and brutality of both Governmental Military Operations (GMO) such as the U.S. attack on Afghanistan which started on October 7, 2001, or the killing of Palestinian civilians by the Israeli army (2000-2002), and also an increase in Non-Governmental Military Operations (NGMO), such as the attacks on 9/11, the Palestinian suicide bombings (2000-2002 also), the Bali massacre of October 12, 2002 and the attacks in Kenya of November 28 of the same year, and many other violent and murderous activities.

Concerning dehumanization, let me quote Noam Chomsky in his criticism of the respected intellectual Michael Walzer: “By ‘distorted accounts,’ perhaps Walzer has in mind occasional references to the statement of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright over national TV when she was asked about the estimates of a half million deaths of Iraqi children as a result of the sanctions regime. She recognized that such consequences were a ‘hard choice’ for her administration, but said ‘we think the price is worth it.” (Chomsky, 2001: 72-73).

Faced with such ways of thinking, speaking and acting, it is urgent to turn the tide towards more respect for human life, and towards more art and more peace in world society. The roles of art in the promotion of peace may not be
obvious at first glance, so in this paper I will focus on three concrete examples from music, literature and painting.

Concerning music, I have chosen songs by Duke Ellington to illustrate the power of jazz for the promotion of social justice. For literature I have chosen a passage from Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* which calls for equal rights for all people. The example I have chosen from painting are artworks from children in Uganda, child soldiers who have been able to escape the hell they were trapped in and who are telling us their story using art.

In order to clarify what I mean by "art" and by "peace", I will first attempt a definition of peace based on the concept of conflict transformation, and then a definition of art based on the efforts of human beings towards self-expression.

Next I will introduce the "Art and Peace Matrix", a conceptual framework designed to encourage others to further explore the links between art and peace. Finally, after sharing some ideas on how the three examples I have chosen from music, literature and painting can contribute to peace, I will list a few concrete activities which have taken place recently in order to inspire more people to study the links between art and peace.

1. Definition of Peace as Conflict Transformation

Johan Galtung, one of the founders of peace studies, often defines peace as "the capacity to transform conflicts with nonviolence, creativity and empathy" (Galtung, 2002a). After thinking about peace for many years, I have reached the conclusion that my definition of peace is basically the same, so I would like to clarify what this definition means to me in this part of the paper.

Life is full of conflicts, all the time, everywhere. When we wake up in the morning part of us wants to start the day, but another part of us wants to stay in bed. A conflict has already started within ourselves. If the "sleepy part" wins, we might stay in bed too long and be late for class or for work. If the "must go
part" wins, we might feel tired the whole day because of lack of sleep.

Now let us jump from this simple, harmless conflict to other conflicts, which have caught the media's attention during the last few months. What is the conflict between Iraq and the U.S. really about? What about the conflict between North Korea and Japan? Or between Israelis and Palestinians?

Between the private conflict of one person trying to wake up, and international conflicts involving millions of people, there is a limitless range of conflicts of all kinds we need to be aware of. If we consider conflicts as raw material, we can see why conflict transformation skills are of utmost importance for the promotion of peace. At the root of the violence characterizing many human relationships today, we do not find the presence or absence of conflicts. Rather, we find the manner in which people transform these conflicts. The capacity to transform conflicts in a nonviolent manner is therefore one of the most important qualities we need to develop today.

Here I would like to make an important distinction between "conflict resolution" and "conflict transformation", two concepts which are often confused, in theory and in practice, often with serious consequences. "Conflict resolution" implies that one can find a solution to a particular conflict, and that when this solution has been reached, the conflict is over. I do not think this is a realistic approach. Most conflicts have deep roots, and it is unrealistic to expect the possibility of completely resolving any conflict with conflict resolution techniques.

However, it is possible to transform the conflict. This means that if we change the frame of reference of the parties in conflict, if we can alter their attitude, behavior and their perception of their goals as being incompatible, we can transform a potentially violent conflict into a nonviolent conflict. The conflict will continue with its raw energy and inner dynamics, but it can be transformed into a source of creativity and lead to constructive outcomes.

Let us now turn to a basic conflict formation, and describe an XY graph with five points representing potential outcomes. This XY graph is one of the
theoretical pillars of the TRANSCEND method established by Johan Galtung (Galtung, 2002b). Simply put, in a conflict between A and B, X represents the axis of absolute satisfaction for A, and Y the same axis for B. This gives us five points. (1) A gets everything and B nothing, a win/lose outcome, (2) B gets everything and A nothing, the opposite win/lose outcome, (3) A and B get nothing, called withdrawal (4) A and B get both half of what they want. Point (4) is called a compromise, but it is very fragile because both A and B will often try to get back the other half later and the conflict might still become violent because not much has been transformed. Point (5) is where both A and B get exactly what they wanted, or even more. To reach this point requires a lot of imagination, creativity, originality, and open dialogue, and it is called the “transcend” point. To reach this point parties in a conflict need to “go beyond” the perceived incompatibilities, to transcend the framework of the conflict and find brand new ideas (see appendix 1).

As mentioned, it takes a lot of imagination and creativity in order to reach the “transcend” point. How can we develop these qualities? One obvious answer is through the practice and appreciation of the arts. We can see here one of the links between art and peace: art can help us develop the imagination and creativity necessary to transform conflicts, and by promoting creativity, art can promote peace.

Before moving on to a definition of “art”, let me briefly mention about the ABC triangle. Another pillar of the TRANSCEND method, it means that we can look at conflicts by examining the attitude (A), behavior (B) and contradiction (C) of the parties in conflict. Let us take the current conflict between North Korea and Japan (December 2002), and take a look at the ABC of Japan.

What is the attitude (A) of Japan? Can we say that Japan shows an attitude of respect towards North Korea? Some people claim that because of the Japanese colonization of the Korean Peninsula (1910-1945), one million Koreans were killed, six million have been taken into forced labor, and two hundred thousand
young Korean girls have been transformed into sex slaves for the Japanese army. If this is true, what do you think about the current attitude of the Japanese government and media towards North Korea?

What is the behavior (B) of Japan? What actions are the government and NGO's taking to transform the conflict? Finally where is the contradiction (C)? What is the conflict really about? Another way to explain “contradiction” is to talk about “seemingly incompatible goals”. We can then ask the same questions about the ABC of North Korea, and about the ABC of other parties in this conflict, which is of course not only between Japan and North Korea, but also involves South Korea, China, Russia, the United States and other parties.

We can see that the nonviolent transformation of this conflict towards a peaceful and constructive relationship largely depends on the attitude, behavior and capacity of the parties to creatively reexamine the contradictions at the root of the conflict. To make a long tale short, an excellent ABC would be an attitude of empathy, a behavior of nonviolence and abundant creativity to transform the contradictions inherent in the conflict.

I hope these explanations will make the definition of peace, which was mentioned at the beginning of this section, more transparent: “the capacity to transform conflicts with nonviolence, creativity and empathy” (Galtung, 2002a).

2. Definition of Art as Human Efforts Towards Self-expression

Based on the definition of peace mentioned in the first part, our basic research question becomes: “what are the roles of art in the development of empathy, nonviolence and creativity for peace”? When one hears the word “art” one might think about a visit to a local exhibition of French impressionist paintings.

However in this paper we take the word “art” to mean not only painting, but also literature, cinema, all fine arts including sculpture, all performing arts.
including dance and music, and other forms of art such as cooking or fashion design. Moreover "art" does not only refer to the finished product of great writers, movie directors, painters, musicians and others, but also to the creative process itself. In this context, a child ringing a small bell is considered "art" as much as the "Ninth of Beethoven".

To sum up this part of the paper, our definition of art will be "any human effort towards self-expression, from basic shapes, objects, movements and sounds to fully professional productions of literature, cinema, fine arts, performing arts and other forms of art".

3. The Art and Peace Matrix

This is the first idea I came up with in January 2000 when I first started to explore the links between art and peace. In this very simple matrix, art is divided into five categories, (mentioned in part 2 above), and peace is divided into five levels. These levels depend on the number of people involved in the conflict transformation under consideration.

In a conflict such as a personal dilemma, there is only one person involved: this is the "individual" level. In a conflict within a couple, a family, a neighborhood, or the management of a small company, a few people are involved, and this is at the "group" level. Next we move to conflicts within societies, occurring along the artificial separations dividing women and men, people of different skin colors, conservatives from liberals and radicals, fully able people from people who have some disability, and along other types of societal faultlines. Here we are talking about the level of "society". Further, we can look at conflicts involving countries, regions, and call that the "civilization" level. Finally we must consider the growing conflict between humanity and nature, between all the people of the planet on the one hand, and the rest of nature being polluted and destroyed on the other hand. We may call that the "nature"
level. Our “Art and Peace Matrix” therefore looks like a square divided into twenty-five boxes (see appendix 2).

This should only be used as a frame of reference, what really matters are the insights and new ideas generated by the reader’s explorations concerning the links between art and peace, and these cannot be confined within any kind of matrix.

I have placed six examples in the matrix to illustrate its potential usefulness:

“Ugandan Children”: child soldiers from Uganda have created paintings to start healing their deep mental wounds.

“Love Story”: this movie can encourage more compassionate relationships between partners.

“Hugo”: Victor Hugo’s novel *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* is about social justice, and so are most of his novels.

“Jazz”: this music has been and still is a powerful instrument for the improvement of equal civil rights.

“Silk Road Gifts”: jewels, pieces of pottery and other objects were used to enhance good relationships between countries along the Silk Road from Iran to Japan.

“Earth Charter”: there are many artistic activities designed to promote the Earth Charter, a document for a more sustainable way of life. (*Earth Charter Organizing Committee, 2002*).

Let us now look at three of these examples.

4. Three Examples from Music, Literature and Painting.

Duke Ellington is one of the greatest jazz musicians of all times, an accomplished pianist, composer, performer and bandleader. Please listen to some of his music now, before resuming your reading of this paper. I recommend “Take the A Train.”
The A train was actually a subway line in New York, but now I would like to talk about another kind of train. Let me quote from another paper I wrote, which was published earlier this year:

“Edward Kennedy Ellington was born in 1899 in a comfortable middle-class home in Washington DC. In spite of the segregation and discrimination going on in the capital city too, his family was able to lead a dignified life, and they were very lucky indeed. His mother Daisy believed that he was ‘blessed’ and she would remain a very important source of support for her son throughout her life. For example, she taught him that ‘unpleasant facts and potential barriers are simply to be ignored’, and one fundamental principle for success, which is: ‘do the best you can with what you’ve got.’ Edward always remained dignified whatever happened, and he soon earned the nickname ‘the Duke.’ One anecdote shows how well Duke Ellington had absorbed these guidelines from his mother, which were also reinforced at the all-black school he attended.

In 1933 he went to Europe and England with his orchestra, and the tour was a complete triumph. However when they came back home, they started a tour of the American South, and the hotels and restaurants would refuse to serve him and his band because of their skin color. His reaction was fabulous: he arranged for the band to have their own Pullman cars, a whole train with rooms and a restaurant just for them.

The band was therefore able to play throughout the racist South while sleeping and eating comfortably, a luxury that few African American musicians could afford at the time. This is truly the principle of ‘Do the best you can with what you’ve got’ in action.” (Urbain, 2002: 62)

Next here is an example from literature. Again let me quote from a paper which was written earlier:

“In his novel The Hunchback of Notre-Dame, Victor Hugo tells us the story of a Gipsy girl called Esmeralda, who is the victim of severe persecution by the priest Claude Frollo. He is madly in love with her and uses his power and influence to have her jailed and eventually killed. It is a rousing appeal for social
justice. One interesting point is Hugo’s choice of a heroine. Esmeralda is a member of the Roma nation, and therefore not a French citizen, and she is also a woman. In 1789 the French Revolution produced the ‘Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen’ One woman complained about the fact that the word ‘man’ excluded all women and to make a long tale short... she was beheaded by the revolutionary authorities. Immanuel Wallerstein in his recent book The End of the World as we Know It mentioned that the concept of citizenship implies that there are both citizens and non-citizens, which means that some people are automatically excluded. We can see Victor Hugo’ vast vision of human justice in the fact that he chose Esmeralda as the heroine of his novel. She is not a man, and she is not a citizen, and as a result she has to endure terrible discrimination. In a way the 1789 ‘Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen’ does not apply to her at all.” (Urbain, 2001).

Finally here is an example from painting. A savage civil war has been raging in northern Uganda for decades, and especially since 1986 when the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) started taking up arms against the government.

Here are excerpts from a report by “Human Rights Watch”.

“In dozens of countries around the world, children have become direct participants in war. Denied a childhood and often subjected to horrific violence, some 300,000 children are serving as soldiers in current armed conflicts. These young combatants participate in all aspects of contemporary warfare. They wield AK-47s and M-16s on the front lines of combat, serve as human mine detectors, participate in suicide missions, carry supplies, and act as spies, messengers or lookouts.

(...) Child soldiers are being used in more than thirty countries around the world. Human Rights Watch has interviewed child soldiers from countries including Angola, Colombia, Lebanon, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Uganda. In Sierra Leone, thousands of children abducted by rebel forces witnessed and participated in horrible atrocities against civilians, including beheadings, amputations, rape,
and burning people alive. Children forced to take part in atrocities were often given drugs to overcome their fear or reluctance to fight.

(...) Girls are also used as soldiers in many parts of the world. In addition to combat duties, girls are subject to sexual abuse and may be taken as 'wives' by rebel leaders in Angola, Sierra Leone and Uganda. In Northern Uganda, Human Rights Watch interviewed girls who had been impregnated by rebel commanders, and then forced to strap their babies on their backs and take up arms against Ugandan security forces.

Because of their immaturity and lack of experience, child soldiers suffer higher casualties than their adult counterparts. Even after the conflict is over, they may be left physically disabled or psychologically traumatized. Frequently denied an education or the opportunity to learn civilian job skills, many find it difficult to re-join peaceful society. Schooled only in war, former child soldier are often drawn into crime or become easy prey for future recruitment.” (Human Rights Watch, 2002)

From the above report excerpts, we can see that it is absolutely crucial to help the children who survive this hell to regain a sense of their own humanity. Having them draw and paint their tragic experiences can do this. In refugee camps in Uganda, children are encouraged to draw and paint what has happened to them, then later how they feel about their present conditions, and finally they regain a sense of dignity and hope, and some of them are able to draw and paint a brighter future (UNICEF, 1998).

In this case art can promote peace both at the “personal” level, healing deep wounds, and also at the level of “society” by helping individuals to find a place in the social fabric again.
5. Taking Action.

Now I would like to introduce a few concrete activities which are taking place here on the Soka University campus.

Every semester the World Language Center offers two “English Communication Advanced” classes about “Art and Peace”. Every Wednesday from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. the “Ho Pono Pono Section” of the “Gakusei Kokusai Center” offers workshops about art and conflict transformation in Japanese in AT 301.

Several organizations on campus combine their efforts in order to offer an “art and peace exhibition” in December and an “art and peace conference” in June. The International Peace Research Organization (IPRA) now has a “Commission on Art and Peace”, and in July 2002 three Soka University undergraduate students presented papers about art and peace for an international audience. The next IPRA conference will be held in Hungary in 2004 and readers are welcome to present a paper to submit a proposal.

Finally I would like to invite you to visit the website of the Transcend: Art and Peace Network (T:AP), one of the twenty or so programs of the TRANSCEND organization, at <http://tap.mailme.org>.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the way one sees the roles of art in the promotion of peace depends on one’s definition of peace, and of art, and also on the nature of the links one is willing to see between the two. In this paper I have proposed a definition of peace and of art, I have introduced the “art and peace matrix”, given concrete examples and suggested ways to take action in order to promote more art and more peace in our world. Indeed, they belong to each one of us.
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Appendix 1.

The Five Outcomes of A Basic Conflict Formation

1. Point of total satisfaction for A only. (Win/Lose)
2. Point of total satisfaction for B only. (Win/Lose)
3. Nor A nor B get anything. (Withdrawal)
4. Fifty/Fifty Compromise
5. Point of Total Satisfaction for both A and B (Transcend)

Insights and New Ideas!
Appendix 2.
The Art and Peace Matrix
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<th>Peace</th>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Society</th>
<th>Civilization</th>
<th>Nature</th>
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Insights and New Ideas!