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“THE ROLE OF DRAMA FOR REGIONAL RECONCILIATION: “HO’O PONO PONO: PAX PACIFICA” PROPOSED BY JOHAN GALTUNG AND TRANSCEND-JAPAN”

Key words: reconciliation / drama / TRANSCEND / Pax Pacifica

Summary: The role of art for peace should be valued, and by examining Johan Galtung’s “PAX PACIFICA in Yokohama Harbor,” a drama for reconciliation in the Pacific, or more specifically, for East Asia, the importance of art for peace is discussed. In addition, peace museums in a wider definition should offer time and space for such projects. However, the delicate and complex issues involved in the project cannot be ignored, so improvement of the script (“Ho’o pono pono: Pax Pacifica”) by TRANSCEND-Japan is now being experimented and how to do so is reported in the presentation.

Current Situations and Regional Reconciliation in North-East Asia, and the Power of Art

In April this year, on weekends, people in China had so-called “anti-Japan demonstrations.” Many of them turned out to be aggressive and many shops, restaurants, and also the Japanese embassy were attacked in big cities in China. There are many reasons for the movement, and much of it is (at least it seems to be) tacitly encouraged or controlled by the Chinese government for its political intentions. On the other hand, the Japanese government is also using this opportunity for its political intentions. Moreover, the Japanese government has displayed its arrogance toward China through the talks with Chinese politicians.

First of all, I believe that we cannot ignore the fact that there is still a huge gap between China and Japan about the recognitions of “history,” which is a major factor of the current tension. It includes the issue of history textbooks as many Chinese point out. This also applies to the relationship between the Korean peninsula and Japan. It is basically the same with Taiwan and other Asian countries too. This tragic situation requires true reconciliation in the region from many different aspects, and I believe that we also need to approach this issue from the point of view of art.

At the same time, it sometimes feels like nonsense to discuss these issues by perspectives of “stereotypes” such as “Chinese think in this way” or “Japanese have such a standpoint.” There are different groups of people in China, in Japan, and in Korea, etc., and moreover,

individuals have different opinions and approaches toward the issues of regional peace. However, in order to “resolve” the conflict, we must do something. How can we transcend such a dilemma? This is what I am going to discuss in this presentation. Are there possibilities for art to play a role in regional reconciliation at all? In my presentation, the importance of the role of drama for peaceful reconciliation, along with that of peace museums, will be emphasized, but at the same time, the delicate and complex issues involved in the project are discussed.

TRANSCEND Directed by Johan Galtung, and His “Pax Pacifica”

Johan Galtung, a director of TRANSCEND network, created the script of a play/drama for North-East Asia. The script is an “Epilogue” to one of his recent books *Pax Pacifica*. It emerged from his challenge of having a dialogue-based reconciliation play in a TRANSCEND workshop held in Yokohama three years ago. I do not intend to discuss all about its process of creation and the exact wordings, but shall summarize what it is about, and try to analyze it from my own perspective. Three of the members of TRANSCEND-Japan translated it into Japanese language, and also worked on the script in order to actually perform it on more coming occasions for the future-use in Japan, and named it “Ho’o pono pono: Pax Pacifica,” with Dr. Galtung’s permission. I also make some suggestions later in the presentation to improve the script in order to make it more useful and effective.

What can art do to create peace? I was pondering such a question from the point of view of literature, when I first encountered TRANSCEND in 1998. TRANSCEND is an international NGO network which promotes conflict transformation by peaceful means (www.transcend.org). The organization is directed by Johan Galtung who offers ideas without any compensation to people who desperately need to transform their conflict and to survive. One example of his proposals to the need is expressed in a form of collective recitation, “Pax Pacifica,” peace for the Pacific, or more specifically, for North-East Asia.

Hawaiian Form of Community Reconciliation Called Ho’o pono pono and “Pax Pacifica”

Galtung was inspired by a Hawaiian form of reconciliation called “ho’o pono pono,” a Polynesian word meaning “setting right,” and created a play based on it. In his theory, reconciliation consists of both factors of closure and healing, and ho’o pono pono is a possible form of such creative reconciliation. “PAX PACIFICA in Yokohama Harbor” is written in the form of a recitation in which 13 actors basically read out their lines, and the audience listens to it. The “Wise Person” opens, directs and closes the whole process of the drama, and the other 12 actors categorized in 4 groups follow the process. The first group of three people are from Japan: a Japanese politician, a Japanese Zero Bomber, and a Japanese hibakusha woman. The next three are a US politician, a US Hiroshima Bomber, and a US Hawaiian. The third group is from the Korean peninsula: a Korean politician, a Korean “Comfort Woman”, and a Korean zainichi (Korean resident in Japan). The last group is from China and they are a Chinese politician, a Chinese Nanjing victim, and a Chinese Taiwanese.

First, I shall introduce the script:

Prof. Johan Galtung: "PAX PACIFICA in Yokohama Harbor"

Ho'o pono pono, setting right, is a Polynesian, and in this form Hawai'ian, approach to conflict transformation and reconciliation. Perpetrators, victims, some who are both, and some who are neither, sit around a table, chaired by a "Wise Person", and speak their mind.

There are five phases:

- [1] establish the facts, **what** happened in the community of nations
- [2] **exploring why** it happened, emphasising acts of commission
- [3] sharing responsibility, also for acts of omission, apologising.
- [4] **a constructive, future-oriented program**, based on [1], [2] & [3]
- [5] declaring the conflict closed, symbolic burning of records.

The cast: 13 persons (national groups sit next to each other)

Wise Person (WP)

Japanese Politician
Japanese Zero Bomber
Japanese *hibakusha*, woman

US Politician
US Hiroshima Bomber
US Hawai'ian

Korean Politician
Korean Comfort Woman
Korean zainichi (Korean resident in Japan)

Chinese Politician
Chinese Nanjing victim
Chinese Taiwanese

The WP opens the *ho'o pono pono* with a statement of purpose. The *ho'o pono pono* then proceeds to phases [2], [3] and then [4]. Each participant has a statement in each phase; 1 + 36 all together. The following summarizes the statements to get the gist of what happened and could be done anywhere in the Hemisphere.

A Chronology for the play, and a Prologue to It, Both Produced by TRANSCEND-Japan

The members of TRANSCEND-Japan produced a simple "history map" or a chronology for the play for the audience. There exist different perspectives to a historical fact. This "map" is to share a "common" understanding of the complex histories of the North-East region of Asia, so that at least we can start from a certain common ground of understanding the fact. Here are the main points of the chronology.

In Order to Understand "Ho'o pono pono: Pax Pacifica"
<Chronology of the 15 Years War (1931~45)>

3 phases to understand "15 Years War"

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| I: September, 1931 ~ July, 1937 | The Manchurian Incident |
| II: July, 1937 ~ December, 1941 | The China-Japan War |
| III: December, 1941 ~ September, 1945 | The Asia-Pacific War |

We also created and added a prologue to the main script, and the purposes of the prologue are to understand what Imperial Japan was, and its ambitions and achievements, and also to share the fact that the whole event began from 1889 when Meiji Constitution was created and its consequences continued until the end of the war and still continues to the present. Secondly, in order to create an atmosphere for reconciliation we provide, we try to use photographs of the memories of the past war and/or some kind of music to make people feel that they are here together for the same cause, reconciliation. For example, photographs can be a photograph of the remains of the building of the Imperial Japanese Government which used to stand in the center of Seoul. The building can be said to be a symbol of invasion. However, I believe Koreans are showing their resentment by setting the remains of the building in a small section of their Independence Hall, or, could it be a symbol of their "forgiveness"? Other examples could be a picture of Hiroshima Dome, or an illustration by painters, Iri and Toshi Maruki, in a picture book of Okinawa battles. Even though Okinawan people served Imperial Japan, they were often threatened by Japanese soldiers with their guns. They were the very victims of Imperial Japan. Thirdly, the prologue tells the audience that the setting of the drama is as follows; players/actors sit in a circle with the Wise Person at the head, and as all the people present are getting ready to start the play, the music fades.

A Summary of Galtung's Original "PAX PACIFICA in Yokohama Harbor"

As mentioned before, in "Pax Pacifica" there are twelve "representatives," and actors who play them are supposed to speak out from their own positions. There are three steps in the play. First, they speak out "what happened" from each point of view. This means that they explain their "act of commission" of their own and others', and what kind of situation they were

“forced” to be in during the Pacific War, 1931-1945. In so doing, many different perspectives appear and people understand the war was not just one event, but consisted of many facts for the many different parties involved. As Galtung illustrates, the Wise Person announces that actors are supposed to give a vivid testimony in the drama, all from their angles, proving again the truth of the well-known Kurosawa movie, *Rashomon*, how the same story has as many facets as it has humans living it, reflecting on it, and telling it.

In the second phase, they all have to realize what could have been done, even though they failed to do so. Galtung explains that we humans are not only what we do, and we are also what we do not do, what we fail to do, and what we should have done. He emphasizes that we all should have had more knowledge, more insight, we should have disobeyed orders at times, we should have resisted nonviolently, and we should have known how to do it. He calls it “act of omission.” In this step, people, then, reflect even deeper this time more on what they could have done but did not do, sharing the responsibility, apologizing. By realizing that they did not do enough especially before and during the war, they are led to apologize, and the whole process becomes a collective apology.

The third step in the process is to state what can be done in the future. All twelve actors in the script again suggest their ideas for the future from their own point of view. According to Galtung’s script, this is the last round. This step tries to tidy up the past through a reconciliation that heals the wounds and brings closure. Moreover, Galtung insists that real peace can only be found in togetherness, like in an East Asian Community (EAC) similar to the European Community (EC), today the European Union (EU), with an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Asia/Pacific (OSCAP), similar to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Problems/Difficulties Found in the Japanese Cultural Context and the Solutions

The whole process is full of insight, but in my understanding with the help of discussions with friends of TRANSCEND-Japan, there are some conflicts to be transformed when we practice this recitation. Because “Pax Pacifica” is based on “ho’o pono pono,” the Polynesian ceremonial process for reconciliation among community members, it requires from the very beginning a “spiritual” or ceremonial environment. When we tried to read out this script in workshops, some participants raised the point: “it is quite difficult for me to jump into this scenario.” For them whose daily life is filled with secular or irreligious matters, this kind of ceremonial approach gives them uncomfortable feelings simply because they are not used to it in their modern/postmodern everyday life. In order to solve the problem, TRANSCEND-Japan is now in the process of creating and adding another “act” to the drama. That will be before the first phase, where people see what happened during the time. This new act will hopefully provide the participants including actors and the audience an atmosphere where they can trust each other and believe that they have something in common so that they want to sit around the same table, and their common goal is to create a new and peaceful future for the region together.

Another point that some workshop participants questioned about “Pax Pacifica” was that between the first step and the second step they felt that there was a huge gap of thought. They stated that they cannot simply “believe” that people can jump from the first step to the second. In the first step, they are supposed to realize what they have done, or what the situations were to them. This, according to the participants, was easy to do. In the second step, however, all of a sudden they say that they “felt as if they were forced to apologize.” To admit “act of commission” was rather acceptable in the first phase, but to learn about “act of omission” demanded enormous self-exposure, and participants abruptly felt that it was too much to do, thinking “this never happens in reality!”

This point is related to the next conflict as well. Some people insisted that this “Pax Pacifica” violates individual human rights. By “labeling” or “stereotyping” each representative, and also, by leaving other possible parties out, they say that the script ignores individuality. This point makes sense, but from one perspective, when you strictly follow this line, you will eventually find yourself unable to say anything at all. In fact, you will never be allowed to “speak out” for somebody else, because you are not that person. If you would like to challenge to change society and the world, then what you might have to do is to systematically figure out what this world consists of. That is what Galtung’s “Pax Pacifica” intends to do, in order to grasp the structure of the conflict in the North-East Asia and the Pacific. However, as TRANSCEND-Japan friends say, it is also true that stereotyping is dangerous.

In order to solve the two conflicts above, TRANSCEND-Japan is now suggesting to create and add another “act” here again, between the first step of the process and the second. Our idea is to put as many “voices” as possible, of each representative in the play. For example, a hibakusha woman might state her deep and inner sentiments, which are conflicting in herself, like “I can understand that we should never have let the government lead us into that disastrous war. We did not do enough to resist Imperial Japan, so we need to apologize. However, deep in my heart, I hear a cry that I AM the victim of the whole event!” By showing each delicate conflicting “voice”, maybe we can reduce the level of negative tension that some participants had and felt during the workshops.

This solution which TRANSCEND-Japan attempts to develop indicates another important point. It is about possibilities of having a “dialogue” on stage among actors through the drama. Actors as human beings have to perform the drama with their spirit and soul, so that the dialogue will eventually spread among the audience off the stage as well. In other words, when people see actors “read-out” the play, and having “dialogue” through their lines filled with honest inner voices, I am sure that this dramatic experience will also give the audience a chance or motivation that they need to further communicate with others on the topic outside the theatre space. The role of art, I believe, is about such power. When you know how to handle the power of art for peaceful directions, it would expand the network of dialogues and the communication line will connect more people more deeply. Art also requires people to be imaginative and creative, so that dialogues will be filled with understanding, cooperation, and furthermore, I strongly hope, reconciliation.

The Meaning of “Ho’o pono pono: Pax Pacifica”

Come to think of the fact that neither sincere apologies, nor any form of reconciliation has happened in North-East Asia yet, Japan, particularly, has to play leading but humble role in the process. The primary reason is that Japan is supposed to be one of the most victimizing parties in the Pacific and North-East Asia during the past tragedy. Although TRANSCEND insists of all the parties’ responsibilities of “act of commission” and “act of omission,” so that all the people who are involved in the tragedy are claimed to be somewhat responsible, nobody would disagree with the fact that Imperial Japan was the invader. In such a situation, TRANSCEND-Japan understands that Japan should be leading some kind of movement to make this reconciliation process happen. Therefore, TRANSCEND-Japan has received Galtung’s “Pax Pacifica,” translated it, edited it for readers in Japan to understand it more easily and comfortably, and titled it “Ho’o pono pono: Pax Pacifica.” We are now using the script in different TRANSCEND workshops that we hold from time to time in Japan. Also, we are ready to improve it by the ideas and comments raised by workshop participants.

As I mentioned earlier, one thing I noticed about the Japanese government concerning the situation is its arrogance. The minister of Foreign Affairs (Machimura) was interviewed by Japanese media the other day, and he replied: “I am telling Chinese people that we should not look at the history in a narrow aspect. Our mutual history/relationship is not only about those 60 or more years around WWII, but we have been sharing a long history. I am trying to remind them of this fact.” This statement can be translated as follows: “Even though we ‘invaded your country’ or ‘did a little bit of harm to you,’ it is not the only thing which lies between us. We created more than that. Let’s not focus so much on the invasion, (and maybe forget it!?,) and construct a positive future together.” This should NOT be the lines/words from an invader, a victimizer. Only when victims send this kind message to the victimizers, can victimizers appreciate it and apologize once more again and again. You must be really sensitive about the order and be sure that perpetrators should wait until victims kindly forgive them, I believe. We need to do something about this confused situation sooner or later.

Finally, my proposal is to hold a session/sessions of “Pax Pacifica” at peace museums. In my understanding, peace museums should NOT be a dead space, but should be as alive and active as possible. In South Korea, there is an interesting movement mobilized by peace museum activists, such as Prof. Hongkoo Han. Even though they do not yet have a museum building in a physical sense, they go out in the street and perform or “exhibit” art of peace. As another example, the Japan-based NGO called PeaceBoat organizes cruises around the world and offers time and space to participants to discuss and think about peace issues as well as organizing other peace projects. In this wider sense of understanding what peace museums should be, the play “Ho’o pono pono: Pax Pacifica” could be performed in such “peace museums.” It is because, I believe, that they are sure to provide an atmosphere of sending out and receiving peace messages, so “dialogues” or communication among the drama itself, actors, and the audience (museum-goers) will be hopefully deepened.

Reference

Johan Galtung, “Epilogue: PAX PACIFICA in Yokohama Harbor.” 2002.